The Role of the School District in Improving Educational Opportunities
and Outcomes for Adolescent English Language Learners

by

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The Role of the School District in Improving Educational Opportunities
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DEDICATION

To those who seek to build new lives in this fine country,
that they may find our nation’s schools to be places that celebrate
their many strengths and unleash their abundant potential.
ABSTRACT

This single-district, case study builds a conceptual understanding of the role of the school district in improving educational opportunities and outcomes for adolescent English learners. As the numbers of English learners grow at a faster rate than that of the general school population, and many continue to struggle with the challenges of mastering English proficiency and academic content, the need for district leaders to develop a deeper understanding of strategies for educating these students more effectively assumes increasing urgency. Several questions guide this study: What contextual factors influence district efforts to promote and support English-learner-focused reforms in secondary schools? What roles, systems, strategies, and practices does the district employ in creating more equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for English learners? In its efforts to address the needs of adolescent English learners, how does the district negotiate the change process? What lessons can districts learn about their roles in supporting the achievement of adolescent English learners?

Findings were derived from interviews with district leaders, principals, teachers, school staff, and parents; observations of classrooms and district-training activities; and document analysis. Grounded in the literature on the district’s role in reform and the education of English learners, the study presents a theoretical framework for district-led change on behalf of adolescent English learners and provides a rubric that merges district roles in reform with research-based practices for educating English learners. Together, these complementary instruments capture the complex nature of this work.

This research demonstrates that district leadership on behalf of English learners involves the execution of multiple, interdependent roles; a deep understanding of
effective practice in working with these students; careful attention to the change process; and a commitment to social justice leadership. It concludes that district latitude for action is considerable and represents a significant opportunity to lead change on behalf of English learners. Potential benefits of this study include enhancing our understanding of district practices yielding the greatest returns for currently underserved students; focusing attention on existing district will and capacity to support reform focused on English learners; and laying the groundwork for future research into how districts facilitate the achievement of specific subgroups.
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CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

The Challenge

The greatest challenge facing educational leaders in U.S. public schools today involves creating schools that work for all children. Despite growing accounts of individual schools in which all students, regardless of race, English-language fluency, or family income, are performing at high levels, far too many schools are still not places in which even a majority of children experience academic success. Over the past two decades, federal and state accountability systems have aimed to reduce disparities in achievement by focusing unprecedented attention on the performance of individual student groups. Among those groups receiving increasing scrutiny are English learners (ELs). These children, often immigrants or the offspring of immigrants, struggle daily to learn English and simultaneously grasp academic content. Collectively, they rank as one of the fastest-growing and statistically lowest-achieving student populations in the nation (Fry, 2008).

Within the larger group of ELs are adolescent learners who confront especially formidable challenges because their timeframe for achieving academic and language proficiency is much shorter than that of their elementary school counterparts. These adolescent learners must not only become proficient in conversational English, but they must also develop a facility in academic English specific to a variety of disciplines. Academic English encompasses abstract, complex language, often found in middle and high school textbooks (Goldenberg, 2008). Without a strong grasp of academic English, it is difficult for students to participate fully in mainstream classroom activities that require them to engage in such learning tasks in English as comparing and contrasting
phenomena or relating events, and so forth. The secondary school curriculum also requires large amounts of content-specific vocabulary, extensive background knowledge, and advanced reading and writing skills (Cho & Reich, 2008). Finally, secondary schools must deal with the realities of frustrated EL students who choose to leave school early. Indeed, accounts of schools and districts that are doing exceptionally well with adolescent ELs are rare.

As growing numbers of schools fail to satisfy accountability requirements for boosting the achievement of older, language-minority students, increasing pressure is placed on school districts to play a more active role in improving the teaching and learning of these students. Although studied less often by researchers (compared to schools and teachers), districts have shown some success in improving achievement and increasing equity for their students. Much of the research on district capacity in this regard has not, however, focused specifically on district support for ELs, but has instead tracked achievement rates of all learners or mostly low-income students. This study is designed to build upon the existing knowledge about district capacity for instructional reform by examining and analyzing the efforts of a single district, charged with educating a large number of adolescent ELs, to produce more equitable learning opportunities and outcomes for these students.

Background

English Learner Demographics

English learners currently comprise roughly 10% of the total public school student population in the United States and number over 5 million. The rapid growth of this population is evidenced by an increase of nearly 60% between 1995 and 2005
(National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2009). Although EL students have traditionally been concentrated in six states,¹ in the past decade their numbers have grown rapidly in other states with historically low EL populations (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center [EPE Center], 2009). The common condition of adolescent EL students is that they face the dual challenge of learning both English and content-heavy academic subjects. Beyond this feature, however, they differ in the native languages they speak, the amount of previous formal schooling they have received, the levels of literacy they possess in their native languages, and their socioeconomic backgrounds. Each of these variables plays a role in the academic achievement of ELs (August & Shanahan, 2006). According to one researcher, “There is no more diverse learning cohort than that grouped under the term adolescent English language learner” (Rance-Roney, 2005, p. 33). The differences among subpopulations of ELs manifest themselves in variations in the learning strategies they use, the transferability of their primary language skills, and their motivation to learn, among others (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). The heterogeneity and complexity of the adolescent EL population preclude the possibility of any one simple path to academic excellence for all of these students.

Although this student group defies easy categorization, a number of generalizations may inform efforts to support many of these students. The vast majority of EL students are Hispanic or Latino and speak Spanish as a primary language. Additionally, most ELs are educated in high-poverty, urban schools populated largely by children of color (Fry, 2008). In fact, two-thirds of the nation’s ELs come from families

¹These states include California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, and Arizona.
with incomes recorded at less than 200% of the poverty level. These students are also half as likely to have college-educated parents as their non-EL peers (EPE Center, 2009). Socioeconomic factors such as these increase the likelihood that ELs will experience poor academic outcomes in U.S. schools (Gándara & Rumberger, 2006). Other contextual factors that influence the social and academic development of many ELs include teacher expectations, familial stress, and a disconnect between home and school environments stemming largely from cultural and language differences (August & Hakuta, 1997).

English Learner Performance

Efforts to measure the performance of ELs compared to non-EL students are limited by the fact that most researchers rely primarily on standardized assessments to measure student achievement (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006). The use of such assessments, which are administered in English, renders it virtually impossible to determine whether EL outcomes are reflective of students’ content knowledge or their English-language abilities (Abedi & Dietel, 2004). The 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandates requiring states to disaggregate assessment data according to student subgroups, including ELs, have only fueled the focus on test scores as indicators of student performance. The underperformance of large portions of the EL population, as measured by such tests, compared to all students has been well documented (EPE Research Center, 2009). On the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 9.6% of ELs in Grades 4 and 8 combined performed at levels of proficient or above in mathematics compared to 34.8% of native English speakers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Performance in reading was worse, with 5.6% of ELs in these grades attaining levels of proficiency or above compared to 30.4% of native
speakers. During the 2005-2006 school year, the performance gap between ELs and all students on state assessments across the nation was almost 24 percentage points in mathematics and 33 percentage points in reading. Significant gaps exist as well between the pass rates of ELs on states’ high school exit exams and the overall pass rate (EPE Research Center, 2009). Nationwide, only 64% of ELs graduated high school in 2005-2006 compared to 80% of all students (Center on Education Policy, 2006). In addition to their poor academic progress, ELs continue to struggle with English language proficiency. A quarter of the country’s ELs failed to make progress toward English proficiency during the 2005-2006 school year (EPE Research Center, 2009). Even according to indicators of student achievement other than test scores, including advanced course-taking, and grades, ELs do not perform at levels comparable to all students (EPE Research Center, 2009; Finkelstein, Huang, & Fong, 2009; Koelsch, 2006).

Within the adolescent EL population, two subpopulations are at the greatest risk for educational failure: immigrants who arrive in U.S. schools at the secondary level with substantial gaps in their formal schooling (often referred to as newcomers\(^2\)) and long-term ELs, children who, despite their many years in U.S. schools, have not developed academic literacy (Olsen, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Long-term ELs comprise nearly 60% of all adolescent ELs and include large numbers of immigrants from Mexico (Batalova, Fix, & Murray, 2005).\(^3\) These students share several characteristics, including

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\(^2\)Not all newcomers have substantial gaps in their education. For example, some arrive literate in their primary language from developed countries. In many districts, the term newcomer is used broadly to describe all English-learner students who have been in the United States less than 12 months.

\(^3\)This number refers to EL students in U.S. schools for more than 6 years who have not been reclassified as fluent English proficient. Researchers point out, however, that many districts do not have precise ways of defining their long-term ELs (Olsen, 2010).
high social fluency, weak academic language, and poor reading and writing skills. Following years of lackluster performance, many have disengaged from the learning environment (Olsen, 2010). Several studies have shown an inverse relationship between the length of time an immigrant family has resided in the United States and their children’s academic achievement in school (Genesee et al., 2006).

Researchers have observed that, although ELs with the strongest English skills are able to perform at levels close to those of their English-speaking peers in the early grades, the gap separating the two groups widens considerably by secondary school (Viadero, 2009). Studies of Mexican-American immigrants in California have shown that, although many are surpassing their parents’ educational accomplishments, even as third-generation immigrants, they still lag far behind their English-only peers (Reed, Hill, Jensen, & Johnson, 2005). Less than 85% of third-and-later-generation Mexican American adults, aged 25 to 34, have finished high school, and only 11% have completed a bachelor’s degree. This contrasts with 95% of third-and-later-generation whites who have earned high school diplomas and more than a third who possess bachelors’ degrees. In combination, these lackluster performance measures do not bode well for the future of ELs within the school system or within society at large.

A Focus on English Learners in California

Student Demographics and Performance

The imperative to educate adolescent ELs well is most pronounced in California, a state charged with educating one in three ELs in the country. One-quarter of all California public schools students are designated as ELs (California Department of Education [CDE], 2009b). Although the percentage of ELs as a proportion of the total
student population decreases steadily between elementary school and the end of high school, the fact that many children of immigrants leave high school early may indicate that actual percentages of high-school-aged ELs are higher (Hill, 2004). In 2008-2009, adolescent ELs in California comprised 18% of the total population of students in Grades 6 through 12. They accounted for one in three, or 38%, of all ELs in California schools (CDE, 2009b). Nevertheless, the fact remains that, despite the substantial size of this population and a growing understanding of their special educational needs, the state has consistently failed to provide these students with access to the kinds of teachers, curricula, instruction, assessments, and overall learning environments conducive to their academic success (Jepson & de Alth, 2005; Rumberger & Gándara, 2004). As in the nation as a whole, the performance of ELs on standardized tests in California has lagged behind that of all students in the state. In 2008-2009, 29% of ELs scored at the levels of proficient or above in English-language arts, compared to 48% of all students. The gap was less severe in mathematics, with 39% of ELs scoring proficient or above, compared to 51% of all students (Ed-Data, 2009). In 2008, only 40% of EL tenth-graders passed the English-language arts portion of the state’s high school exit exam, compared to 79% of all students (CDE, 2009a). Finally, graduation rates of ELs lagged behind that of all students by 15 percentage points in 2005-2006 (EPE Research Center, 2009).

The Policy Environment

The education of ELs in California has been shaped by a number of key legal and policy decisions at both the federal and state levels. These date back to the 1960s and include Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination on the grounds of race, color, or national origin and has been interpreted since to prohibit
denial of equal access to education because of a minority student’s limited English proficiency. The federal Bilingual Education Act (Title VII) of 1968 subsequently recognized the special educational needs of ELs and designated categorical funding to support their learning. This Act was reauthorized in 1994 as part of the Improving America’s Schools Act, and Title VII was modified to give priority to students wanting to develop bilingual proficiency. Meanwhile, the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974 specifically defined as a denial of equal educational opportunity “the failure by an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by students in an instructional program.” In that same year, the Supreme Court in *Lau v. Nichols* placed legal responsibility on schools to provide effective programs for EL students, requiring districts to take affirmative steps to overcome educational barriers faced by non-English speaking students. In 1981, the Fifth Circuit Court in *Castañeda v. Pickard* required that “appropriate action to overcome language barriers” be taken through well implemented programs and established a three-part test for evaluating district programs for EL students. English learner programs must be based on sound educational theories; be implemented effectively with sufficient qualified staff and resources; and include a system to evaluate and refine the program. Most recently, the 2001 reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, 1965), referred to as NCLB, builds on previous reauthorizations of

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4 It is worthy of note that the term “bilingual education” is often used loosely to refer to a variety of programs including mainstream classroom instruction with extra pull-out support for ELs; structured immersion (instruction in English in a self-contained classroom of ELs); and initial literacy and subject matter instruction in the primary language with English language instruction. According to the National Association for Bilingual Education (2009), bilingual education refers to approaches in the classroom that use the native languages of English language learners for instruction and encompasses numerous programs, including transitional, developmental, or two-way bilingual education.
ESEA, the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994, which called upon states to adopt academic content and performance standards and assessments. Specifically, it increases states’ accountability for student performance by requiring them to demonstrate that all students, including specific subgroups of students, make measurable academic progress toward the ultimate goal of ensuring that all students be proficient on state assessments by 2014. With respect to the education of ELs, Title I of NCLB requires that ELs, through fair and reliable assessments in core academic subjects, demonstrate the same adequate yearly progress in meeting statewide academic standards as other student subgroups. Title III, which designates categorical funding to meet the needs of ELs, placed new requirements on districts and schools for moving students toward English language proficiency.

Other significant legislation affecting the education of ELs in California specifically include policies that restrict the use of bilingual education. Following two decades of policies and practices that favored bilingual education, the period spanning from the late 1980s to the present has been characterized by policies that limit primary language instruction. Changing sentiments within the state population were reflected in the overwhelming passage in 1986 of Proposition 63, in which California voters declared English as the state’s official language. It was in the wake of this decision that the Chacón-Moscone Bilingual-Bicultural Education Act of 1976, which had established English language learners’ right to bilingual education, was allowed to sunset in 1987. Nevertheless, despite the law’s sunset, many of its provisions, including the requirement that districts use a student’s primary language in instruction when necessary, remained in effect. The most significant blow for bilingual education came in 1999 with the passage
of Proposition 227, a mandate that “all children in California public schools shall be taught in English as rapidly and effectively as possible” (Proposition 227, 1997, n.p.). As a result, ELs are instructed “overwhelmingly in English” through temporary sheltered/structured English immersion normally not to exceed 1 year, followed by mainstream English-only classrooms (Parrish et al., 2006, p. vii).

Both NCLB and Proposition 227 have fueled considerable debate and discussion within the research and policy communities regarding their effects on the education of ELs (Abedi & Dietel, 2004; Montgomery, Roberts, & Growe, 2003; Parrish et al., 2006; Rossell, 2003). Both policies have placed new demands on California districts in supporting schools to serve these students and raised concerns about fair and equitable treatment of ELs. Overall, given the substantial number of ELs in the state and the changing policy environment over the past decade, the educational landscape in California provides fertile ground for critical inquiry into how urban districts are addressing the educational needs of ELs. There can be little question that what works and what does not work in California have the potential to guide the nation in supporting these students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to build a conceptual understanding of a currently under-researched topic of growing importance to both California and the nation: the role of the school district in improving the achievement of adolescent ELs. The research is largely exploratory, with an explicit purpose being to understand more about a severely understudied phenomenon. The researcher, however, also seeks to use this study to
explain patterns related to the district role in supporting ELs, as well as to identify plausible relationships among variables that shape district success.

Several questions guide this study that cut across three high-profile issues significant to the future of American public education. These issues include: (a) the district as a unit of analysis showing promise for generating reform that increases achievement and advances equity; (b) the public school system’s struggle to educate well the nation’s growing English learner population, and (c) the pressing need to create secondary schools that provide all students with a high-quality academic education and stem disproportionately high dropout rates (EdSource, 2008; Genesee et al, 2006; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Each of these issues has garnered the attention and resources of the education and philanthropic communities. Understanding those instances in which they intersect to produce success for students is of paramount importance, not only to the future of public education, but also to the future of society as a whole. The research questions, derived from an in-depth review of the relevant literature on the district’s role in educational reform and that on the education of ELs, include: What contextual factors influence district efforts to promote and support EL-focused reforms in secondary schools? What roles, systems, strategies, and practices does the district employ in creating more equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for ELs? In its efforts to address the needs of adolescent ELs, how does the district negotiate the change process? What lessons can districts learn about their roles in supporting the achievement of adolescent ELs?

5The Carnegie Corporation (focused on English learners), the Broad Foundation (focused on districts), and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (focused on high schools) are three prominent examples.
Overview of the Methodology

Given the broad, exploratory nature of the questions at issue, I will employ a qualitative research design, which will permit me to delve deeply into complexities and processes and focus on events occurring in natural settings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The use of a case-study approach, with a single typical school district as the primary unit of analysis, will enable me to construct a deeper understanding of how, in the pursuit of academic achievement for adolescent English learners, districts assume multiple, interrelated roles with respect to schools. It is also anticipated that this approach will be equally informative in shedding light on the strategies, systems, and structures required to make constructive change for ELs. Particular attention will be given to illuminating how the district negotiates change that transforms the perspectives and thinking of multiple stakeholders regarding these students.

Researchers have employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to study the role of districts in educational reform. The fact, however, that most data currently collected on ELs are not disaggregated by grade level complicates efforts to report specifically on the performance of adolescent ELs. Additionally, aside from graduation rates, the performance data reported on these students are generally limited to standardized assessments administered in English. Yet, scholars have repeatedly argued that such assessments are not reliable tools for determining the status and progress of these students (Abedi, 2004; Abedi & Dietel, 2004). They have also criticized these tests as poor guides for tailoring instruction to student needs and for making determinations about placement in courses. At the secondary level, other indicators may prove more meaningful in measuring the progress of ELs. These might include ELs’ enrollment in
advanced courses, their completion of college eligibility requirements, and their participation in school clubs or other extracurricular activities. Other indicators of genuine equal opportunity for ELs might include the extent to which they are meaningfully engaged with their English-only peers in the classroom and the preparation and expectations of their principals and teachers. Investigating the district role in influencing these metrics requires looking more deeply at their policies and practices, talking directly with both district- and school-level actors, and observing classrooms. These considerations reinforce the value of pursuing a qualitative, case-study approach.

Definition of Terms

*English Language Learners*

Although, above, I have described ELs as students who must learn both English and academic content simultaneously, states and districts have more precise methods for determining which students receive the EL designation. No Child Left Behind affords states considerable latitude in defining this subgroup, which has resulted in inconsistencies across districts and schools regarding the labeling of these students. Much of the nationally focused research on ELs, therefore, has relied on varied definitions in making comparisons (Fry, 2008). For the purposes of this research, however, I will utilize California’s definition of ELs as any student whose home or primary language is not English and whose school district has not yet reclassified him/her as “fluent English proficient” based on state test scores and other criteria (EdSource, 2008, p. 1).
Researchers’ definitions of districts vary considerably, with some including school boards and principals within their conceptualizations of districts and others referring solely to the activities of the superintendent. In reporting the findings of others’ empirical research, I do not provide each researcher’s definition of districts. Those who are interested in knowing the more precise definitions are encouraged to consult the original research. For the purposes of my own empirical work, I will refer to the district as the superintendent and his or her central office staff. I treat both school boards and principals as actors with whom the “district” must interact in order to accomplish its goals for the education of ELs.

Systemic Equity

Throughout this study, I refer repeatedly to the district’s role in advancing equity for ELs. For some, equity might imply simply equitable outcomes as defined by the elimination of performance gaps as measured by standardized test scores between ELs and their English-only peers. I prefer a broader definition of equity that encompasses equality of opportunity that permeates a school system. Indeed, the mantra that “all students can learn” requires that students learning English not only be held to the same expectations as their English-only peers but also that they be given the academic tools to achieve at levels comparable to these peers (Gándara & Rumberger, 2006). In accounting for this reality, I borrow a well-articulated definition of systemic equity:

Systemic equity is defined as the transformed ways in which systems and individuals habitually operate to ensure that every learner—in whatever learning environment that learner is found—has the greatest opportunity to learn enhanced by the resources and supports necessary to achieve competence, excellence,
independence, responsibility, and self-sufficiency for school and life (Scott, 2001, n.p.).

In determining whether or not the district under study is genuinely advancing equity for ELs, I will focus on the extent to which equal opportunities exist for these students at several levels. I fully anticipate, however, that my definition of equity may not coincide precisely with that of key actors at either the district or school levels. To the extent possible, I will endeavor to discern and report others’ conceptualizations of equity as they relate to the research questions I am exploring.

Significance of the Research

Projections indicate that ELs will constitute the major source of growth in our nation’s public school population over the next decade. Estimates of the number of school-age children of immigrants, many of whom will be designated as ELs, reach 17.9 million by 2020 (Fry, 2008). The responsibility for assimilating and educating immigrant children has long fallen to public schools. These schools are not only challenged to serve rapidly increasing numbers of immigrant students, but they must also prepare them with the skills to earn a living wage in a global, information-based economy. Indeed, the explosive growth of the EL student populations in some states during the immigration boom of the 1990s strained the capacity of school districts to meet the needs of these students (Maxwell, 2009). And, despite growing numbers of ELs in our nation’s secondary schools, education research has focused primarily on elementary schools, rendering knowledge about the education of older ELs alarmingly thin.

The persistent achievement deficit and underperformance of adolescent ELs is a constant reminder of the failure of our public schools to educate these children well.
Researchers point to the need for closer examination of those school district policies that have facilitated the movement of ELs toward academic literacy and content mastery (International Reading Association–National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2007). Without essential English literacy and mathematics skills, EL students cannot engage fully in the classroom or eventually in the workplace. They face limited educational and occupational options and often languish in low-paying jobs. The consequences of such large-scale underachievement extend well beyond the EL population itself and ultimately erode the competitiveness, productivity, and overall quality of life of all Californians and Americans as a whole. Indeed, as the numbers of ELs grow at rates several times those of the general school population, the need for district leaders to develop a deeper understanding of effective settings and strategies for educating them assumes greater urgency.

Most research has concentrated on school-level actors as key agents of change, overlooking the role of districts. Given the magnitude of the challenge, however, even the most skilled principals are likely to struggle to increase EL achievement without some district support. The fact that most high-school ELs are educated in large, comprehensive schools renders research on a district composed of several such high schools particularly meaningful. Although there is clearly value in exposing the success of the small high school or charter school in supporting these students, reaching the vast majority of ELs currently necessitates knowing how to navigate the institutional complexities of the large comprehensive high school. Understanding the district’s role in improving the achievement of ELs in these schools is essential for tapping leadership capacity at all levels of the system. Indeed, no entity other than the school district may be better
positioned to address issues of educational equity or have more potential to transform pockets of school success into ubiquitous gains for all adolescent ELs.

The proposed research aims to accomplish several things, including informing district policy and practice and filling important gaps in the literature. It will accomplish this by enhancing our understanding of those district practices yielding the greatest returns at the school level for a severely understudied and underserved group of students. It will also aim to focus greater attention on existing district will and capacity to drive and support reform that advances equity and improves achievement for adolescent ELs. The research will illuminate what a single district is doing that is working for these students and, therefore worthy, of further investigation, as well as expose a number of areas in which district will and capacity to address these challenges may be severely lacking and in need of investment.

A secondary intent is to lay the groundwork for future research into how districts facilitate the achievement of specific subgroups. Unfortunately, even the most well-intentioned educators committed to improving EL outcomes at the district and school levels suffer from limited knowledge of the research base on effective practices for EL students (Olsen, Lindholm-Leary, Lavadenz, Armas, & Dell’Olio, 2010). The research aims to help establish a platform for study regarding how the identified district roles can be aligned and targeted toward addressing the learning challenges of these students. Moreover, it will underscore the overarching need for researchers to focus more closely on districts as units of analysis in their study of education reform.
Limitations of the Study

This study’s focus on the activities of a single California district limits the extent to which its findings can be generalized to the broader population of districts in California or the nation. It should, in this regard, be viewed as a starting point for understanding some of the issues relevant to those who find themselves in a similar situation. Additionally, despite efforts to ensure trustworthiness, the study’s reliance on the capacities of a single human researcher as its primary method for data collection and analysis are naturally limiting. Finally, the study’s findings are confined to the experiences and reflections of those persons interviewed at the district- and school-levels and, therefore, do not reflect the entirety of the actors involved in the phenomenon under study. Additional studies incorporating the perspectives of a greater number and broader selection of participants—especially those of students—would expand its utility in this regard.
CHAPTER 2—REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In exploring the role of districts in improving educational opportunities and outcomes for adolescent ELs, I draw primarily from two bodies of literature: research on the district’s role in supporting school improvements and reforms that benefit struggling learners and research on the education of ELs. A subset of the literature focusing on ELs also addresses the specific challenges facing secondary schools in serving adolescent EL students well. I also consulted two other collections of literature: research on organizational change, specifically systemic district-level change aimed at addressing issues of equity, and research on educational leadership for social justice.

The research on districts seeks to define the various roles assumed by districts in educational reform and presents evidence that supports districts as agents of change. It focuses specifically on how districts facilitate school-level changes that yield high achievement and gap closure. Most importantly, it establishes a rationale for looking to districts, despite the many challenges and limitations they face, as the primary initiators and implementers of equity-focused reform.

The research literature on the education of ELs identifies school- and classroom-based educational strategies and practices that effectively serve learners with diverse educational backgrounds, demographics, and native languages. Although researchers generally concur that no single approach is suitable for educating all ELs given their diversity, there exists a growing body of evidence of promising practices and strategies for supporting these students generally. Unfortunately, research focusing solely on ELs at the secondary level is still alarmingly thin, with the majority of studies devoted to
elementary-aged ELs. Nevertheless, there are many opportunities for districts to serve
these students more effectively. To date, very little research specifically connects the
district role in educational change to the academic achievement of ELs. That is precisely
the intent of this endeavor.

The research on organizational change and specifically change focused on
advancing equity provides a window for understanding the process of how districts
transform systems, structures, and entire cultures in advancing their equity agendas. This
research explores issues of district-school autonomy, as well as the challenges districts
face in pursuing “second order” change that requires substantial altering of norms, values,
and beliefs (Marzano & Waters, 2009). The perspective afforded by the research on
organizational change is particularly relevant to this study given my decision to focus
my fieldwork on a district that is engaged in the trials of reform initiation and early
implementation rather than to conduct a retrospective analysis of outcomes resulting from
a past reform initiative.

Finally, the research on leadership for social justice is of particular relevance to
the education of English learners who are often marginalized both within their schools
and the broader educational system. Marginalized students will never receive the
education they require until leaders place equity and justice in the forefront and undertake
deliberate efforts to transform schools on their behalf (Theoharris, 2007). This body of
research defines the imperative facing district and school leaders to question the
institutionalized uses and abuses of power within districts and schools. It urges them
to engage in deliberate and proactive practices focused on deconstructing old and
reconstructing new realities in which all students are treated equitably (Dantly & Tillman,
Finally, as districts seek to construct their visions of instructional quality in the classroom, it sheds light on the type of instructional practice in the classroom that values and builds upon the perspectives of traditionally marginalized students (Freire, 1970, 1998).

In toto, the following literature review lays the groundwork for understanding the complex work of districts in systematically facilitating the achievement of adolescent English learners. Each of the research areas explored offers a critical lens for understanding the phenomenon more profoundly. The themes emerging from the literature have informed the development of guiding research questions and a provisional theoretical framework that merges the current knowledge about district leadership, the education of ELs, and social-justice oriented systemic change. This framework has guided both data collection and the interpretation of findings related to district-initiated, EL-focused reform efforts.

The Research on Districts

Overview

Prior to the advent of standards-based reform in the late 1980s, education researchers had largely overlooked districts as a unit of analysis, focusing primarily on schools, teachers, and policymakers. In their narrative synthesis of research on districts dating back to the mid-1980s, Rorrer, Skrla, and Scheurich (2008) refer to districts as the focus of “intermittent attention” by the research community (p. 307). They further describe the research on districts as “sporadic,” “varied in focus,” and heterogeneous in methodological approach (p. 310).
Those researchers who did focus on districts have often held vastly divergent perspectives on districts’ abilities to contribute positively to school improvement. Much of the effective schools research dating back to the 1970s either ignored districts or blamed them for the existence of ineffective schools (Cuban, 1984; Edmonds, 1979). Other researchers criticized districts as inconsequential, overly bureaucratic, or too political to play constructive roles in teaching and learning (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Finn, 1991). Several scholars documented the limited attention district leaders had historically placed on the core mission of teaching and learning as reflected in their relations with schools and use of staff time (Crowson & Morris, 1985; Floden et al., 1988; Rowan, 1982). By the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, a number of researchers had begun to expose districts as increasingly important players in educational reform (Elmore, 1993; Murphy & Hallinger, 1986, 1988).

Much of the contemporary research on the role of districts in educational change has coincided with the advent of standards-based reform and the concomitant introduction of state and district accountability systems. Researchers have focused primarily on districts that have experienced some success in increasing achievement and narrowing gaps across student groups (Cawelti, 2001; Cawelti & Protheroe, 2001; Dwyer, 2005; Marsh et al., 2005; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Petrides & Nodine, 2005; Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000; Springboard Schools, 2006; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Using a case-study approach, many of these researchers have examined the relationship between district policies/practices and student achievement, as measured by performance on standardized tests.
In their review of literature on the role of districts in improving instruction and student achievement, Mac Iver and Farley (2003) classified contemporary research on districts according to three categories: district outlier studies, which focus on high-performing districts; district case studies, which document the experience of a single district engaged in system-wide reform; and comparative district studies, which contrast practices and outcomes in two or more districts. This continues to be a useful taxonomy for comprehending the growing body of qualitative research on districts. Although quantitative studies may fall into any of these categories, I address them separately in a subsequent section.

**Outlier Studies: Identifying Common Factors Across Successful Districts**

Building upon several generations of “effective schools” research conducted from the late 1960s through the 1990s (Edmonds, 1979; Lezotte, Edmonds, & Ratner, 1974), Murphy and Hallinger’s (1988) investigation of 12 “instructionally effective” districts in California was one of the early outlier case studies that aimed to identify the factors that characterize successful districts. Based on interviews with the 12 superintendents and an examination of district documents, researchers observed common factors across successful districts, including: attention to curriculum and instruction; strong superintendents; focus on processes and outcomes; and high levels of coordination among the district, schools, and classrooms.

Of particular interest to a growing number of researchers by the late 1990s were districts that had succeeded in pushing historically marginalized, low-income, children of color to excel at high levels. In this regard, several outlier studies, also focused on
districts within a single state, are notable (Ragland, Asera, & Johnson, 1999; Skrla et al., 2000). The findings generated by these studies generally reinforced those of Murphy and Hallinger (1988). District leaders created a shared sense of urgency for change, focused all stakeholders on the improvement of academic goals, and provided the high-quality support required to meet high expectations.

A number of outlier studies also focused on high-performing districts across several states. Cawelti and Protheroe (2001) studied six urban districts in Texas, Idaho, West Virginia, and California, all of which served large numbers of low-income children and demonstrated significant improvement in student achievement over a 5-year period. Using trend data and information gathered through interviews and on-site visits, the authors summarized six characteristics of districts’ effectiveness: reliance on assessment data to guide instruction and improvement; decentralized structure that increased accountability at the school level; shared beliefs about learning and high expectations; targeted training for teachers; alignment of standards, curricula, instruction, and assessments; and research-based planning.

Along similar lines, Togneri and Anderson (2003) analyzed instruction and achievement in five high-poverty districts across the country with demonstrated success in increasing student achievement across grades, subjects, and racial/ethnic groups over a 3-year period. Based on data collected through interviews with school and district staff, school visits, and focus groups, researchers identified seven strategies practiced across districts as being essential to improvement. These strategies included building the will and vision for reform, adopting new approaches to professional development, and redefining leadership roles. Finally, Petrides and Nodine (2003) used qualitative analysis
to examine 28 urban school districts identified as “leading the wave” in adopting performance-driven practices. Based on interviews with teachers and administrators, this study considered how districts implement performance-driven practices over time, as well as the barriers they encountered along the way. According to Petrides and Nodine, performance-driven systems engaged in four key practices: setting clear, rigorous, and measurable student achievement goals; collecting and assessing achievement-related information; analyzing ongoing performance and developing new action plans; and evaluating and modifying programs and processes continuously.

Several cross-state studies also honed in on specific areas of district expertise, such as reliance on the use of data, as critical to districts’ success in improving schools. Among these studies is Armstrong and Anthes’ (2001) examination of the practices of six districts from five different states known for their effective use of data. A more recent, related qualitative case study by Datnow, Park, and Wohlstetter (2007) identified the components of data-driven instructional decision-making in four school systems in different states.

*Single-District Case Studies: In-Depth Analyses of Successful Districts*

Several studies have relied on in-depth qualitative analyses of the central office role in instructional reform in such places as New York, Philadelphia, Woodward (Texas), San Diego, and Boston (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Foley, 2001; Hernandez, 2003; Hightower, 2001, 2002; Reville, 2007). These studies of districts engaged in long-term systemic reform offer evidence supporting the potential of districts to improve instructional practice. For example, studies conducted in New York City’s Community
District #2 focused on the district’s role in initiating and scaling up instructional reforms in both literacy and mathematics (Elmore & Burney, 1997). These studies also examined the district’s reliance on professional development to create and support professional learning communities in schools. Gains in student achievement were attributed to the district’s clear vision of instructional quality, its ability to mobilize resources to meet goals, and its sustained multi-year focus.

Comparison Studies: Contrasting the Performance of Several Districts

Comparison studies, although useful for illuminating the impact of district policies and practices on student achievement, are more limited in number (Mac Iver & Farley, 2003). One early study by Rosenholtz (1989) involved comparing “moving” districts with “stuck” districts and concluded that the former exhibited a strong focus on instruction, policy, and programmatic coherence; good communications; and strong supports for teachers. Spillane and Thompson’s (1997) qualitative analysis of five reforming and four nonreforming districts in Michigan; Massel’s (2000) study of the capacity-building practices of 22 districts in eight states; and Snipes, Dolittle, and Herlithy’s (2002) retrospective case studies of improvement in four high-performing urban school systems are a few more examples. Spillane and Thompson (1997) found that districts rich in human and social capital were most successful at implementing reform. Massel’s (2000) findings demonstrated that districts relied most frequently on four key capacity-building strategies: using data, building teacher capacity, aligning curriculum and instruction, and targeting low-performing schools. Snipes et al. (2002) used case studies of high-performing districts to inform the development of hypotheses
about the reasons for achievement gains. It also used studies of districts that had not experienced similar improvements as a partial test of these hypotheses. Less successful districts lacked clear consensus about priorities for reform, goals, timelines, or consequences for failure. Their central offices failed to provide strong instructional leadership that connected policies and practices to changes in teaching and learning. They also did not establish a cohesive strategy for reform throughout the district. More recently, Bottoms and Fry (2009) built on their work through the High Schools That Work (HSTW) school improvement network by comparing the perceptions of 22 principals in 17 districts regarding district support for school reform. This qualitative study involved interviews with 12 principals leading schools that had improved over a 2-year period and 10 principals in less successful schools. Findings revealed the importance of district efforts to build collaborative relationships with principals and to invest in building principals’ leadership capacity as critical to school success.

Quantitative Studies: Correlations Between District Leadership and Student Success

Some of the most recent quantitative evidence in support of the district role in school improvement is provided in Marzano and Waters’ (2009) meta-analysis of 27 studies spanning the period 1970-2005. This analysis, involving over 2,800 districts and the achievement scores of 3.4 million students, identified five district-level leadership responsibilities that had statistically significant relationships with student achievement. These responsibilities included: ensuring collaborative goal setting, establishing nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction, creating board alignment with district goals, monitoring achievement and instructional goals, and allocating resources to
support goals. As a whole, these studies, designed to measure the influence of district leaders on student achievement, support a statistically significant relationship of .24 between district leadership and student achievement (95% confidence interval: .19 to .30).\(^6\) This positive correlation means that the stronger the district leadership, the higher the average student achievement in that district. According to the meta-analysis, 24% of the variation in student achievement can be explained by variations in district leadership. The 95% confidence interval indicates that this relationship can be expected to hold true in all but 5% of cases.

Significantly, however, researchers note considerable variation in the strength of the relationship between student achievement and district leadership, from a high of .54 to a low of .13. Marzano and Waters (2009) offer two explanations for what they refer to as the differential influence of district leadership. Firstly, if a district does not focus on goals that are likely to affect student achievement, even a strong district may fail to boost this metric. Secondly, if leaders establish the right goals, but do not gauge accurately the order of change these goals exact from different stakeholders, they may plan inappropriately and invite failure. In sum, districts do matter, provided their leaders undertake the right work and understand fully what accomplishing this work implies for all stakeholders. This finding is particularly relevant to effective EL education, which, at the secondary level, may entail significant second-order change.

These findings also coincide with conclusions reached by Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) in their examination of research on districts. In considering the chain of variables linking leadership practices to student learning,

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\(^6\)The computed correlation represents the average of leadership effects across all 27 studies.
Leithwood et al. (2004) concluded that “leaders’ contributions to student learning, then, depend a great deal on their judicious choice of what parts of their organization to spend time and attention on” (p. 13). Specifically, these researchers observed that certain choices yield greater achievement dividends.

*The Role of Districts in Educational Reform*

In their narrative synthesis of research on districts dating back to 1984, Rorrer et al. (2008) consolidated research findings into four key roles that districts assume within educational reform efforts, including: providing instructional leadership; reorienting the organization; establishing policy coherence; and maintaining an equity focus. Building upon the thorough work of these scholars and other studies of districts engaged in reform, I have organized the research findings on district-level school improvements into five broad, albeit overlapping, district roles in reform. These include Mediating External Influences; Developing a Shared Vision of Instructional Quality; Aligning Structures, Processes, and Resources; Ensuring Reciprocal Accountability; and Monitoring Progress. Although there is considerable overlap between my categorization of district roles and those of other researchers, the primary distinction lies in our decision to group the similar activities in different ways. Based on my own analysis of the research and my intention to study a district in action, I have decided in some instances to break down a single broad role into several discrete ones. For example, while Rorrer et al. addressed the monitoring of progress and building of capacity as part of the district’s role in providing instructional leadership, I view these functions as sufficiently distinct in purpose to merit their analysis

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7 Some other researchers that have identified district roles include Bottoms and Fry (2009), Rorrer et al. (2008), and Snipes et al. (2002).
as separate roles. Perhaps the most salient difference between my taxonomy and that of Rorrer and colleagues is my decision, for the purposes of this research endeavor, to eliminate entirely the district role they refer to as focusing on equity. This decision is in no way intended to diminish the central role that districts can and should assume in pursuing equity. Rather, given that my research is ultimately driven by a quest to understand how districts can systematically improve achievement and advance equity for ELs, it is my intent that the focus on equity should be viewed not as a separate role but should instead be viewed as a responsibility to be pursued systematically through each of the other five roles. In the following section, I present the research evidence supporting each of the five district roles I have defined.

*Role #1: Mediating External Influences*

In the 1970s, the rise of systems theory influenced the study of organizational behavior by effectively forcing theorists to view organizations as open systems. As open systems, organizations interacted with their environments and had the potential to be profoundly impacted by external changes (Walonick, 1993). Public school districts, which are generally run by elected boards, funded by public resources, and the subject of significant public interest in student performance (Hess, 1999), are highly permeable organizations (R. Williams & Marcus, 1982). As such, they are open to a range of external influences that include policy mandates, funding sources, local politics, client preferences, external service providers, union pressures, and so forth.

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8 A number of theoretical perspectives, including contingency theory, resource dependency theory, evolutionary theory, and institutional theory, draw connections between the outside world and the internal practices and mechanisms of organizations (Styhre, 2002).
Skrla et al. (2000), in their study of four high-performing Texas school districts, attributed the success of the districts under study in part to such external factors as the state’s accountability policy context and local catalysts, which included both federal desegregation mandates and local activists. On the other hand, Togneri and Anderson (2003) cited the heavy reliance of the districts they studied on external, short-term funding as a serious impediment to continuous improvement. Hess’ (1999) study of urban school reform considered the array of political influences, many of which are external to the organization, that ultimately determine the nature of district-led reform. In Hess’ analysis, some of these forces, including intense public scrutiny, conspire to undermine sound reform efforts.

In considering external influences, researchers have focused particular attention on the role districts play in deciphering federal and state policies and translating them into local practice (Spillane, 2000). Situated between state authorities and the schools, districts not only interpret and buffer state policies and initiatives, they also generate their own policies (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003). Strong federal and state policies create opportunities for districts to design their own policies, ultimately increasing centrally-initiated instructional guidance (Spillane, 1996). Drawing upon the experience of two Michigan districts, Spillane (1996) noted, “district administrators took a pro-active policy-making stance, defining policy problems and developing their own instructional policies” (p. 65). Some districts have deliberately ignored or reinterpreted certain policies, effectively replacing them with their own (Spillane, 2000). Fuhrman and Elmore (1990) observed that “local leaders know how to use state and federal mandates as leverage to accomplish what they might wish to” (p. 88). Corcoran, Fuhrman, and
Belcher (2001) examined the roles played by central office members in supporting reform in three large, unnamed urban districts located in different states. A critical component of their analysis involved its consideration of the extent to which the larger policy context, characterized by decentralized decision-making, high-stakes accountability, and evidence-based practices, affected the ability of districts to lead reform. Researchers concluded that a “noisy reform environment” and changes in state policies, among other things, often hampered district efforts to implement and expand their reforms (Corcoran et al., 2001, p. 84). Finally, in a review of literature on districts and state policy, Marsh (2000) identified several factors that influence districts’ responses to policies at the state level, including district capacity, size, understanding of policies, leadership, organization and governance, political climate, and the nature of the policy.

More recently, the highly prescriptive federal policy embodied in NCLB, which holds districts directly accountable for the achievement of such demographic groups as ELs, has produced dramatic changes in the way districts and, ultimately, schools perform their work. Dwyer (2005) observed that NCLB has affected how districts prioritize problems, utilize resources, address high-priority issues, and cultivate a common purpose. Specifically, under NCLB, districts are focusing greater attention on low-performing schools and struggling students. Zavadsky (2006) credited NCLB with pushing urban districts to strengthen curricula, use data more effectively, and improve supports for struggling students and schools.

There is, however, considerable debate about the overall effect of both federal and state accountability policies on student equity, an issue that is directly related to the education of ELs (Skrla & Scheurich, 2004). While some have lauded the contributions
that disaggregated data and other efforts to hold districts and schools accountable for equitable performance for all groups have made, others have been more critical of accountability systems’ impact on such struggling students as ELs. Many scholars have been especially critical of these systems’ heavy reliance on assessments, which they consider to be inappropriate for second-language learners (Abedi & Dietel, 2004; Black & Valenzuela, 2004; Menken, 2008; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Others have studied the effects of NCLB on curriculum and instruction for ELs, offering evidence that English language development (ELD) instruction may be compromised as districts focus instruction on the reading and writing skills most frequently assessed on standardized tests (Callahan, 2006; Menken, 2006).

The policy context for California districts is also complicated by State Proposition 227. For many scholars, this policy runs contrary to research findings about best practices for teaching second-language learners and creates possible dilemmas for district leadership (Gándara & Rumberger, 2003). Although it is beyond the scope of my research to evaluate the merits of existing accountability systems and other state policies, understanding how districts navigate external influences to serve the strategic purpose of educating EL students effectively is of particular relevance.

Additionally, I consider the role of the district in negotiating such other external forces as school boards, unions, support organizations, and parents as they pursue reform focused on ELs.9 Districts are accountable to a variety of stakeholders whose views

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9 Although some scholars include school boards in their definition of districts (Rorrer et al., 2008), school boards have so frequently worked at cross purposes with district-led reform efforts (Educational Writers Association (n.d.); Hightower, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003) as to justify their treatment as external forces.
often conflict with one another and over whom districts rarely have direct control. Nevertheless, districts must manage these stakeholder relationships in ways that complement their strategy for reform (Childress, Elmore, & Grossman, 2006). Empirical research on successful districts shows that central offices and school boards have worked collaboratively in pursuit of a common vision and goals (Childress et al., 2006; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Portz, 2007; Skrła et al., 2000; Snipes et al., 2002). The results of McLaughlin and Talbert’s (2003) survey of district administrators in the Bay Area showed board support to be the only significant predictor of key indicators of district reform. In differentiating between effective and ineffective districts, Jacobson (1986) observed that leaders in the former category generated the will for reform among such key stakeholders as board members and the broader community: “The effective superintendent viewed his job as requiring him to educate his community and school board about the educational services they should want. He actively worked to raise community expectations as to what students could achieve” (p. 20).

Research on districts that have successfully engaged in systemic reform has also pointed to the role that collaborative relationships between districts and unions have played in facilitating change that improves schools. Green and Etheridge’s (2001) study of eight such districts reveals that the unions played significant roles in supporting district-led reform, including leading professional development efforts associated with these reforms. Other district-led reform efforts, such as that in San Diego under Alan Bersin, have suffered under union resistance (Hightower, 2002).

Other actors who exert external influence on districts include parents, the media, political parties, and interest groups (Rorrer et al., 2008). Despite the strong research
base linking parental involvement to student achievement, efforts to engage parents do not figure prominently in the research on effective, reforming districts. Springboard School’s 2006 study of three high-performing school districts in California is a notable exception in this regard. Researchers identified partnering with parents as one of five roles assumed by successful district leaders. Leaders viewed involving parents and the public generally as critical to their efforts to “create a constituency for focus” on their strategies and goals for change (Springboard Schools, p. 61). One case study district engaged in a proactive effort to develop such a constituency among parents by inviting African-American and Latino parents to informal meetings in students’ homes, where district leaders inquired about what was working and was not working in the district for their children. Other districts reached out to parents through parent centers, specialized classes, and student-focused, college preparatory programs like Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID). Leaders in these successful districts have learned that “internal priorities cannot hold unless they are embraced by external stakeholders” (Springboard Schools, p. 4).

A number of key external resource organizations have been vital to the work of effective, reforming districts. Technical assistance organizations, in particular, have played important roles in supporting districts in leading reform (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003; Reville, 2007; Supovitz, 2006). Private foundations have also greatly accelerated districts’ strategies for reform when funding has been channeled in accordance with district goals (Childress et al., 2006; Reville, 2007). For example, reforms under Thomas

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10 AVID is an elective program that helps students prepare for entrance to a 4-year university by helping them to improve their note-taking, organization, writing, leadership, and public speaking skills. Students also visit local universities.
Payzant in Boston were bolstered significantly by the infusion of resources, time, and talent provided by the business community, foundations, and the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE), a local education-focused nonprofit organization. The BPE was also instrumental in co-designing aspects of the reform strategy (Reville, 2007). Payzant welcomed the external pressure for change created by groups like BPE: “I was willing to have the push and prod from outside, which helped me get things done that I would not have been otherwise able to do” (personal interview, December 2008). In their research on districts, Childress et al. (2006) concluded that districts need a critical mass of allies within the community and that, without this support, they run the risk of being pulled off course by a variety of dysfunctional forces.

In sum, the research on the role of districts in educational reform is replete with instances in which external influences have served as either catalysts for, or impediments to, district efforts. High-performing districts have been skillful in mediating these influences in ways that serve their strategic ends. Districts intent upon reform focused on ELs will no doubt encounter both opportunities and challenges as they navigate the social, political, and economic contexts in which they operate daily. Their ability to navigate these environments will, in part, determine their potential for implementing meaningful change for ELs.

**Role #2: Developing a Shared Vision of Instructional Quality**

This role requires that district leaders cultivate a clear vision of the future that is capable of guiding the qualities and conditions of the institution. Supovitz (2006) explained:
A powerful vision . . . not only frames a picture of the future state of the organization, but also focuses that image on its core mission, thus allowing leaders to convey where they are heading and sharpening their focus on the primary purpose of the organization . . . . at the heart of all efforts to improve education across a school system there must be a vision of what powerful teaching and learning looks like inside the classrooms. (pp. 25-26)

Effective districts know where they are headed and have a strong and sustained focus on getting there (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003). Reforming districts are characterized by unity around a shared vision and common norms of reform practice across schools (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003). In effective districts, this vision is informed by research. Districts studied by Cawelti and Protheroe (2001) used the knowledge base on improved teaching to inform their efforts. In San Diego, Superintendent Alan Bersin relied heavily on the expertise of the Institute for Learning based at the University of Pittsburg (Hightower, 2002).

To varying degrees, reform-focused districts have invested in building commitment for reform goals through strategic planning processes that have included a range of stakeholders. In 10 Texas districts, leaders crafted visions that challenged teachers, parents, and students alike to believe all children could achieve at high levels. They then used this vision of a new future to create a sense of urgency for change (Ragland et al., 1999). In their study of five districts, Togneri and Anderson (2003) observed that districts initiated reform by developing student-focused visions that included specific goals for improving instruction and increasing achievement. These visions, developed with the input of key stakeholders, permeated all levels of the system and drove both programmatic and financial decision-making. Marzano and Waters’ (2009) meta-analysis revealed that the most effective superintendents engaged in
collaborative goal-setting. In Texas, leaders of high-performing districts first developed and then promoted “a set of shared-equity beliefs” regarding their commitment to the achievement of all children (Skrla et al., 2000, p. 6). Supovitz (2006) noted that the instructional vision in Duval County district schools was the product of an “evolutionary process of discovery and learning shared by the superintendent, his leadership team, and external assistance” (p. 30). Finally, Green and Etheridge (2001) in their study of 11 districts that had successfully engaged in systemic reform described the collaborative nature of the vision for change: “The new leaders were visionary and through the use of persuasive and inclusive management styles, they built a common vision toward which everyone worked and common values upon which everyone operated” (p. 824).

Effective districts exhibited a “clear transparent focus on student achievement as the bottom line” (Muller, 2004, p. 6). From this overarching focus emanated specific and measurable goals, which, in turn, served as the basis for decisions about curriculum and instruction (Green & Etheridge, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Petrides & Nodine, 2003). Leaders in successful districts established “non-negotiable goals” for classroom instruction and student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 4).

Researchers studying high-performing districts have found that these districts undertook system-wide approaches that align actions and policies across all schools (Dwyer, 2005; Muller, 2004; Petrides & Nodine, 2005; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). They had clear expectations about classroom practice (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003). They used standards, instructional frameworks, and professional development to guide schools (Reville, 2007; Snipes et al., 2002; Supovitz, 2006). Districts ensured coherent instruction in every school by urging consistent district-wide implementation and guiding
and supporting instructional improvements at the school-site level (Snipes et al., 2002). Supportive measures included the creation of curriculum guidance documents, as well as benchmark performance targets and assessments (Marsh et al., 2005; Skrla et al., 2000). In the highest-performing schools, central office staff regularly focused on instructional matters in their visits to schools, constantly conveying a message to school leaders about what is important (Bottoms & Fry, 2009). These districts also communicated to their school leaders a vision that encompasses all aspects of schooling from scheduling to school culture, instructional practices, student motivation, resource use, and outside partnerships.

Successful districts also consistently rejected undertakings that distracted from their visions and goals (Marzano & Waters, 2009; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003). In analyzing the accomplishments of the Boston Public Schools, a recipient of the Broad Foundation award in 2006, researchers credited district leaders with laying out a compelling vision and “keeping all eyes on the prize,” which ensured the widespread ownership of the district’s reforms (Reville, 2007, p. 22). In her dissertation study of a Texas district that successfully closed the achievement gap between ethnic student groups, Hernandez (2003) learned through interviews with both district and school staff that the district benefited from a sustained focus on student learning.

Drawing upon the work of a number of researchers, Rorrer et al. (2008) concluded that establishing the vision, focus, and goals required to support instruction is a critical aspect of leaders’ efforts to generate the necessary commitment to improved teaching and learning. These researchers refer specifically to studies by McLaughlin (1987), Daresh (1991), and Firestone (1989), all of which have linked the building of will for reform to
effective instructional leadership. In light of these research findings, there is little
question that districts intent on pursuing equity for ELs must begin with a clear vision
of what quality instruction for ELs looks like. Crafting a vision and goals, which are
informed both by the research and the input of key stakeholders, is a significant
undertaking. Ensuring the necessary will and sustained focus to implement that vision
over time is no less critical. Systemic reform that is focused on improving educational
outcomes and opportunities for ELs must be driven by a powerful vision of EL
achievement that is shared broadly by educators across all schools and all classrooms.

Role #3: Aligning Structures, Processes, and Resources

Having developed a clear vision and related goals, districts must focus next on
aligning organizational structures, processes, and resources to actualize those goals.
Elmore (2005) has defined alignment as the process of moving from an atomized state to
a more coherent organizational state. According to Bolman and Deal (2003), “clear, well-
understood roles and relationships and adequate coordination are the key to how well an
organization performs” (p. 44). Districts must therefore decide how to organize, assign,
and integrate the work associated with reform.

Examples of structural changes designed to create more tightly aligned systems
include new decision-making arrangements (Dwyer, 2005; Ragland et al., 1999).
Districts may decide to decentralize decision-making to the school level and thus spread
the accountability for a reform, or they may decide to exert more control over decision-
making in certain areas. In the districts studied by Green and Etheridge (2001) and
Cawelti and Protheroe (2001), management processes were redesigned such that
collaboration replaced top-down directives. “If major changes occurred in curriculum or
other aspects of the teaching and learning process, it was done based on learning standards and goals about which there was collective agreement” (Green & Etheridge, 2010, p. 826). Research by Bottoms and Fry (2009) reinforced these findings, with the principals of the most-improved schools they studied often describing situations in which the district exercised loose control over decisions about school improvement, and principals of the least-improved schools more often operating under tight district control. However, Petrides and Nodine (2005), in their analysis of 28 urban school systems making the transition from compliance-driven to performance-driven organizations, concluded that there is no one perfect management structure. Instead, they described a dynamic balance between centralized top-down management and decentralized site-based authority that initially vacillates between the two extremes before settling down somewhere in the middle. Elmore and Burney (1997), in their study of reform in New York City’s Community School District #2, observed that district leaders focused first on establishing clear expectations and other aspects of reform and later on decentralizing organizational structures and processes. The leaders in effective districts studied by Springboard Schools (2006) “evolved local responses to the top-down or bottom-up dilemma that involved centralizing some decisions and decentralizing others” (p. 61). Analogously, Massell (2000) observed similar variation in districts’ approaches to the challenge of aligning curriculum and instruction, noting that “more often than not curriculum guidance is a patchwork of loose and tight control (p. 5).” A more thorough discussion of the autonomy-control issue as it relates to all five district roles appears later in this paper.
Petrides and Nodine (2005) also found that, in their quest to become performance-driven, districts have begun to reframe individual roles across their organizations. Individuals’ roles were increasingly being defined more by their relationship to student outcomes than by the specific functional tasks performed; for example, finances or human resources. In other districts, structural reforms entailed downsizing and reorganizing entire central offices in order to serve schools more efficiently (Darling-Hammond et al., 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003). San Diego’s reform leaders began by restructuring the district’s human resource, facilities, and business departments. This included overhauling existing processes for the recruitment, hiring, placement, and evaluation of teachers. Additionally, the district altered processes so that principals’ requests were handled both promptly and personally. In places like San Diego and Chicago, reform leaders replaced area superintendents with instructional leaders, who were assigned to work directly with principals to improve teaching and learning. Structural changes in Chicago Public Schools also involved the creation of business service centers, which assumed many of the district- and school-level administrative tasks and allowed instructional officers and principals to focus on instruction (Childress et al., 2006).

Other processes that have often required realignment include systems for evaluating principals and teachers. Dwyer (2005) found that mixed messages and contradictory behaviors occurred in those districts where principals were evaluated by supervisors who were not responsible for school improvement. Similar confusion arose when second-language instructors who operated under district supervision were assigned to school sites where they received contradictory directions from principals.
High-performing districts have also taken steps to ensure that financial, personnel, and material resources are allocated in ways that support district goals (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Districts creatively manipulated budgets to focus attention and resources on such key areas as curriculum (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Rorrer et al., 2008). These districts made high-quality investments in professional development for both teachers and principals a priority (Marzano & Waters, 2009; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003). A study of district-led reform in the New Haven School District revealed that simply adding more resources was insufficient to improve low-performing schools (Dwyer, 2005). Instead, leaders needed to differentiate the types of support required through a tiered system that offered more targeted, intensive support to schools depending upon their needs.

Bryk and Schneider (2002), in their research on successful reform in Chicago, argued that social resources are also critical to school improvement efforts. They focused specifically on the role of relational trust—the supportive social relations among the adults responsible for and dependent upon one another to implement reform—as critical to actualizing desired outcomes for students. Gándara and Rumberger (2006) referred to these social resources more generally as “the institutional norms, incentives, and supports necessary for human resources to be realized or activated” (p. 28).

Rorrer et al. (2008) have concluded that the aligning of resources accomplishes several things: it reflects a district’s commitment to its reforms, facilitates the development of capacity to implement reform, and increases the chances that the reform will be both successful and sustainable. In addressing the needs of ELs, district leaders will need to consider the extent to which existing structures, processes, and resource
allocation patterns reinforce inequitable outcomes for these students. Gándara and Rumberger (2006) noted that closing the achievement gap between linguistic minority students and their English-only (EO) peers will likely require additional resources in the form of supplemental instructional time, specialized teacher training, bilingual support personnel, and translation services, as well as appropriate curricula and supplementary materials. It is highly likely that meeting the differential instructional needs of the EL students in a meaningful way will not only require substantial rethinking of roles and relationships but will also necessitate considerable changes in the way in which resources are currently allocated and targeted.

Role #4: Ensuring Reciprocal Accountability

Accountability systems that apply pressure through sanctions may succeed in focusing attention on poor performance, but they are limited in their ability to improve performance (Mintrop & Papazian, 2003). Reciprocal accountability refers to districts’ responsibilities for equipping people with the tools they need to actualize the district-wide vision and goals. The practice of reciprocal accountability is important because of its ability to change the dynamic of relationships between districts and schools such that they share responsibility for reaching mutual goals (Supovitz, 2006). Reciprocal accountability encompasses districts’ investments in training, recruiting of highly qualified professionals, and providing other supports and incentives designed to build a professional culture focused on teaching and learning. Through reciprocal accountability, districts “position themselves within, not above, the accountability system, shoulder to shoulder with schools, to achieve improvement” (Supovitz, p. 233). Through their
commitment to build capacity, district leaders have been able to build critical trust among teachers (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003).

District leaders are charged with setting the direction for professional development (Firestone, Magin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005; Spillane, 1996). What teachers learn is, to some extent, a function of their districts’ ability to construct appropriate learning environments (Spillane & Thompson, 1997). Districts represent not only a primary source of technical expertise but also the center of decision-making about how funds will be allocated for professional development (Firestone et al., 2005).

In her study of 22 districts across the country, Massell (2000) recorded building teacher skills as one of the four most common capacity-building strategies employed by districts. She also observed growing interest among district leaders in exploring less traditional formats for professional development, including school-based, job-embedded options. Three reforming California districts were known for their substantial investments in the use of cutting-edge practices to build teachers’ instructional capacity (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003).

Research on successful districts reinforces the importance of professional development that is collaborative in nature. Hernandez (2003), in her dissertation study, described conditions in one highly successful district as “conducive to reciprocal support” (p. 118). She highlighted the close collaborative efforts of the district administration and the teachers, the range of support the district provided teachers, and the mutual trust both parties felt toward each other, all of which contributed to the district’s success in closing the achievement gap. These feelings of reciprocal support also resulted in teachers’ willingness to work hours beyond that required by their contracts, among other things.
Supovitz (2006) observed that districts that are truly learning organizations created processes that engaged teachers in conducting their own inquiries into the instructional strategies they use. Leaders of learning districts facilitated these processes so that “teachers choose inquiries that have real meaning for them, yet still connect to the larger instructional vision” (Supovitz, p. 228).

Green and Etheridge’s (2001) findings on successful districts also indicated that, within the context of district priorities, teachers often identified the major focus of, and provided leadership for, professional development activities. Professional development in these districts was planned and coordinated collaboratively, was provided to all levels of the organization (from school site to the central office), and was designed to occur continuously throughout the implementation of an innovation. “As professional development was shown to be effective, so was the restructuring effort. Thus, professional development became a binding thread within each district” (Green & Etheridge, p. 829).

In order to build strong instructional leadership at school sites, reforming districts have often targeted principals in their capacity-building efforts (Bottoms & Fry, 2009; Childress et al., 2006; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Hightower, 2002; Reville, 2007; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Bottoms and Fry (2009), in their study of some of the most- and least-improved high schools in their High Schools That Work (HSTW) improvement network, conclude that, “the research is clear and overwhelming: If school districts want high-achieving high schools, they must empower principals to be leaders of change” (p. vii). In many cases, effective districts practiced distributed leadership that encompassed the superintendent, principals, teacher leaders, and other administrators at
the district and school levels (Shannon & Bylsma, 2004). In the districts studied by Togneri & Anderson (2003), “no single group would be expected to tackle instructional reform alone. Instead, leadership would be shared and members of each stakeholder group would take on roles they were best suited to lead” (p. 32).

Finally, researchers have stressed the importance of district efforts to monitor the implementation of programs designed to spread particular practices across schools, for example, changes in classroom instruction (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Supovitz, 2006). Desimoine, Porter, Birman, Garet, and Yoon (2002), in their study of district strategies associated with high-quality professional development, found a strong relationship between the quality of professional development and the district role in employing such continuous improvement strategies as the use of data, needs assessment, and evaluation of professional development investments. Overall, however, these researchers have observed that this district work in this area is still not as strong as it should be and requires additional investments in building district capacity.

Given the research, it is difficult to overstate the importance of the district’s role in making thoughtful investments in professional development. Well-designed professional development is not only a critical vehicle for building the capacity for reform, but it can also help fuel the necessary transformation of district culture. According to the research on EL education, appropriate professional development for both principals and teachers must figure prominently in reforms focused on these students. Districts that are serious about improving results for this population will need to be open to new conceptualizations of, and investments in, professional development.
**Role #5: Monitoring Progress**

No Child Left Behind has given birth to significant changes in education, including a relentless focus on measuring changes in student achievement. It effectively requires that educators be competent in analyzing, interpreting, and using data to make informed decisions. The research on districts shows that effective districts pay close attention to data, relying on them regularly at all levels to set priorities and to adjust their actions (Bottoms & Fry, 2009; Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003). Petrides and Nodine (2005) defined performance-driven practices as “those that encourage and build upon the monitoring of performance in order to change practice in ways that will improve outcomes” (p. xiii). Effective districts created an “ongoing feedback loop” to improve continually their effectiveness in raising achievement (Petrides & Nodine, p. vii). High-performing districts make decisions “based on data not instinct” (Togneri & Anderson, 2003, p. 6). Bottoms and Fry (2009) discovered that the most effective schools were often supported by districts that used data to re-align resources in order to address deficiencies in instruction, professional development, or other areas. Meanwhile, less effective schools more often reported that their districts relied on data primarily as evidence of their success or failure to meet performance targets.

Datnow et al. (2007), in their qualitative case study of four school systems, identified the components of data-driven instructional decision-making. The school systems they studied fostered cultures of data use and continuous improvement by investing in management information systems that collected a variety of data to inform instructional, curricular, resource allocation, and planning decisions. They made data available in a timely manner and in user-friendly formats. They built school capacity to
use data by investing in related professional development, modeling data use, and supporting teacher and cross-school collaboration around data analysis. Finally, they led efforts to help principals and teachers act effectively on data by creating explicit data analysis protocols and goal monitoring reports. Montgomery County Public Schools invested in software that enabled teachers to enter and access student data in the classroom using Palm Pilots (Childress et al., 2006). California districts embarking on system-wide reform made data available electronically to teachers along with software that tracked individual student progress (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003). Those districts with the more comprehensive data systems were able to use data not only to inform decision-making but also to build a base of support for the reform within the broader community.

In many districts, a primary use of data is to hold individuals accountable for student achievement (Supovitz, 2006). Summative assessments are the primary vehicles used by federal and state accountability systems to monitor student progress. No Child Left Behind has essentially narrowed the definition of student achievement to include solely performance on standardized tests (Darling-Hammond, 2004). These assessments are administered periodically to measure what students know at a particular point in time. And while these assessments may be useful for accountability purposes in that they establish similar expectations for all students and measure progress toward school improvement schools, researchers point to their limited value to districts for a number of reasons. These include their inability to measure progress over time or to inform instructional decisions about students (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Specifically, summative assessments do not provide information required to make instructional
adjustments at the classroom level during the learning process. Researchers have also pointed to a number of other limitations of summative assessments, including less classroom attention given to nontested subjects and areas within subjects, and diminished teacher morale (Koretz, Barron, Mitchell, & Stecher, as cited in Supovitz, 2006).

Meanwhile, research on formative assessment has demonstrated the value of these types of assessments in providing feedback within the system that can be used to improve performance in meeting instructional goals (P. Black & William, 1998). According to Dwyer (2005), “only formative evaluation and careful analysis will allow us to judge an improvement strategy’s impact on student learning” (p. 5). High-performing districts have, therefore, invested in the development and use of multiple assessments that track progress over time (Springboard Schools, 2006).

Researchers have pointed out that educational accountability policies and standards-driven testing, in particular, have exacerbated the challenges associated with educating ELs. Most criticisms have revolved around the fact that tests are not linguistically and/or culturally appropriate for ELs and do not, therefore, accurately measure the academic knowledge, skills, and abilities of these students (Abedi & Dietel, 2004). Researchers have cited a number of deleterious consequences of inappropriate tests. These include the impression that districts and schools are failing students when tests may be the true culprits; students’ being inappropriately tracked into remedial programs; and damage to students’ self-esteem, which may ultimately result in their dropping out of school (Fairbairn & Fox, 2009).

In addition to data focused on student performance, effective districts have an interest in obtaining data about how well their vision is being implemented and the
impact that vision is having. Evaluating program implementation and impact is integral
to district efforts to disseminate practices across the system (Supovitz, 2006). Strong data
in this area can help districts determine whether a lack of progress is the result of
ineffective reform ideas or weak implementation of the district’s theory of action. Data
on program implementation often include a broader array of information beyond student
performance such as observations, interviews, surveys, and so forth.

A final key use of data by districts involves collecting, analyzing, and
disseminating data in ways that enable others within the organization to learn and make
appropriate adjustments in their work (Supovitz, 2006). In this regard, sharing the
learning from various district efforts, studying those learnings with a critical eye, and
using them to ask deeper questions about the progress and future of reform facilitate
organizational learning. As districts seriously address the challenge of educating ELs
more effectively, the learning curve is likely to be steep and the importance of district
efforts to create opportunities for educators at all levels to reflect deeply upon data
cannot be overstated. District leaders will, no doubt, encounter a range of issues ranging
from what is the most appropriate way to assess EL performance to the depth of
implementation of changes in instructional practice. Districts determined to be effective
in educating ELs will not only need to be judicious in determining the nature of the data
they will use to monitor success but the ways in which they will use those data to perfect
their own theories of action and to engage educators throughout the system in reflecting
more profoundly upon their work on behalf of these students.
A Role Within Roles: Changing the Culture

One of the greatest challenges in transforming districts involves uprooting deeply held assumptions, beliefs, and practices (Skrla et al., 2000). Rorrer et al. (2008) referred to this as changing the district culture and incorporated it into the district role associated with reorienting the organization. The limitation in considering this as part of any single district role is that, in reality, change in district culture is accomplished over time through each of the five aforementioned district roles.

More specifically, district leaders have essentially transformed culture through the ways in which they have interpreted state policies. In Chicago, district leaders replaced a culture of compliance in which satisfying state and district regulations was a driving concern with a culture focused on working together to improve student performance (Childress et al., 2006). Districts also changed culture through their efforts to create buy-in for their vision for instructional improvement. In the four Texas districts they studied, Skrla et al. (2000) documented the efforts of district leaders to transform district culture by ingraining shared beliefs about educational equity at all levels of the district, from the school board to the teachers. These beliefs centered on expectations that all children can learn and succeed at equally high levels, that the primary responsibility for making this happen lies with adults in the districts, and finally, that the primary means for accomplishing this is through equitable and excellent classroom learning.

Districts have also altered culture through meaningful professional development that builds learning communities and incorporates opportunities for dialogue and reflection about practice. “In the most effective districts, there is agreement about standards of practice, practice is public, and there is opportunity for discussion and
reflection about practice” (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003, p. 26). Elmore (2002) has observed that it is change in teacher practice that produces changes in norms and values—not the other way around. Petrides and Nodine (2005) have described professional development as the “primary means that organizational leaders have to engage people in change” (p. xiv). A comparative analysis of New Jersey districts revealed that districts supported instructional reform by using professional development as a tool for influencing teacher thinking and practice (Firestone et al., 2005).

Districts have also created performance-based cultures through their reliance on data to identify priorities, align curriculum and instruction, assign and evaluate personnel, and identify students for special programs, among other things (Datnow et al., 2007; Massell, 2000; Petrides & Nodine, 2005). They have established cultures of data use and continuous improvement (Datnow et al., 2007).

There is considerable evidence in the research on districts that supports the critical link between the transformation of organizational culture and genuine change. In their studies of 15 urban districts, Childress et al. (2006) observed that the most effective districts cultivated “performance cultures” characterized by collaboration, high expectations, and accountability. By taking actions that included redefining roles and relationships and altering performance expectations, these districts were able to “upend an entrenched counterproductive culture” (Childress et al., p. 66). According to McLaughlin (1992), “The relationships between teachers and districts that are powerful influences on teachers and teaching have little to do with hierarchical structure and controls and everything to do with the norms, expectations, and values that shape the district professional community” (p. 35). Evans (1996) in his research on the human
dimension of school change has argued that change efforts must attend to people, culture, meaning, and motivation before structure, roles, and rules (Evans, as cited in Supovitz, 2006). According to Seel (2000), unless the paradigm at the heart of an organization’s culture changes, there will be no lasting change.

Systemic Change Focused on Increasing Equity

*The Equity Agenda and School Districts*

McLaughlin and Talbert (2003) have emphasized that the equity agenda for school reform “sits squarely on the district’s plate,” as no other organization is better situated to monitor outcomes and resources across schools (p. 5). Spurred by NCLB requirements that they disaggregate performance data by student groups, districts are increasingly placing the need for equity across schools and student groups at the center of school reform. Under NCLB, those districts and schools that fail to close the achievement gaps among student groups risk consequences. As a result, some districts are targeting their energies and resources toward their lowest-performing schools and students (Dwyer, 2005).

Rorrer et al. (2008) identified two facets of the district’s role in maintaining an equity focus: namely, owning past inequity and foregrounding equity. Districts that have succeeded in eroding or eliminating inequity have done so by publicly acknowledging and taking responsibility for past inequities (Skrla et al., 2000; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Additionally, districts committed to equity have regularly placed the issue at the center of the instructional and policy dialogue. They have drawn attention to equity concerns by publicizing data on outcomes, and well as through consistent support for policies and programs designed to ensure greater equity (Hernandez, 2003; Rorrer, 2001).
Research by Springboard Schools (2006) revealed that districts help struggling students the most when they “mind the gap” and direct attention toward groups who need the most help (p. 5). Their examination of districts that were successful in closing the achievement gap for ELs demonstrated that these districts took ownership of the challenge of ELs. The study demonstrated that districts accomplished this by providing special training for EL teachers, refining their intake systems to better meet the needs of these students, encouraging proficiency-based language grouping of students, and using assessment data to monitor their performance. High-performing districts viewed the education of ELs as a system-wide responsibility, not as a categorical program. A more thorough analysis of the limited literature on the district role in supporting ELs specifically occurs later in this chapter.

Although Rorrer et al. (2008) included a focus on equity as one of four separate roles performed by districts engaged in educational reform, they acknowledged the potential of this role to permeate and influence other roles. They maintained that, as institutional actors, districts are uniquely equipped to implement reforms that are tied to such value commitments as equity. As the equity value becomes embedded in the district culture, it can serve as a catalyst for “shifting norms, policies, and structures, and for helping organizational members determine how they ‘interpret their tasks, devise solutions, and make decisions’” (Boin, as cited in Rorrer et al., 2008, p. 334).

The Pursuit of Equity Through Social Justice Leadership

Another important perspective from which to consider the question of equity is that of social justice. Leadership for social justice in education finds its primary impetus in the existence of persistent differences in student outcomes along racial, economic,
ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or other demarcations of “otherness.” Proponents of a social justice agenda in education maintain that such differential outcomes have less to do with student ability than with the policies and practices of educational institutions that effectively favor certain groups over others (Bogotch, 2002; Foster, 1989; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). They further insist that such inequities in schooling are anathema to the principles of a democratic society (Furman & Shields, 2005).

Scholars’ conceptualizations of social justice have encompassed issues of equality, respect for human rights, the achievement gap, inclusion, and the valuing of differences (Marshall & Oliva, 2006). Most conceptualizations have also underscored the importance of moral values, justice, equity, care, and democracy. Dantly and Tillman (2006) defined social justice leadership in education as leadership that “interrogates the policies and procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuate social inequalities and marginalization due to race, class, gender, and other markers of otherness” (p. 19). Furman and Shields (2005) proffered “a robust and dynamic” understanding of social justice that is not defined by any single attribute but rather encompasses multiple aspects of equity, including injustices related to power and privilege, individual prejudices and collective inequities, and pedagogical practices, including content and method of instruction (p. 124). They argued that injustice manifests itself in both individual relationships and in those systems that advocate a one-size-fits-all approach to curriculum, programming, resource allocation, and/or accountability. In her earlier work, Shields (2004) suggested that educational leaders pursue social justice in education by developing shared understandings about the
education of diverse students that are rooted in such criteria as justice, caring, democracy, and optimism. Just and caring education ensures that all students “have the opportunity to graduate in similar numbers with similar high levels of achievement, and with opportunities that enable them to follow their dreams” (Shields, p. 40).

Over the years, scholars have developed a variety of frameworks for understanding the practice of social justice in educational leadership. A number of these frameworks incorporate the moral use of power and are guided by critical theory, which calls for the examination of the uses and abuses of power in social, economic, and political structures. Foster (1989), in particular, has argued that educational administration must be viewed as both a critical and a moral practice that focuses on the social conditions of institutions in society. According to Foster, administrators need to be less concerned with such technical aspects of their work as “running a tight ship” or “achieving organizational goals” and more focused on transforming educational institutions in order to meet the needs of the community in which education occurs (p. 6). Leaders must use moral language to undo social structures that work against socially agreed upon ends and facilitate public debate on moral issues. Foster described this vocabulary as one “of critique and of hope” (p. 17).

Bogotch (2002) employed John Dewey’s conceptions of theory and practice to develop his conceptual framework for understanding leadership for social justice in schools. Of particular import to Bogotch was the distinction Dewey drew between apprenticeship practice and laboratory practice. While the former is akin to mechanical process in which the learner reproduces tasks that have been performed and proven previously, the latter is a more intellectual exercise that offers opportunities for
understanding why and how things occur and allows for the possibility of improving or changing how things are done. Dewey feared that educators too often preached their support of ideals about social justice (e.g., all children could learn) but continued to practice as if they were schooled only in apprenticeship practice. Dewey’s hope was that educators who engaged in laboratory practice would critique and challenge programs and policies that do not work for all children. According to Bogotch, “Social justice breathes meaning and life into our educational practices. Without it, our work would be as mechanical as a lifelong apprenticeship without intellect or educational leadership” (p. 153). Bogotch took his analysis further by providing examples of leaders who have had to continually reconstruct their notions of social justice in response to the daily realities of school leadership—demographic changes, community voices, and so forth. These leaders must dare to deviate from the mechanical, past ways of doing things. They must refuse to accept educational outcomes that perpetuate long-standing inequities by continuing practice as usual.

Using the work of George Counts as a conceptual lens, Lugg and Sholo (2006) reached similar conclusions about the realities of social justice practice in schools. These researchers noted that, despite a deliberate effort by professors of educational leadership to embrace more expansive notions of social justice that urge practitioners to engage in more activist approaches to their work, the nature of school administration today perpetuates a more managerial mindset. For example, these authors observed that school administrators who fail to manage schools well are more likely to lose their jobs than are those who fail to lead well. They further argued that the high stakes accountability systems, fiscal pressures, and polarized environment under which today’s educators...
operate make it increasingly difficult for them to assume the roles that Counts advocated they should: political actors, capable of shaping their political environments through their teaching and other activities. This inhospitable reality of schools works against the pursuit of a genuine social justice agenda, leaving true social justice leaders with little choice but to engage in risk-taking in order to do the necessary work.

The body of empirical work in the field of social justice is instructive in providing frameworks for “how” social justice is enacted in schools. In his examination of the work of seven social-justice focused principals, Theoharris (2007) employed a definition of social justice that drew upon the work of others (Bogotch, 2002; Gewirtz, 1998; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002) and is rooted in the “daily realities of school leadership” (p. 223). Theoharris concluded that principals enact social justice in four primary ways: (a) by raising student achievement, (b) by improving school structures, (c) by recentering and enhancing staff capacity, and (d) by strengthening school culture and community.

The social justice principals he studied encountered resistance within their schools, their immediate community, the district, and beyond and emanated from a variety of sources, including the demands of the principalship, the inertia of the status quo, obstructive staff attitudes, and close-minded parents. Frequently, as a result of this resistance, social justice principals endured enormous personal trials and experienced perpetual discouragement. The former had serious implications for their emotional and physical health. It “tears away at your soul” commented one principal (p. 242). Nevertheless, all principals in the study employed strategies that enabled them to sustain their social justice work. These included such proactive strategies as developing a supportive administrative network, working together for change, keeping focused on the
end goal, prioritizing their work, and building relationships. Ongoing learning through book study groups also helped principals learn with their staffs and relieved some of the stress regarding their sense of efficacy in pursuing social justice. Principals also relied upon coping strategies: prioritizing life outside of work and engaging in mindful diversions and physical activity, and so forth.

Theoharris (2007) concluded that his findings reinforce the need for administrator preparation programs to focus on how to enact social justice, as well as how to develop resistance in the face of significant barriers. In closing, Theoharris maintained that there exist significant differences between those who are good leaders and those who are worthy of the designation social justice leaders: “It takes more than what traditionally has been seen as good leadership to achieve greater equity” (p. 258). According to Theoharris, social justice leadership occurs when principals place issues of race, class, gender, and other marginalizing conditions at the center for their leadership practice, vision, and advocacy.

Lopez, Gonzalez, and Fierro (2006) also examined the principalship. These authors profiled a social justice principal, the leader of a school located near the U.S.-Mexican border, who regularly crossed cultural borders, frequently challenged traditional assumptions about what it means to be a school leader, and perpetually worked to develop deep relationships with teachers, parents, and students. Lopez et al. (2006) identified five characteristics that typify the kind of school leaders needed for social justice change. They are leaders who: (a) are first and foremost instructional leaders; (b) are introspective and work regularly to remove their own blinders to social and economic issues; (c) work to engage parents and community leaders in dialogue about their needs, desires, and
hopes; (d) are not afraid to engage emotionally in understanding the needs of the community; and (e) take personal and professional risks in their efforts to challenge the assumptions, practices, beliefs, and expectations of others.

Finally, the work of Freire (1970) offers important perspective for district leaders seeking to formulate a powerful vision of instructional quality, especially for EL students whose voices are less frequently heard. Freire criticized what he called the “banking approach” to education in which teachers are charged with depositing knowledge into the empty bank accounts of students. This type of instruction, he argued, fosters oppressive attitudes and practices in society. Teachers must, instead, respect students, be aware of the conditions of their worlds, understand their thinking and perspectives, and encourage them to engage in the co-construction of knowledge. Many of Freire’s ideas can be translated into classroom instruction as pedagogy that is student-centered, highly interactive, dialogue rich, focused on developing critical thought processes, and rooted in a deep understanding of students’ perspectives. Together these practices are often referred to as instruction that builds upon students’ background knowledge.

Districts are faced with the dual challenge of accommodating the increasing diversity of the nation’s public school population and preparing graduates of public schools to thrive in a multi-cultural society. These challenges converge to fuel the urgency for educational leaders to attend to social justice concerns. In a chapter focused specifically on the application of social justice constructs to the education of ELs, Frattura, Capper, and Scanlan (2007) reflected upon the tension in education between accountability movements intended to raise achievement—especially among marginalized students—and the push for greater social justice in schools. The former,
they lamented, has the unintended result of increasingly marginalizing ELs in segregated at-risk, after-school, and tutoring programs. These researchers offered one of the most prescriptive models for achieving social justice. They asserted that educational leadership for social justice must include educating students in heterogeneous environments—because where students learn and with whom they learn matter greatly. The route to social justice, therefore, involves equipping all teachers to meet the needs of all students in integrated classrooms. Change of this order, cautioned Frattura and Capper (2007), necessarily involves transforming beliefs about schooling.

As part of the evaluation of the 3-year Promise Initiative Pilot Study, Dell’Olio (2010) studied 15 school-site administrators to identify practices associated with transformative advocacy-oriented leadership for ELs. The researcher’s mixed-method analysis relied in part on the Protocol for Advocacy Oriented Leadership and Administration (PAOLA), a research-based tool to assess principals’ perceptions of their expertise and orientation for EL-advocacy-oriented leadership. Although PAOLA was closely tied to the principles of the Promise Initiative, a subset of the standards and indicators it used to determine school leaders’ level of advocacy with respect to the education of ELs are useful in understanding the social advocacy orientation of district and school leaders more generally. These include leaders who display values and beliefs that inspire work on behalf of ELs; emphasize the needs of ELs as a learning community; provide EL-related professional development to all staff; practice leadership grounded in

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11The Promise Initiative is a collaborative endeavor of six Southern California counties, including Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura counties. The 3-year pilot initiative focused on building the capacity of schools and districts to implement principles-based EL programs focused on promoting English proficiency, mastery of academic content, and development of 21st century competencies among ELs (see Olsen et al., 2010).
research-based principles for EL instruction and biliteracy; advocate for ELs with data and research; actively garner resources to support the EL program; ensure that the school be engaged in an ongoing cycle of inquiry; and develop collaborative structures to engage EL parents and community. Overall, the model seeks to identify EL leaders who have incorporated priorities for addressing the specific needs of ELs into the school vision, its instructional plan, professional development program, assessment priorities, and partnerships with parents and the broader community.

*Advancing Equity for English Learners as Second-Order Change*

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) distinguished between change that is “first order” and that which is “second order.” The former encompasses changes that are perceived as extensions of the past, while the latter reflects changes that are perceived as breaks with the past. The characteristics of second-order change include change that does not conform to existing paradigms; conflicts with prevailing attitudes and norms; requires the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and resources; and may be resisted because it is not considered by all stakeholders to be necessary. Given these characteristics, it logically follows that change focused on advancing equity generally, and on creating more equitable learning environments for ELs specifically, would constitute change of second-order magnitude.

Ideally, districts’ visions for change would embrace the twin goals of excellence and equity (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). However, despite long-held expectations that education and public schools serve as promulgators of democracy and equality (Bowles & Gintis, 1976), inequality has become institutionalized in the American educational system (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Disparities in learning opportunities persist across racial,
ethnic, and socioeconomic lines, with English-language learners frequently falling into several of these categories. These students’ opportunities to learn are limited by policies, curriculum choices, funding decisions, access to quality teachers and appropriate learning materials, organizational structures, and expectations (Callahan, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Rorrer, 2001). Districts that endeavor to create institutional realities that run counter to those that currently perpetuate inequity signal a definite, discernible break with the past.

Some researchers have attributed the perpetuation of inequity in the nation’s public schools largely to organizational cultural practices. Rothman (1999) defined institutionalized inequality as “the collection of customs, laws, and social practices that combine to create and sustain the unequal distribution of rewards based on class, minority status, and gender” (p. 54). Others have pointed to the relationships among students, the messages sent by adults in schools, and the accepted social attitudes and behaviors as co-conspirators in creating a hidden curriculum that effectively marginalizes certain student groups (Rorrer, 2001; Stevens & Wood, 1995). Truly leading for social justice requires transforming fully traditional beliefs and customs about schooling and leadership, as well as transforming the structure of the schools, teacher capacity, and the way in which resources are acquired and allocated (Frattura & Capper, 2007). Districts that are intent upon ensuring equitable outcomes for ELs must dismantle existing paradigms and question the legitimacy of prevailing attitudes and norms. Moreover, as the review of literature on EL education will demonstrate, advancing equity for ELs may require challenges to existing paradigms about time in school, teacher preparation and assignment, course-taking patterns, parent involvement, and so forth. It will most likely
also involve changing the expectations of a range of stakeholders with respect to EL student potential.

Educating ELs more equitably will also require the acquisition of new skills on the part of both district- and school-level staff. According to Elmore (2005), school improvement is fundamentally a process of individual and organizational learning in which educators learn to do new things by accessing and assimilating knowledge into their practice. This will need to occur especially at the high-school level, where teachers have typically worked solely within disciplines and have not attended specifically to the needs of ELs to develop their academic vocabulary and thinking across disciplines.

Finally, it is quite possible that not all stakeholders will agree on the nature or direction of change with respect to ELs. As with other major equity/social justice efforts, school leaders are bound to meet resistance from both internal and external stakeholders with vested interests in maintaining the status quo (Oliva & Anderson, 2006). These might include teachers who question their ability to learn new skills or school board members with an anti-immigration bias. Rorrer (2006) has also explored how districts negotiate the resistance precipitated by their attempts to de-legitimize inequity as they lead change designed to create equitable access and outcomes for all children. In a study of two districts pursuing equity-focused change, she concluded that successful districts do three things in order to erode the legitimacy of inequity in a systemic fashion: alter interpretive schema; build normative understandings; and respond to political, functional, and social pressures. According to Rorrer, districts striving for equity often find

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12Rorrer (2006) has maintained that “certain classes and forms of knowledge; preferred structures of power, authority, and influence; and practices, leadership styles, and particular interpretations of policies in public education that marginalize certain groups of students hold legitimacy” (p. 227).
themselves “straddling the margin of tolerance between shifting assumptions and actions to support equity and maintaining legitimacy within an environment that may be opposed, openly or not, to equity” (p. 243).

Pursuing equity for ELs satisfies all of the conditions of second-order change as defined by Marzano and Waters (2009). These researchers provided several recommendations to districts navigating change of this magnitude. These include urging districts to anticipate how the initiative will affect stakeholders and be prepared to address potential problems; remain united in espousing the benefits of the initiative; focus stakeholders continuously on the core beliefs and ideas underlying the initiative; create an atmosphere in which radical ideas are most likely to be adopted; use “sticky messages” that people are unlikely to forget to communicate goals; and attend to the personal struggles associated with major change.13

A Theoretical Framework for District Action

The Rationale for District Action

When considered as a whole, the five roles described above underscore the importance of the district in reform generally and shed light on potential avenues for action in advancing equity for adolescent ELs specifically. Rorrer et al. (2008) argued that districts have an indispensable role as institutional actors in educational reform. Snipes et al. (2002) concurred that urban districts must play a key role in order for “school improvement to be widespread and sustained and for our nation to decrease racial

13Marzano and Waters (2009) referred to the work of Everett Rogers (Diffusion of Innovations, 2003) in discussing ways to create a climate in which innovations are likely to be adopted. They also referred to the work of Malcolm Gladwell (The Tipping Point, 2002) in their discussion of “sticky messages.” Finally, they considered the work of William Bridges (Transitions: Making Sense of Life’s Changes, 1980) in providing guidance about personal transitions.
differences in academic achievement” (p. 1). Corcoran and Lawrence (2003) maintained that not only can districts intentionally change classroom practice at scale, but, with some support, they can do this work well. They further concluded that this is precisely the work districts should be doing. Childress et al. (2006) have contended that achieving excellence on a broad scale requires a district-wide strategy for improving instruction in the classroom and that only districts are equipped to “create such a plan, identify and spread best practices, develop leadership capabilities at all levels, build information systems to monitor student improvement, and hold people accountable for results” (p. 1). Without district leadership to bring school improvement efforts to scale, some schools will excel while others struggle (Bottoms & Fry, 2009).

Indeed, as the organization with the greatest share of human and financial resources at its disposal, the district possesses a unique capacity to accomplish the kind of second-order change required to improve both educational opportunities and outcomes for large numbers of ELs. Researchers have generated considerable consensus regarding the components or themes surrounding high-performing, high-poverty districts. The literature is replete with examples of factors that affect districts’ success in producing sustained improvements in instruction. What the research has yet to offer, however, is a theory of action for systemic reform. According to Rorrer et al. (2008), research on districts has successfully illuminated discrete functions of districts in improving achievement and equity, but it has yet to produce “a coherent model for how a district is likely to have the greatest influence and impact on increasing achievement for all students and advancing equity through systemic reform” (p. 341). These researchers pointed to “a lack of research-based guidance for district leaders to follow to create systemically
districts that improve achievement and advance educational equity for all children” (Rorrer et al., 2008, p. 307). Other researchers have stressed the need to move beyond the identification of broad common principles of district success to focus on how districts adapt principles to their unique situations and how those lacking certain key preconditions for success create them. Figure 1 depicts visually my theoretical framework for district action on behalf of ELs.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework for district action on behalf of ELs.
Components of the Framework

Core of the Framework

Using the research on the critical roles of districts in educational reform, I have developed an initial framework for analyzing district leadership in advancing equity systemically for ELs. At the core of this framework lies the ultimate vision—equitable teaching and learning for English-learners in every classroom. Its centrality conveys the need for broad focus on equity at all levels of the system and not just on equitable outcomes (Skrla & Scheurich, 2004). The district is charged, through its multiple roles, to strengthen this core continuously.

Nested Layers

Surrounding the core are two concentric circles designed to capture the notion that classrooms are nested within schools, which are, in turn, nested within districts. This coincides with Purkey and Smith’s (1983, 1985) view of school systems as “nested layers” in which actions at the higher layers help determine conditions in lower layers. According to these researchers, the school is the focus of change and its culture is the ultimate policy target. In order for teaching and learning to be transformed at the classroom level, districts must first foster the emergence of school cultures that encourage student achievement, staff collaboration, and “staff-owned” innovations (Purkey & Smith, 1985). Marzano and Waters’ (2009) description of schools as functional components operating within a larger system best captures that which is portrayed pictorially by the rim of the wheel, which represents the district encircling the school. “It is the larger system—the district—that establishes the common work of schools within
the district, and it is that common work that becomes the “glue” holding the district together” (Marzano & Waters, p. 90).

*Five Overlapping, Interdependent Roles*

The wheel’s perimeter is formed by the five key district roles identified in my earlier analysis. These roles, as described above, include: Mediating External Influences; Developing a Shared Vision of Instructional Quality; Aligning Structures, Processes, and Resources; Ensuring Reciprocal Accountability; and Monitoring Progress. The nonlinear, interdependent, and overlapping nature of these roles is represented on the wheel’s rim. According to Massell (2000), district efforts to strengthen the capacity of schools “are not mutually exclusive; they can and do overlap in districts in ways that are often reinforcing” (p. 1). Childress et al. (2006) noted that districts often neglect to see the connections among such roles as organizational design, resource allocation, the development of human capital, and the use of performance data. These researchers have insisted that districts “view their organizations as integrated systems whose interdependent parts are directly linked to the work of students and teachers in the classroom” (p. 7).

By applying complex systems theory to organizations, other researchers have exposed the limitations of a linear conception of organizational change, which posits that the first stage of the change process is followed by a series of other stages. Styhre’s (2002) examination of organizational change in a telecommunications company from the perspective of complexity theory revealed that, despite the fact that change activities were planned in a linear fashion, changes actually occurred as the result of multiple interconnected causes and effects whose relationships were too complicated to be explained within an analytical framework based on linearity. Styhre explained that
“organization change is never solely a one-dimensional series of succeeding activities, but is always taking place amidst the turmoil of transient states and interconnected flows of activities” (p. 349). Rorrer et al. (2008) have constructed their own framework for district action around the idea that change is nonlinear and that feedback loops create important opportunities “for practices, policies, or structures in one role to be altered, specifically increasing alignment and coherence, as a result of changes in [sic] the other roles” (p. 339).

In exploring the nonlinearity of reform efforts, my research attempts to address a previously noted gap in the research on districts. Leithwood et al. (2004), in their review of contemporary research on school districts, credited researchers with having shed light on the specific policies and actions at the district level, as well as on the characteristics of effective districts. They lamented, however, the failure of researchers to describe the interaction among these characteristics and actions and the ways in which they affect the performance of schools, teachers, and students. Rorrer et al. (2008) made a similar observation, describing a lack of focus on the interdependence and interrelatedness of districts’ roles as “a vulnerability in the previous research on districts” (p. 336).

Feedback Loops

The spikes of the wheel portray the two-way connections and information flow between district leadership and schools with respect to each of the key district roles. These spikes reflect the distributed or shared leadership that has been practiced in effective districts in which stakeholders at all levels of the system assume responsibility for reform. They also depict the importance of connectivity between the key district- and school-level actors in enacting system-wide change. Seel (2000), using complexity
theory, has explained that organizations become more conducive to change when they build connectivity among people that encourages them to make new meanings out of their daily working lives. In a similar vein, Elmore (2005) has acknowledged the two-way nature of change, positing that school improvement “requires that people internalize responsibility for student learning, exercise agency and control over their practice, and change their methods in response to organizational expectations and external demands” (p. 139). In this regard, researchers have communicated that solutions to problems must be discovered from within the system through people making better connections with those they serve and with each other. District leaders must, therefore, honor, as well as respond and adapt continuously to, the implementation experiences of those working (educators) and learning (students) in schools. Hence the arrows in the diagram indicate a perpetual flow of information and ideas from district to school to classroom and vice-versa.

**Balancing Autonomy and Control**

The alternating dotted and solid lines that form each of the spokes denotes the existence of what Rorrer et al. (2008) referred to as “variable coupling”—dotted lines representing loose coupling and solid lines representing tight coupling—that may occur between districts and schools with respect to each of these roles. This returns us to our discussion of the balance between autonomy-control in district-school relations. Numerous researchers have addressed this dynamic relationship beginning with Weick (1976, 1982) who is widely known for his work describing the loosely coupled nature of educational systems. Researchers have characterized this dynamic in multiple ways, including as tension between centralization and decentralization (Childress et al., 2006;
Dwyer, 2005); top-down versus bottom-up (Fullan, 1994); control versus commitment (Rowan, 1990; Supovitz, 2006); and managed instruction versus performance/empowerment (McAdams, 2006). Researchers have tended to agree that there are costs associated with either extreme. Bolman and Deal (2003) have argued that when structure is too loose, people go their own way or get lost. Conversely, when structure is too tight, people expend their time trying to beat the system. Indeed, a wheel in which all spikes were loosely anchored would be characterized by high instability, while a wheel containing all solid lines might indicate too much rigidity. Bolman and Deal summarized the challenge facing organizational leaders as one that involves trying to figure out “how to hold the organization together without holding it back” (p. 71).

A more recent variation on the autonomy-control dialectic is what Marzano and Waters (2009) have called “defined autonomy,” which refers to the expectation on the part of district leadership that central office staff and principals should lead within boundaries that are defined by nonnegotiable district goals for achievement and instruction. Along these same lines, Supovitz (2006) has proposed a synthesis of control and commitment extremes that includes an overall vision of instructional quality supported by inquiries at various levels of the organization whereby people explore the relevance of the guiding vision to their own work. The framework developed by Rorrer et al. (2008) embodies Weick’s (1976) suggestion that tight coupling in one part of the system can be effectively combined with loose coupling in another part, such that it is “the pattern of couplings that produces the observed outcomes” (p. 10). This variation in coupling has been noted in earlier research by Massell and Goertz (1999) who found that most districts they studied were characterized by a “mosaic of loose and tight control”
Given the very real possibility that districts engaged in change focused on ELs may require varying levels of control over the system at different times throughout the change process, my own framework incorporates the notion of variable coupling.

The Pace of Change

As the wheel of reform advances, its movement is alternately propelled or impeded by both internal and external forces. Forces propelling reform cause the wheel to spin clockwise, while forces impeding reform move the wheel in a counter-clockwise fashion. Most researchers have suggested that the wheel does not constantly spin rapidly forward. Instead, they have maintained that change is incremental, with regular movement headed mostly forward, yet interrupted occasionally by pauses and even movement in the opposite direction. Lewin’s (1951) change model, one of the first to provide an overview of the change process, provides a useful perspective from which to understand the uneven and erratic pace and direction of change.

Rooted in the concept of force-field analysis, Lewin (1951) explained human behavioral change as a dynamic process that is a function of two opposing forces: driving forces that push for change and restraining forces that aim to preserve the status quo. When these two forces are balanced, human behavior remains unchanged, equilibrium is maintained, and the status quo is preserved. Change requires that the force field be altered in some way, either by increasing the forces driving change, decreasing the forces resisting change, or pursuing some combination of these options. Altering the force field is, however, a complex process, given its natural proclivity to seek equilibrium. Simply
creating a driving force toward change is likely to precipitate an equal counter-pressure resisting that change, ultimately producing little or no change—behavior is effectively frozen.

Lewin’s (1951) theory suggests that in order for my metaphorical wheel of change to move forward, participants in the change process must pass through three stages: unfreezing, changing or moving, and refreezing. The change process begins when there is some driving force or incentive for change. This often involves some source of dissatisfaction with the status quo or “disconfirmation” of our expectations (Schein, 1996, p. 29). The unfreezing stage involves not only accepting the deficiencies in the status quo but beginning the process of overcoming the resisting forces that cause one to ignore or dismiss disconfirming information. These forces might include survival anxieties or fears about admitting existing deficiencies or one’s capacity to learn new skills. It is only when these fears have been surmounted that one enters the “changing or moving” stage, during which behavior is altered and the metaphorical wheel rolls forward.

The critical role for district change agents is thus to grease the proverbial wheel by creating what Schein (1996) called the “psychological safety to allow the change target to accept the information, feel the survival anxiety, and become motivated to change” (p. 30). In building on Lewin’s (1951) theory, Schein suggested that such safety can be created through “cognitive restructuring” or defining the desired change in ways that do not arouse the defenses of the change targets (p. 31). Additionally, once change targets have been unfrozen and are open to change, change agents can ensure that the appropriate change ensues by providing them access to others who actively model the desired change behaviors. In the absence of powerful role models, Schein proposed that change agents
allow change targets to research and experiment with their own creative solutions to change. He further added that when change targets identify solutions that resonate with their personalities and experiences, these solutions are more likely to endure. Sims and Sims (2004) suggested that, once in the change stage, districts pursuing systems change focus on changing behavior and not changing values, which are more resistant to change. They encouraged leaders to concentrate on those areas of change over which they have control and celebrate milestones with rewards and incentives.

The final stage of Lewin’s change process involves refreezing. Change is complete when new behaviors, values, and attitudes have become routine. In order to prevent the wheel of change from moving backward, which may occur over time if new behaviors are not reinforced, district leaders must continually exert pressure to keep the force field at the new equilibrium. One way they can do this is through implementing changes in the organization’s reward structure; for example, evaluation systems (Sims & Sims, 2004).

*Integrating Research on the Education of ELs*

The next level of development of the framework integrates the research about best practices for educating ELs into each of the five district roles. Specifically, it addresses such key questions as: What are the external forces facilitating and/or impeding district efforts to improve instructional quality for ELs? What does a shared vision of instructional quality for ELs look like at the school and classroom levels? What kind of capacity-building is required to meet the instructional needs of ELs? How do structures, processes, and resources need to be realigned to serve these students most effectively?
Finally, what kind of data will enable districts to measure the progress of ELs most meaningfully?

**Research on the Education of English Learners**

*Overview*

The research on the education of English-language learners has evolved considerably since the 1970s in response to a number of developments, including groundbreaking research in the fields of languages and cognitive development, ongoing controversy over the merits of bilingual education, and the effective schools movement (August & Hakuta, 1997). Researchers interested in the education of EL learners share a concern about the paucity of studies, especially in certain areas, such as reclassification decisions or literacy development (August & Shanahan, 2006). Many studies do not account for factors that may influence student progress in developing academic language skills, including culture, educational settings and goals, the home language environment, and individual differences. Experts further lament the lack of high-quality studies, citing numerous methodological shortcomings in the existing body of research (August & Hakuta, 1997; Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006; Slavin & Cheung, 2005).

To date, most research has focused on EL students at the elementary-school level, leaving far more questions than answers about the academic success of adolescent ELs (Faltis & Wolfe, 1999; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). For example, researchers know considerably more about how to teach ELs basic reading skills in the early grades than they do about teaching the higher-order reading comprehension skills that secondary-level ELs need to achieve across a range of academic subjects (Viadero, 2009). Indeed, most empirical studies of ELs have focused on elementary schools (August & Shanahan, 2006;
Genesee et al., 2006). As such, they do not account for the distinct challenges faced by adolescent students who struggle to achieve English proficiency and satisfy high school graduation requirements in a comparatively brief timeframe. They also ignore the formidable hurdles faced by newcomer EL students, recent arrivals to secondary schools who often have little formal education (Walqui, 2000a). In addition, studies focused on elementary ELs overlook the fragmented nature of secondary school instruction and the limited preparation of secondary teachers in working with ELs (Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000; Walqui, 2000b).

A few recent research reports focused specifically on adolescent ELs have identified key challenges to improving the education of these students. Concentrating on EL students at the middle-school level, Walqui et al. (2010) highlighted several critical concerns, including: limited teacher capacity to make content knowledge accessible to EL students in ways that build their conceptual, academic, and linguistic knowledge; low expectations on the part of educators regarding EL student performance; misguided ideas (sometimes formalized in policies) that run contrary to the research; and flaws in the design and consistent implementation of programs that serve these students. Along these same lines, in an earlier review of 70 studies on adolescent English language learner programs prepared by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2004), researchers concluded that most secondary schools that implemented EL programs had failed to demonstrate sufficient understanding of effective EL practices or strategies. In a testament to the paucity of solid research on adolescent ELs, these researchers also noted that only 20 studies included in their review satisfied rigorous scientifically based research standards as defined by NCLB.
In a report based on the findings of a national panel on adolescent EL literacy convened in 2005 by the Center for Applied Linguistics, Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) identified a number of similar challenges to secondary EL education. These included inadequate teacher capacity, limited use of research-based practices, lack of appropriate and sufficiently flexible programs, inconsistent criteria across the nation for identifying ELs and tracking their academic performance, inappropriate assessments for measuring EL progress, and the absence of a strong, coherent research agenda on EL adolescent literacy. Another recent report honed in on the specific challenges faced by long-term ELs in secondary schools (Olsen, 2010). The researcher concluded that few districts or schools have tailored their programs or approaches in ways that adequately meet the needs of this growing component of the adolescent EL population. Once again, a number of barriers, including ill-prepared teachers, misunderstandings about the research on effective practices, and inadequate assessment tools and systems for tracking student performance, have impeded progress in working effectively with these students.

Perhaps the most rigorous reviews of the empirical research on the education of ELs, are those produced by the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth (NLP; August & Shanahan, 2006) and the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE; Genesee et al., 2006). Although only a few of the reviewed studies focused specifically on secondary ELs, these extensive reviews encompassed empirical studies conducted between 1980-2002 on pre-school-to-high-school-age language minority children. Researchers summarized much of what is known to date about the best instructional practices for working with these students.
The NLP review is the product of a multi-year effort by a team of experts working in such areas as second-language development, cognitive development, curriculum and instruction, assessment, and methodology. It examined 293 qualitative and quantitative empirical studies that focused primarily on best practices for students’ literacy development. The CREDE review examined approximately 200 mostly quantitative empirical studies and articles pertaining to students’ oral language development, literacy development, and academic achievement. Major conclusions reached by both reviews include the following: (a) what constitutes good instruction for students in general also constitutes good instruction for ELs specifically; (b) teaching students to read in their primary language boosts reading achievement in their second language; and (c) teachers of ELs must make instructional modifications to account for language limitations (Goldenberg, 2008). Each of these findings is examined more thoroughly in the following sections on effective schools, instructional strategies, and programs.

*Effective Schools for English Learners*

*Similarities Between Effective EL Schools and Effective Schools Generally*

Research on ELs has often used the school, program, or classroom as the unit of analysis and then extrapolated from those experiences to determine the most appropriate roles for the district in supporting schools and teachers (Parrish et al., 2006; Walqui et al., 2010; T. Williams et al., 2007). Although it is not always possible to isolate school activity from classroom activity, the following section highlights school-level practices surrounding the education of ELs. A subsequent section concentrates on instructional practices in the classroom.
Not surprisingly, research findings on effective learning environments for ELs correspond closely to those documented in studies of schools that are effective for all children (August & Hakuta, 1997; Gándara & Rumberger, 2006; Linquanti, 1999; Parrish et al., 2006; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Schools and programs demonstrating some success in educating ELs well engaged in a number of common practices: (a) reliance on strong leaders who incorporate a vision for EL achievement into all aspects of school functioning; (b) cultivation of school communities in which adults care for and respect ELs students and are willing and qualified to share responsibility for their education; (c) maintenance of high expectations for EL students, including providing them with access to a rigorous curriculum and appropriate instructional materials; (d) provision of academic supports that accelerate rather than remediate; (e) use of data-driven processes to determine placement, inform instructional decisions, and assess student progress; and (f) establishment of connections with families. A brief discussion of some of the literature regarding each of these aspects of effective EL schools follows.

**Strong School Leadership**

The integral role of school-site leaders in setting the direction for successful schools has been well documented in the literature on school reform (Cotton, 2003; Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Marzano et al., 2005). Similarly, the research on ELs has shown that leadership is central to the cultivation of school environments and professional communities that are committed to English learner success (Dell’Olio, 2010; Gándara & Rumberger, 2006; Gutierrez, 2005; Parrish et al., 2006; Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000; Verdugo & Flores, 2007; T. Williams et al., 2007). Building a strong program for ELs requires administrators who are informed about the
research on ELs, who are visible and engaged, and who regularly communicate their commitment to the education of ELs (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010c). A 2005 survey of principals and teachers from 237 California elementary schools\textsuperscript{14} by T. Williams et al. (2007) identified effective practices at schools with higher-performing ELs. These successful schools were led by principals with clear visions of reform and clear expectations for teachers who, in turn, shared responsibility for meeting school goals. Another study of effective EL schools by Parrish et al. (2006) found that leaders of effective schools have worked to incorporate the EL program into the school vision, instructional plan, professional development, assessment plan, and parental and community partnerships. These leaders are strong instructional leaders who monitor program implementation, provide direction, and foster collaboration among staff. Other research has shown that effective leaders of EL schools have demonstrated the political will and capacity to identify and address challenges to accomplishing their vision for EL success, including ensuring that it be implemented consistently throughout the school and garnering the resources necessary to implement their vision (Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000; Dell’Olio, 2010). Researchers studying the Promise Initiative found that schools that demonstrated weakness in several key areas of leadership, including leaders’ knowledge about ELs, advocacy practices on behalf of ELs, alignment of leaders across levels of the system around a vision for ELs, and collaborative and distributed leadership

\textsuperscript{14}All schools had an English learner population of 15% or higher and fell within the 25th-35th percentiles on the School Characteristics Index, a composite index used to summarize multiple factors associated with student performance on California state tests. High-performing schools had a high Academic Performance Index for ELs.
on behalf of ELs; were also less effective in implementing the Promise model of EL reform (Olsen et al., 2010).

School Climate of Caring and Shared Accountability for EL Students

The importance of building a safe, inclusive, caring school climate is not only featured prominently in the literature on ELs (August & Hakuta, 1997; Genesee et al., 2006; Meltzer & Hamann, 2004; Olsen, 2006; Walqui, 2000a, 2000b), but it is also a focus of the literature on social justice education (Shields, 2004). The first body of research characterizes a supportive school-wide climate as one that values the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of ELs, holds high expectations for their achievement, and integrates them into the overall operation of the school (August & Hakuta, 1997). Specific manifestations of these activities in high schools with strong EL programs have included hiring bi-lingual staff, encouraging students to develop their native-language skills, establishing courses and programs specifically designed to meet language-minority students’ needs, supporting extracurricular activities that will attract these students, and developing counseling programs that attend specifically to their needs (Berman, Minicucci, MacLaughlin, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995; Lucas, 1997; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Olsen et al., 2010). Gold (2006), in his vision of high schools that serve ELs well, incorporated, such key features as comprehensive support systems for ELs that make counseling, tutoring, and financial aid available and that help these students build relationships with staff and peers. More specifically, researchers viewed the involvement of counselors or advisory teachers in working regularly with EL students as important opportunities to build relationships with these students and focus on their strengths (Gold, 2006; Walqui et al., 2010). Some of the work performed by counselors or advisory
teachers included meeting with children on an individual basis to assess their knowledge, goals, and interests. In some cases, schools have implemented advisory periods during which mixed classrooms of EL and English proficient students participate in a curriculum focused on diversity (Olsen, 2006). These kinds of opportunities are particularly valuable in light of research showing that adolescent motivation regarding learning is often a function of students’ relationships with teachers, peers, and others (Meltzer & Hamann, 2004).

Not surprisingly, support for the creation of more inclusive and affirming school environments may also be found in the literature on social justice in education. Just and caring education is committed to the welfare and success of every student (Shields, 2004). Caring communities are characterized by conversations that value the lived experiences of all students, not just those of the dominant class. According to Shields, educational leaders can use their positions as creators of “communities of difference” to promote meaningful relationships with students, parents, and staff (p. 38). The work of Shields resonates with that of Walqui (2000b), whose research on secondary-school immigrant students calls for the co-construction of cultures in classrooms that value and respect each person, including his or her language and culture. The creation of inclusive, supportive, safe spaces for learning is also relevant to issues of EL motivation and engagement. Meltzer and Hamann (2004) suggested that students’ decisions about whether or not to engage in learning activities depends upon such considerations as whether they feel safe making mistakes, believe that their voices are valued, and sense that teachers are supportive of them. English learners, in particular, must feel safe participating in a language with which they are not yet fully proficient and in a culture that is foreign to
them. Although long-term ELs are familiar with the American culture, they still suffer from a limited command of academic language and often from low teacher expectations regarding their levels of engagement in the classroom (Olsen, 2010).

Finally, schools and programs with demonstrated success in working with ELs have cultivated a shared understanding that educating ELs is the responsibility of the entire school staff. They have accomplished this through school-wide visions that encompass a commitment to the education of ELs and a culture of high expectations that emanates from leaders at all levels, including teachers (August & Shanahan, 2006; Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010c; Parrish et al., 2006; Springboard Schools, 2006). Shared accountability is made possible when all staff are equipped to meet the needs of ELs—not just English language teachers—and when collaboration and dialogue occur among cross-disciplinary teams about the best ways to serve these students (Lewis-Moreno, 2007; Rance-Roney, 2005; Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000). For example, regular communication between English-language development and content-area teachers ensures that learning in each of these areas is articulated in ways that helps students apply language skills to academic tasks (Cho & Reich, 2008; Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010a; Rance-Roney, 2005). Collaboration between content-area and English-language development teachers also facilitates efforts to align California content standards with state standards for English-language development (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008) so that teachers of ELs are working together to help these students meet the dual challenge of learning English and content area material simultaneously. School-wide, team-based support for ELs that includes content-area teachers, counselors, and school administrators ensures ELs access to the full range of school resources (Rance-Roney, 2005). Researchers also
suggest that, because secondary ELs generally have multiple teachers, content-area teachers should confer regularly with one another about student performance. In particular, researchers suggest that conversations about discrepancies in EL performance on assessments across disciplines may expose important information about the limitations of the assessments, as opposed to deficiencies on the part of students (Hamayan, as cited in Meltzer & Hamann, 2005). Shared accountability for, and collaboration on behalf of, ELs, therefore, have the potential to accomplish a number of important objectives on behalf of ELs: deepen educator skills in supporting ELs, reinforce similar expectations for EL student performance across classrooms, and prepare ELs for transition into the mainstream classrooms. To the extent that teachers use collaboration to articulate their instruction across disciplines, shared accountability and collaboration may also provide a valuable opportunity for EL students to make meaningful connections across the curriculum, thereby reducing some of the fragmentation inherent in their secondary school experiences.

*High Expectations and Access to a Rigorous Core Curriculum*

A powerful theme reported by staff associated with high-performing EL schools and programs is the importance of conveying high expectations for EL academic performance. According to researchers, there exists a widespread misconception that students must fully understand English in order to participate in rigorous disciplinary activities (Walqui et al., 2010). Moreover, educators often confuse limited ELs’ English proficiency with lower-level intelligence and place these students in low-track classes (Callahan, 2005). This practice runs contrary to findings from effective EL districts, schools, and programs in which EL students are afforded the same access to a coherent,
rigorous, standards-based curriculum across all classrooms and grades as other students (Berman et al., 1995; Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006; Parrish et al., 2006; T. Williams et al., 2007). Principals and teachers at high-performing EL schools also reported focusing on explicit academic goals, using essential standards to guide classroom instruction, and relying on curriculum guides in all core subjects (Parrish et al., 2006; T. Williams et al., 2007). These guides—sometimes referred to as pacing plans—help ensure that standards are being taught in a timely fashion across all classrooms. They often specify the core concepts, based on the state standards that must be taught. Pacing guides also provide direction regarding the amount of time that should be spent on each concept and offer suggestions for teaching the material to diverse groups of students. Although these guides can be useful tools for ensuring that all students are exposed to the same rigorous curriculum, researchers have raised some cautionary concerns regarding their use for ELs. Specifically, teachers of ELs are often frustrated by the restrictions these plans impose on curriculum delivery in many low-performing schools (Olsen et al., 2010). Pacing guides designed for native English speakers may create pressure on teachers to move through material even when their EL students are not grasping the material or to forego valuable interactive activities critical to EL learning (Olsen, 2010). This finding has prompted researchers to conclude that making curriculum guides more responsive to EL learning needs remains a critical concern in facilitating their access to a rigorous curriculum.

Researchers have documented the numerous negative effects when ELs are placed in special classes and programs with less linguistically and academically rigorous instruction (Callahan, 2005; Finkelstein et al., 2009). For example, students placed in
low-track classrooms are often exposed to less sophisticated discourse and thinking skills, simplified content, and less material. They also have less positive relationships with teachers, and experience lower performance outcomes than those placed in higher-track classrooms. They are also at greater risk of not being prepared for college (Koelsch, 2006).

As a result of their examination of EL course-taking patterns in 54 California high schools, Finkelstein et al. (2009) concluded that ensuring EL students have access to college preparatory coursework in English and mathematics as early as the ninth grade was critical to their completion of college-entrance requirements. Long-term ELs especially should have access to content classes that include honors and college-preparation “a-g”\textsuperscript{15} classes (Olsen, 2010). Most researchers acknowledge the need for ELs to receive language-development support, often through separate classes. However, they insist that ELs be integrated as much as possible with native English speakers into mainstream, rigorous classes that are taught with differentiated instructional strategies (Frattura et al., 2007; Gold, 2006). Finally, researchers have expressed concerns about state policies mandating increased instructional minutes in English and math instruction in underperforming schools—policies that may narrow the curriculum for low-performing ELs by crowding out time for other subjects (Olsen, 2010).

*Appropriate Instructional Materials*

Delivering rigorous and relevant content effectively to ELs presumes that teachers have access to appropriate materials (Lavadenz & Armas, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons,\textsuperscript{15}The “a-g” classes refer to the sequence of high school courses required for admission to California’s public university systems.)
appropriate materials for ELs encompass challenging reading materials that support them in developing vocabulary (Meltzer & Hamann, 2005). Ballantyne et al. (2008), drawing upon earlier research by Walqui et al. (2010), refer to these as texts that “amplify rather than simplify language to facilitate ELLs’ reading comprehension” (p. 36). However, in many cases, ELs’ limited English proficiency precludes their accessing content through the regular curriculum materials. Indeed, most of these materials were not designed with ELs in mind and do not reflect the research on their learning needs (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Rumberger, 2008). Reading materials must, therefore, not only be aligned with standards, but they must also be accessible to second-language learners through their use of graphics and other engaging formats (Olsen, 2006). In addition to texts adapted for second-language learners, ELs will benefit from access to both primary-language resource materials and technology to facilitate learning. Technology is particularly important given that most ELs come from low-income families that may not have the same ability to expose them to technology as the families of higher-income students (Olsen, 2006; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Finally, the great diversity within the EL population necessitates that instructional materials be differentiated to meet their needs (Gándara et al., 2008) and that teachers be adept at selecting and adapting materials to meet EL needs (Walqui et al., 2010).

The literature on adolescent literacy generally also sheds light on the type of materials that will support EL learners. As with all adolescent readers, ELs at the secondary level are more engaged when they have access to texts that are diverse and of high quality. They are also more likely to respond to texts that connect with their interests, backgrounds, and identities (Darder, 1993; Tatum, as cited in Meltzer &
Hamann, 2004). National Literary Panel reviewers found studies showing that when EL students read texts with themes from their cultures, their comprehension improved (August & Shanahan, 2006). In one study of highly effective EL elementary schools, those with higher-performing ELs had access to adequate classroom materials, including supplementary instructional matter for struggling students (T. Williams et al., 2007).

For many schools, securing appropriate materials for ELs is still a challenge. Studies of middle schools in California revealed that subject matter texts frequently do not support access by ELs (Walqui et al., 2010). Moreover, California’s failure to adopt curriculum frameworks for its ELD content standards has created a situation in which districts have limited options in terms of instructional resources and often rely on materials that are below-grade level or designed for native English speakers (Gándara et al., 2008; Menken, 2006). Walqui and colleagues (2010) considered some materials such as the High Point program to be “pedagogically and conceptually weak” (p. 74). In focus-group conversations with researchers, California teachers revealed their concerns about inadequate curricular materials for ELs (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). Researchers associated with the Promise Initiative found that across the six counties they studied, there was limited use of linguistically, developmentally, and culturally appropriate supplemental materials for ELs in classrooms (Olsen et al., 2010).

**Academic Supports: Acceleration Versus Remediation**

Proposition 227 and accountability systems focused on annual gains in English proficiency have resulted in more ELs’ being placed in mainstream classes. As cited above, this change may benefit ELs by ensuring them access to a more rigorous curriculum. It may also increase their opportunities to interact with proficient English
students and decrease the isolation and stigma associated with being segregated. However, ELs often require academic supports to accelerate their learning before they can move into rigorous mainstream classes and, once in those classrooms, need supports to thrive academically. Researchers insist that these supports should focus on acceleration rather than remediation (Olsen, 2010; Thomas & Collier, 2002; Walqui et al., 2010). “A path of remediation and sheltered courses condemns students to a low-track sequence from which they seldom recover” (Walqui et al., 2010, p. 62). The goal should be to provide supports geared toward moving ELs forward. For example, the secondary school master schedule should aid ELs in overcoming gaps in their education, facilitate earning credits, and be flexible enough to allow for opportunities for modifications in supports as needed (Olsen, 2010). Another strategy for accelerating ELs’ movement toward graduation and accumulation of credits, also cited by Olsen (2010), has involved granting “a-g” credits for English-language development classes.

Nevertheless, ELs who perform poorly on standardized tests are often placed in special programs or remedial courses that do not count toward college preparation or provide them with the kind of support they require to accelerate their learning (Callahan, 2006; Menken, 2006; Walqui et al., 2010). For example, ELs who perform poorly on these tests are often misidentified as learning disabled when, in actuality, their academic struggles are the result of language or cultural issues. They are then placed in special education programs that do not meet their needs (Rodriguez, 2009; Spinelli, 2008). Researchers are particularly critical of California state policies that require students (many of whom are ELs) performing at least two levels below grade level in ELA to be placed in several periods of remedial English courses a day. They argue that these
policies have created situations in which districts, intent upon boosting reading scores, place students in double-blocked classes that do not necessarily meet their needs (Callahan, 2006). Furthermore, ELs in these classes sometimes receive reading instruction, geared primarily toward native English speakers, at the expense of rich exposure to grade-level English content they would receive in regular English classes or the full range of language development modalities they would receive through balanced literacy instruction in English language development classes. English learner support classes should rely upon a grade-level curriculum that is aligned with grade-level content standards instead of below-grade-level reading interventions (Walqui et al., 2010). English learners face an increased challenge to stay on track for college when the courses they take lack the academic content they need to remain at grade level (Finkelstein et al., 2009).

Several researchers have weighed in with respect to the appropriate practices for grouping students. Wong Fillmore and Snow (2000) argued that, generally, students should be grouped for particular instructional purposes based on clear, objective criteria related to the instructional target with flexibility that allows children to leave groups when they have acquired targeted skills. Grouping should not be based on some universal measurement of readiness. Parrish et al. (2006) offered the following guidance on grouping specific to ELs:

While the separation of ELs for targeted support is sometimes justified, such segregation should be strategic and limited to cases justified by specific instructional purposes and demonstrated success in relation to commonly accepted goals for ELs; e.g., intensive ELD instruction for “zero-English” students or native language instruction in grade-level academic subject matter in carefully-designed bilingual programs. (p. V-11-7)
In the interest of accelerating their learning, ELs should also be offered what is sometimes referred to as flexible pathways into the curriculum (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). These might include study skills and extended-time programs such as AVID, after-school, Saturday, and intersession programs. Other strategies that provide additional time for ELs to close gaps include offering a flexible timeline for completing high school (Gold, 2006; Rance-Roney, 2005). This is sometimes structured as a ninth-grade academy.

*Using Data to Place ELs, Inform EL Instruction, and Monitor EL Performance*

Through proper identification, placement, and monitoring of ELs, schools can ensure that the interventions they put in place for ELs are appropriate and that teacher expectations for their performance are realistic (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). In this regard, understanding the diverse set of background characteristics and skills ELs bring into the classroom is critical. These include knowing about primary language oral and literacy skills, gaps in schooling, family income, parent education, performance on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), and academic achievement performance (Gold, 2006; Meltzer & Hamann, 2004; Short & Echevarria, 2005).

Additionally, Olsen (2010) stressed the importance of focusing on the length of time ELs have been enrolled in U.S. schools as another important criterion for placing and instructing ELs. She cited a number of characteristics of ELs who have been in U.S. schools more than 6 years that distinguish their needs from newcomer ELs. Among the changes implemented in Promise Initiative secondary schools was the development of

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16This test is administered annually to all newly enrolled students whose primary language is not English, as well as to students previously designated as English Learners. It is used to determine their levels of English proficiency and place them in appropriate language development programs.
differing placement guidelines for ELs who were newcomers, regularly developing ELs, \(^\text{17}\) and long-term ELs. Using deep knowledge about ELs will ensure that they be placed in classrooms in which they have a good chance of success (Gold, 2006).

Additionally, knowledge about EL students’ capacities may also inform classroom organization for instructional activities. “Teacher knowledge of students’ strengths, areas of challenge, and socio-cultural backgrounds as well as their understandings about literacy can strongly affect the quality of their instruction” (Meltzer & Hamann, 2005, p. 9). Teachers who are knowledgeable about who their students are, their strengths, and weaknesses, and the nature of their prior educational experiences can use this information to cluster students or form flexible grouping structures to facilitate instruction (Olsen, 2010; Wong Fillmore, 1982). In this regard, effective schools for ELs rely upon multiple formative assessments rather than solely upon summative assessments (Gándara et al., 2005; Gutierrez, 2005).

For many districts, the assessment process is governed by federal legislation such as NCLB. This process influences the identification, placement, and ongoing monitoring of students (Lachat & Spruce, 1998). State- and district-administered formal, standards-based summative assessments may help track student progress and demonstrate accountability. They may also magnify attention paid to the performance of such frequently under-performing subgroups of students as ELs (Skrla & Scheurich, 2004). Using standardized tests to set measurable goals and monitored objectives may also be an effective strategy for establishing EL student achievement as a priority (T. Williams et al.,

\(^{17}\) Researchers did not define this term. The assumption is that these are ELs who have been in U.S. schools between 1 and 6 years.
For example, principals in higher-performing EL schools have relied on standards tests to focus school-wide attention on achievement and improve instruction, while those in less successful schools have relied more heavily on language test data. Gándara et al. (2008) have urged schools to report data that show the relationship between EL performance on state standardized test results and their language test data, especially for those students who have been in U.S. schools for many years and are still struggling to meet grade-level standards. Understanding the relationship between language proficiency and performance in content areas will shed important light not only on students’ instructional needs but also on student placement decisions. These researchers have urged schools to analyze EL students’ academic progress and achievement as a function of both their language proficiency levels and time in U.S. schools. In addition to informing placement and instructional decisions, data on EL performance in these and other areas may also provide guidance for the teacher professional development process (Ballantyne et al., 2008).

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, there exist significant concerns about the validity and reliability of standardized assessments for measuring EL progress (Abedi, 2004; Abedi & Dietel, 2004; Fairbairn & Fox, 2009) and consequently for their use as a primary means of identifying, placing, and monitoring EL students. Specifically, the linguistic complexity of these exams for second-language learners may produce construct-irrelevant variations between the performance of ELs and English proficient students. This is especially true for secondary ELs who are being tested on complex content. Echoing other researchers on this subject, Goldenberg (2008) has noted that there is no way to know whether ELs’ low standardized test scores are attributable to a
lack of content knowledge, their limited English proficiency, or the result of other factors that may influence their test performance. In addition to limited English, cultural differences, inadequate academic support or limited opportunities to learn may cause EL students to perform poorly even in those instances in which tests are adapted specifically for them (Spinelli, 2008). In many cases, EL students who perform poorly on such traditional test instruments are misidentified as having learning disabilities (Abedi, 2004; Figueroa & Hernandez, as cited in Spinelli, 2008). Not surprisingly, researchers insist that the standardized tests be used in combination with assessment methods that are more informal and contextual (Spinelli, 2008).

Researchers have argued that formative assessment, which occurs regularly in the classroom and provides individualized, immediate feedback, is the most useful type of assessment for determining students’ strengths and weaknesses, planning instruction, and monitoring progress (Meltzer & Hamann, 2005; Royer & Carlo, 1991; Sherris, 2008; Spinelli, 2008). These more authentic assessment procedures provide a more effective means for ELs to demonstrate what they know and can do. Individual teachers should informally assess ELs’ comprehension and performance of specific tasks frequently. Echevarria and Goldenberg (1999) explained, “When student outcomes are assessed through performance-based tasks, there is opportunity for rich, in-depth evaluation of individual and interactive student learning” (p. 3). Examples of formative assessment include review activities, oral interviews, teacher observation checklists, student self-evaluations; and portfolios of project work, writing samples, presentations, essays, and teacher-designed examinations (Spinelli, 2008; Valdez-Pierce & O’Malley, 1992).
Encouraging parents to become involved in their children’s education stands out as another key feature of schools with effective EL programs. This finding is not surprising given the well-documented benefits of parent involvement for the performance of all students (Epstein, 1996; Henderson & Berla, 1997). Researchers stress that, at the secondary level, it is what parents do at home with respect to homework and television monitoring that appears to have the greatest impact on student outcomes (Caplan, Hall, Rubin, & Flemming, 1995). In their examination of studies on EL literacy development, Genesee and Riches (2006) identified several studies that also suggest a link between certain home-related practices and EL literacy development. Although the reviewers considered only a few studies, most of which were conducted with small study samples, the available evidence associates such practices as having more books in the home, children reading regularly at home, and children being read to at home or listening to audio recordings of stories at home as having a positive effect on their second-language reading performance. Not unlike the case of native English-speaking students, support from, and high-expectations on the part of, EL families help create pressure on students to succeed (Walqui, 2000a). Scholars also point to the value of parental guidance in ensuring that their secondary school students pursue challenging courses and receive some form of career counseling (Hollifield, 1995; U.S. Department of Education, 1994). Crosnoe’s (2009) research shed some light on the importance of EL family-school communications concerning coursework options during the critical transition from middle school to high school. Using the National Education Longitudinal Study sample, Crosnoe found that ELs and low-income students started high school in higher-level math courses
when their parents, middle-school personnel, and high-school personnel were in contact with each other about course placement. Their findings indicated that middle-school personnel, in particular, served as an important bridge between middle school and high school for EL parents. The value of connections of this nature cannot be underestimated in light of ELs’ history of lower levels of educational attainment and research findings on the strong relationship between completion of higher level math and science coursework in high school and college matriculation and completion (Finkelstein et al., 2009).

Although parent involvement in children’s education tends to diminish by the time children enter secondary school due to a variety of factors, Lucas et al. (1990) in their study of six high schools with strong EL programs cited efforts to encourage parents to become involved in their children’s education as one of several key features of these schools. In a later checklist of features of strong EL schools, Lucas (1997) listed staff who speak the parents’ languages, on-campus classes for parents, monthly parent activities, parent involvement with counselors in planning children’s schedules, neighborhood meetings with school staff and parents, and telephone contacts as examples of strategies for reaching EL parents. Both Parrish et al. (2006) and T. Williams et al. (2007) identified parent involvement and community outreach as features of schools that were demonstrating significant progress in educating ELs. Several of the principals interviewed by Parrish et al. reported valuing the support of a community liaison who facilitated communication with EL families, sometimes through home visits, about school activities and academic expectations. These respondents also discussed their efforts to foster school environments that are welcoming and accepting of students’ home cultures.

In his conceptualization of California high schools that serve ELs well, Gold (2006)
advocated for schools that establish early school-to-home connections. These connections involved charging specific staff members with the responsibility for working with the family to develop individualized learning plans. Walqui et al. (2010) recommended that schools focus on involving parents in meaningful ways; for example, through resource centers that offer them academic and social programs designed to meet adult needs and that provide education about effective ways to support their children’s learning. Other research suggests that when teacher professional development is focused on building links with families, teachers are better equipped to weave students’ home languages, cultures, and families into instructional activities and thereby reinforce the home-school connection (Ballantyne et al., 2008). Such activities as encouraging students to read subject matter in their home languages at home or assigning activities that involve family interviews help fortify the role of the EL family in the education of their children. Researchers associated with the Promise Initiative included building the leadership capacity of families and communities to advocate in support of improved teaching and learning for ELs among the core principles for EL-oriented reform (Olsen et al., 2010).

It is worthy of note in closing that even the leaders of relatively successful schools reported ongoing challenges in communicating with, and actively involving, non-English-speaking parents. Respondents in the Parrish et al. (2006) study explained that, although EL parents are supportive of their children’s education, they often do not possess the skills to provide the necessary level of academic support.
Professional Development

Professional development constitutes an essential tool for cultivating in educators at all levels a shared vision of effective teaching and learning for ELs and for equipping them with the knowledge and skills to actualize that vision effectively (Walqui et al., 2010). As such, it must be focused on preparing principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders, and English-language development and content-area teachers alike in undertaking this work. Schools that are effective with ELs implement sustained, focused professional development (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006).

School leaders in particular must be knowledgeable about the research on ELs so that they are able to make informed choices about the best programs and pedagogical practices for meeting various EL needs (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010c). Indeed, researchers have lamented that practices and policies pursued by many schools are not rooted in sound research on effective practices for ELs (Olsen, 2010; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). They insist that professional development for administrators should focus on grooming them to be genuine instructional leaders on behalf of ELs (Walqui et al., 2010). Indeed, the leaders of effective EL schools studied by T. Williams et al. (2007) ensured the availability of instructional resources, including a strong teaching staff, characterized by sound subject knowledge, training in curricular programs, a collaborative spirit, familiarity with the standards, and an excitement for teaching.

State and district policies that place most ELs in mainstream classes make EL success directly dependent upon regular classroom teachers and reinforce the need for administrators to ensure that these teachers be adequately prepared. Principals of schools demonstrating unusually high levels of EL achievement emphasized teachers’ knowledge
and skills in working with ELs as vital to the quality of their work with ELs (Parrish et al., 2006). Over two-thirds of California teachers provided some form of special instructional services, including Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), ELD, or primary language support, to ELs during the 2008-2009 school year (CDE, 2009b). Although California requires all multiple- and single-subject credentialed teachers to complete either a Crosscultural Language and Development (CLAD) certificate or an AB 1059 credential, researchers have raised questions about the adequacy of this training in light of consistently high EL drop-out rates and teachers’ frustrations about how to serve these students (Gándara et al., 2008). A study of over 200 elementary schools showed no correlation between the number of teachers who were CLAD certified and EL performance (T. Williams et al., 2007). Surveys of California teachers have revealed that teachers—even those who are credentialed to teach ELs—need and want more opportunities to learn from professionals skilled in working with ELs, more time for collaboration, and training focused on the developmental characteristics of second-language learners (Gándara et al., 2005). Additionally, school districts and principals continue to cite inadequate teacher preparation for working with English learners as the primary challenge to these students’ academic success (Walqui et al., 2010).

Powerful professional development accounts for the way in which teachers learn (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). For many teachers,

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18This training includes coursework in second-language acquisition, instructional accommodations for ELs, and the role of culture in learning. All novice teachers graduating from teacher preparation programs in California must complete Cross-cultural Language and Development (CLAD) certification. Veteran teachers must pass the California Teachers of English Learners (CTEL) examination.
participating in coursework on the teaching of ELs may not be sufficient to effect real change in their practice. Changing teachers’ instructional practice in significant ways is a slow process that involves considerable support (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). It requires professional development that is sustained over time and accompanied by job-embedded practice (Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 1997; National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1996). Given the limited research base on appropriate professional development for teachers of ELs, scholars suggest that highly contextualized professional development is preferable, particularly in the form of a coaching model, whereby colleagues or administrators tailor training specifically to the daily instructional challenges and needs of individual teachers or groups of teachers (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010c). Highly contextualized professional development also provides teachers with opportunities for hands-on experiences in engaging and instructing EL students in their specific content areas (Walqui et al., 2010).

Teacher professional development should also include opportunities for systematic professional collaboration among teachers (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010c; Walqui et al., 2010). Depending upon which teachers are involved, this form of professional development may facilitate a sharing of perspectives among content, ELD, and bilingual teachers (Menken & Antunez, 2001). Teachers need collaborative mechanisms for working together to design appropriate instruction especially for subgroups of ELs, such as long-term ELs, for whom there currently exist limited materials and programs (Olsen, 2010). Examples of collaborative activities include common planning time for collaborative analysis and reflection upon EL students’ formative assessments or opportunities for co-teaching.
Particularly interesting studies have focused upon the ways teachers in schools educating large numbers of ELs have ultimately changed their beliefs about their practice. Teachers in these schools first implemented new practices and witnessed student performance improvements as a result of those practices prior to any transformation in their beliefs (Goldenberg, 2008; McDougall, Saunders, & Goldenberg, 2007; Saunders et al., as cited in Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010c). In the study by McDougall et al. (2007), changes in practice and subsequent improvements in achievement actually fueled a collective willingness among teachers to engage in more concerted efforts and reflective practice, which, in turn, helped transform their expectations for EL student achievement.

Despite varying degrees of empirical evidence regarding the instructional practices teachers need to educate adolescent ELs effectively, there is a considerable body of professional literature that offers guidance regarding the knowledge and skills that professional development for mainstream secondary ELs teachers should target. In many instances, these practices are consistent with those that are effective with all learners. In others, they involve specific modifications for ELs. The subsequent section on effective instructional practices for ELs addresses many of these practices in more detail. However, for the purpose of the immediate discussion on professional development, several key skill areas are worthy of mention. Although each of these recommendations is cited by a multitude of sources, only a few sources are listed here given space limitations.

- All secondary teachers must have deep knowledge of their subject matter and pedagogy in order to teach the relevant standards and enable students to access the knowledge and skills contained in those standards (Menken & Antunez, 2001);
• Every teacher, including those teaching advanced courses, should understand the process of language acquisition, including the role of language in instruction, the interplay of first and second language acquisition, and the signs of normal second language development (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Genesee et al., 2006; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000);

• Teachers should have a deep understanding of the language demands of their discipline, including discipline-specific discourse patterns and vocabulary, and be capable of supporting students’ second-language literacy development in their respective content areas. They should be capable of integrating all four language modalities into their lessons: oral, listening, reading, and writing (Carnegie Council for Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2009; Genesee et al., 2006; Meltzer & Hamann, 2005; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007);

• Teachers need deep understanding of who their EL students are and strategies for engaging them actively in the learning process and integrating these students equally as members of classroom learning communities. These include strategies for tapping into backgrounds, interests, and experiences to support learning. They also include strategies that promote interactive learning (Meltzer & Hamann, 2004; Walqui et al., 2010), and build “communities of difference” (Shields, 2004, p. 38);

• Teachers should be comfortable scaffolding instruction to support ELs with the understanding that making material accessible to ELs does not equate with simplifying the linguistic and conceptual input (Gold, 2006; Lewis-Moreno, 2007; Walqui et al., 2010). Specifically, teachers must be able to adapt and select content (textbook materials, etc.) and pedagogy in ways that increase students’ access and still satisfy rigorous academic standards;

• Teachers must be equipped to check for EL understanding and modify instruction accordingly using a variety of formative assessments, both formal and informal. They should know how to use both qualitative and quantitative information on ELs to design and deliver targeted, engaging, and challenging instruction. In particular, they should also understand the implications of language proficiency on assessment results and classroom performance and be able to distinguish between content and language comprehension problems (Meltzer & Hamann, 2004; Spinelli, 2008); and

• Teachers should be knowledgeable about strategies for building relationships with families in ways that connect them to students’ learning. This knowledge should encompass developing sensitivity to cultural differences in working with ELs’ families and an awareness of district- and school-level resources available for working with and supporting families (Ballantyne et al., 2008).
Few researchers would argue that there is no greater resource for educating adolescent ELs effectively than well-prepared, committed teachers. Ensuring that those who teach ELs have the proper credentialing is but one step on a long and vitally important journey.

Unique Challenges Facing Secondary Schools

Before concluding this discussion on effective schools for ELs, it is worth noting that educators intent upon making secondary schools more effective learning environments for ELs face a number of unique challenges. These encompass the more intense academic demands of secondary-level coursework, the complex social and emotional needs of adolescent children, and the structural limitations of secondary-school instruction. With respect to academic challenges, it is not uncommon for adolescents of all language abilities to struggle academically as the literacy demands of the secondary curriculum surpass their skill levels in many cases (Haycock, 2001). For ELs, the complex demands of content-area learning are magnified by their struggles to grasp simultaneously both basic English and academic vocabulary specific to each discipline within a tight timeline. Significantly, many linguistic minority children do not return to home environments that are capable of reinforcing the language skills to which they are exposed on a daily basis.

Increased academic demands are compounded by a variety of socioemotional pressures faced by secondary students. Understanding and addressing the social and emotional needs of secondary students is a critical component educating them well (Meltzer & Hamann, 2004). Specifically, issues of engagement and motivation are worthy of particular attention. Researchers cite adolescents’ perceptions of themselves and their personal goals as strong motivators for learning (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).
For second-language learners, motivational issues may vary depending upon how long they have felt unsuccessful in U.S. schools. Olsen’s (2010) research referred to habits of passivity and disengagement among long-term ELs who have frequently felt invisible in mainstream classrooms. Researchers note that teachers may also misinterpret second-language learners’ apparent withdrawal from participation in classroom activities as a lack of motivation, when this behavior may actually stem from their fear of failure, their inability to comprehend the language of instruction, or low expectations for their performance (Walqui, 2000b). Finally, a number of developmental considerations universal to all teenagers, including such physical and cognitive developments as brain growth, sleep patterns, and the ability to perform abstract reasoning, also affect learning capacity (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

A variety of structural limitations associated with secondary schools, particularly large comprehensive high schools, also affects student learning. In addition to the challenges associated with being taught academic content in a language other than their native language, ELs confront many of the same structural challenges confronted by their native-speaking peers attending large comprehensive secondary schools. These include a lack of personalization, multiple teachers, 45-50-minute class periods, disconnected lessons, limited access to counselors, and large impersonal student bodies (Darling-Hammond, 2002). According to scholars, however, many of these institutional barriers are especially detrimental to the learning of ELs (Callahan, 2005; Callahan & Gándara, 2004; Gold, 2006; Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Walqui, 2000b). In documenting a number of persistent shortcomings of secondary schools, researchers have concluded that comprehensive high schools are particularly ineffective
schools for most ELs. These shortcomings include insufficient time for ELs to achieve their academic goals, inadequate access to support services that meet their complex needs, a paucity of teachers who are trained to work with them and understand their learning needs, limited access to high-level courses, inadequate assessment of language-and content-area skills, lack of cohesive comprehensive programs, insufficient appropriate learning materials, the organizational isolation of language-development teachers, insufficient alternative educational options, and a lack of focus on postsecondary planning. In particular, fragmented school days and instructional programs, coupled with the isolation of content-area teachers in separate departments who seldom interact with one another or with English-language development teachers, conspire to deny these students critical opportunities to make connections across ideas and disciplines (Walqui, 2000b). Moreover, as mentioned above, the common practice of tracking of students at the secondary level—and particularly ELs students INTO less rigorous courses not only prevents them from earning the credits they need, but may also limit their opportunities to engage with established groups of English-speaking students (Callahan, 2005). There is little question that secondary district leaders intent upon cultivating schools that serve ELs more effectively face formidable challenges that inhibit EL success. Not only must these leaders address the heightened academic, emotional, social, and physical needs of adolescents learners, but they must also overcome a number of structural barriers to change long associated with secondary schools.
Effective Instruction for English Learners

Similarities Between Effective EL and English-Only Instruction

A common finding among the various research panels on the education of ELs is that, to a great extent, high-quality instruction for English-speaking students also constitutes high-quality instruction for ELs (August & Hakuta, 1998; August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006). Among the features of quality instruction that serve both native English speakers and ELs well are clear goals and objectives; challenging learning environments and rigorous curricula; instruction that is paced appropriately; opportunities for active participation, meaningful interaction with other students, and application of learning; and regular assessments and feedback (Goldenberg, 2008). Other instructional practices that yield benefits to both ELs and native English speakers include a good balance between basic and higher-order skills (Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Overall, a combination of explicit and interactive instruction techniques has been shown to be effective with both ELs and native English speakers (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006; Meltzer & Hamann, 2005).

Drawing from the research on effective teaching practice in developing their framework for effective classroom practice with ELs as part of the Promise Initiative, researchers Lavadenz and Armas (2010) identified four essential areas of teacher expertise and effective instruction for ELs: (a) implementing a rigorous and relevant curriculum; (b) making connections with students’ backgrounds, interests, and experiences; (c) providing comprehensible input; and (d) creating opportunities for interactions between teachers and students, as well as, between students and their peers. All of these practices are frequently referred to as Specially Designed Academic
Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies to which all teachers in California are exposed as part of the CLAD certification process. To a great extent, each of these skill areas reflects good teaching practice in general and is, therefore, relevant for teachers of all learners.

*Implementing a rigorous and relevant curriculum in the classroom.* Much of the school-level discussion earlier in the chapter on the importance of a rigorous curriculum is relevant here. From a classroom standpoint, implementing a rigorous curriculum requires that teachers communicate high expectations for all students, select appropriate instructional materials, and teach to the standards in ways that allow for the differentiation of varying student needs and learning styles. As with native speakers of English, instruction for ELs must be differentiated to reflect individual differences and needs among students. It is precisely because ELs constitute such a diverse and complex student population that there exists no single “correct” way to educate all of them. Indeed, scholars have cautioned practitioners not to equate “best practice” with “single best practice” (Genesee et al., 2006, p. 226). Teachers should instead cultivate a vast repertoire of instructional approaches for educating students whose needs differ based on their native language skills, family backgrounds, personal motivations, learning strategies, and so forth. The ultimate determination of accommodations, modifications, and interventions should be a function of the individual student’s response to instruction, as well as his or her individual skills, abilities, knowledge, and socio-cultural factors (Torgesen et al., 2007). Educators should differentiate instruction and content according to such factors as the length of time in which a student has been receiving instruction in English, similarities between the student’s native language and English, language
proficiency, specific areas of weaknesses and strengths in the academic area of concern, and the nature and effect of past interventions (Echevarria & Goldenberg, 1999; Genesee et al., 2006). One important strategy for differentiating instruction involves grouping EL students within a class in purposeful and meaningful ways (Ballantyne et al., 2008). Researchers vary in their recommendations on whether to group students by comparable proficiency levels or with ELs of different skill levels.

Making connections with students’ backgrounds. In their extensive synthesis of literature on secondary ELs literacy development, Meltzer and Hamann (2004) identified student engagement and motivation as critically important to the educational success of ELs. These researchers point to a body of literature that supports the need to concentrate on the affective and motivational dimensions of academic literacy development for EL learners. Attending to these aspects of literacy development necessitates a substantial broadening of the literacy curriculum beyond reading, decoding, fluency, and comprehension to encompass the intentional use of strategies that motivate students to read and become engaged with text. One could easily extend this paradigm beyond literacy to refer more broadly to instructional strategies that motivate students to become engaged with subject-matter content, period.

A critical instructional practice for increasing student engagement and comprehension of content-area concepts and ideas involves making connections with students’ personal lives. Teachers may do this by tapping into the background knowledge, interests, and experiences that students bring into their classrooms as a starting point for learning. According to Freire (1998), teachers must know the reality in which their students live. He wrote, “Without this, we have no access to the way they
think, so only with great difficulty can we perceive what and how they know” (p. 58). Moll’s (1992) Funds of Knowledge approach urges schools and teachers to view the home and community resources of diverse students as offering “great, potential utility for classroom instruction” (p. 133). Moll’s approach is less about family culture than it is about teachers’ tapping into the social, economic, and productive strengths of diverse families and communities and building upon these strengths in their quest to educate bilingual and minority children. Researchers also suggest that teachers build connections with students by looking for opportunities to incorporate cultural and family knowledge into the curriculum (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000) or to use culturally familiar texts that reflect ELs’ social realities (Carlo et al., 2004; Meltzer & Hamann, 2004). According to Wong Fillmore and Snow (2000), teachers rarely know much about their students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds or the struggles they face on a daily basis to learn content in a second language. These researchers suggest that teachers who respect and incorporate the home languages and cultures of their students into learning activities support ELs in making the transition from home to school and avoid diminishing the role of the family in children’s learning. Another strategy for helping students make meaningful connections to learning and literacy in particular is to allow them to self-select reading materials that coincide with their interests or life experiences (Meltzer & Hamann, 2004; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Delivering comprehensible input. According to Lavadenz and Armas (2010), teachers can ensure their EL students have access to a rigorous, standards-aligned curriculum through additive approaches or scaffolding techniques that rely on cycles of input, clarifications and questioning, and strategic use of primary languages. Teachers
deliver comprehensible input through a range of techniques, including adjusting their speech, modeling academic tasks, or using graphic organizers and other visual and manipulative tools (Short & Echevarria, 2005). Gersten and Baker (2000) have noted, “visual aids such as graphic organizers, concept and story maps, and word banks give students a concrete system to process, reflect on, and integrate information” (p. 12).

Other strategies for making content comprehensible center on vocabulary development and involve creating opportunities for repeated exposure to words in a variety of meaningful contexts (Carlo et al., 2004). Finally, the delivery of comprehensible input involves teacher efforts to check for comprehension and provide feedback to students through the use of frequent formal and informal assessment strategies.

Creating opportunities for interactions. Interactive instruction refers to opportunities for students to engage with their peers in meaningful, authentic conversations about content (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2009; Meltzer & Hamann, 2004). Examples of such instruction include flexible student grouping and such collaborative routines as structured conversations, structured group work, or pair-share partner activities. These activities involve students in a variety of cognitive activities, including questioning, predicting, visualizing, summarizing, and clarifying thoughts. They provide valuable occasions for ELs to develop communicative competence in both receptive and expressive language skills (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2009). Cooperative learning strategies, in particular, are cited as critical vehicles for encouraging structured interaction between native and non-native English speakers (Anstrom, 1997) and for ensuring culturally responsive instruction in content-area classes (Waxman & Tellez, 2002).
Students are generally favorably disposed toward such activities as peer interaction and collaborative literacy (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

These four areas of teacher expertise comprise essential competencies for both English-language development and mainstream content-area teachers. Nevertheless, despite training and exposure to research in many of these areas, teachers of ELs in many California classrooms do not regularly integrate research-based practices effectively into their lessons. In their evaluation of the implementation of a 3-year pilot Promise Initiative, Lavadenz and Armas (2010) found that teachers continued to rely primarily on teacher-centered instruction, offering limited opportunities for meaningful interaction among students or between students and teachers. They also tended to teach a restricted curriculum that did not often involve the use of more culturally relevant, engaging supplemental resources. Similarly, Walqui et al. (2010) in their observations of California middle classrooms discovered vast inconsistencies across classroom in terms of the implementation of research-based practices, with only a small core of teachers at each campus attending to EL needs in ways recommended by the research. Finally, Olsen’s (2010) study of long-term ELs in California’s secondary schools revealed that these students often do not have access to instruction, supports, curriculum, or materials that meet their learning needs.

Meeting the Language Development and Academic Needs of English Learners in the Classroom

The education of ELs differs significantly from that of English proficient students in that it requires attention to their dual needs of English-language acquisition and academic development. English learners require specific language development
instruction aimed at improving their abilities to speak, listen, read, and write in English. They also need specialized instruction within mainstream classes in order to develop academic literacy skills essential for comprehending and reflecting upon disciplinary subject matter.

Although many similar instructional approaches work with both EL and native-English speakers, research findings on EL literacy development are insufficient to conclude that the same instructional routines are *equally* effective with both groups of students (August et al., 1998). In fact, when NLP researchers compared the effect of teaching reading comprehension strategies\(^\text{19}\) to language minority students versus the effect of teaching similar strategies to EO students, they reported weaker effects for the language-minority students. In some cases, the effect on ELs was negligible.

Researchers have surmised that the reduced effect sizes for ELs may be attributable to the need for these students to develop greater facility with the English language, including more extensive knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, and language conventions. (August et al., 1998; Goldenberg, 2008). The need for special instructional modifications is especially critical for older students who are learning increasingly challenging content with complex vocabulary. Although ELs are often assigned to the same classes as native English speakers, researchers have identified several key differences between the instructional needs of the two groups that may call for different instructional approaches (Harper & de Jong, 2004; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). These range from differences in intrinsic motivation to their ability to understand classroom discussions to the type of ____________

\(^{19}\) These include comprehension monitoring, question asking, and summarization and are to be distinguished from such reading instruction practices as cooperative learning, instructional conversations, and mastery learning—all of which were shown to have positive effects on EL reading comprehension.
background knowledge they bring to the classroom. According to Gersten and Baker (2000):

> effective instruction for English-language learners is more than just “good teaching.” It is teaching that is tempered, tuned, and otherwise adjusted, as a musical score is adjusted, to the correct “pitch” at which English-language learners will best “hear” the content (i.e., find it most meaningful). (p. 10)

**Instruction Focused on ELs’ English Language Development Needs**

Researchers have acknowledged that English Language Development (ELD) instruction is of paramount importance to the education of ELs, regardless of the vehicle through which it is delivered; for example, English-only or some form of bilingual program (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2009). In fact, ELs participating in specialized language development programs generally experience better academic outcomes in content-area courses than those who are placed in mainstream classes and receive no specialized language support (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2002). By middle and high school, those ELs who have received some specialized language instruction experience outcomes equivalent to or higher than those who have participated solely in mainstream classes without ELD support. They also perform at grade level and are less inclined to leave school early.

The purpose of ELD is to provide developmentally appropriate English language instruction to ELs demonstrating various levels of English proficiency. California has adopted ELD content standards for Grades K-12 that cover language development in each of the four language modalities: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The state has, however, yet to adopt a curriculum framework based on these standards. Researchers

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20 Formerly referred to as English as a Second Language (ESL), ELD refers to a specific program of English language instruction provided to all ELs in California.
have argued that, without such a framework in place, publishers have limited incentives
to produce appropriate curricular materials for secondary ELD students (Callahan, 2006).
Moreover, there exists no consistency in the adoption of materials across districts (Parrish
et al., 2006). In California, ELD must be part of the daily instructional program for every
EL student. Districts make the final determination whether ELs will receive this language
instruction through specially designed ELD classes or through mainstream English
classes. In many districts with secondary schools, mainstream English teachers are
expected to provide ELD instruction to ELs in their classrooms. Although the research is
not conclusive on whether a separate ELD block is preferable to receiving ELD through
mainstream classes, researchers have suggested that such activities as daily oral English
language instruction should be provided through separate ELD classes (Gersten & Baker,
2000), in which learners are grouped by proficiency levels (Coleman & Goldenberg,
2010c). Parrish et al. (2006) in their study of districts and schools with high EL
performance found that most of the respondents who cited a strong focus on ELD
instruction as a key factor in their EL students’ success relied upon a separate ELD block
and emphasized the importance of grouping ELs by level of English proficiency.
Administrators at these successful schools also described their ELD programs as
rigorously structured, standards-aligned, and specifically scheduled throughout the year.

*Instruction focused on English oral language development.* English oral
language proficiency involves “acquiring vocabulary, gaining control over grammar, and
developing an understanding of the subtle semantics of English” (Saunders & O’Brien,
2006, p. 14). The value in facilitating English oral language proficiency in ELs is
indicated by a number of studies reviewed by CREDE and NLP researchers. These
studies showed a direct relationship between English oral proficiency and a number of specific competencies in English, including a higher capacity to formulate questions, provide formal definitions of words, use academic language, and employ a wider repertoire of language learning strategies (Saunders & O’Brien). Several studies also reported that ELs who exhibit strong oral proficiency in their second-language experienced greater success in reading English than did those with less-developed second-language oral proficiency. Specifically, academic and literacy-related second-language oral proficiency appears to play a greater role in English literacy development than more general verbal communication abilities (Riches & Genesee, 2006). Of particular relevance is a 1997 study by Garcia-Vasquez et al. (as cited in Genesee et al., 2006) of bilingual Hispanic students in Grades 6-12. These researchers found one of the strongest correlations between students’ performance on an academically oriented language proficiency assessment, the Woodstock Language Proficiency Battery, and their English reading achievement. Several studies reviewed by NLP researchers also revealed links between oral language proficiency and English reading comprehension for ELs (August & Shanahan, 2006). In particular, students’ oral vocabulary knowledge was positively associated with their ability to understand written texts (Lesaux & Geva, as cited in August & Shanahan, 2006). These NLP researchers also identified several studies (some with middle school students) that suggest an association between well-developed English oral language skills and English writing skills. Coleman and Goldenberg (2009), in an article focused specifically on oral language development, maintained that developing high levels of oral language proficiency should be a priority for educators of ELs.
Despite the documented benefits of English oral proficiency, there exists little empirical knowledge about appropriate instructional practices for accelerating its acquisition in second-language learners (Saunders & O’Brien, 2006). In reviewing limited evidence related to instructional practices, these researchers focused closely on vocabulary development. Overall, they concurred regarding the importance of systematic and explicit instruction of vocabulary, including syntax, grammar and text structures (Goldenberg, 2008). Three studies reviewed by CREDE researchers (Avila & Sadoski, McLaughlin et al., and Ulanoff & Pucci, as cited in Genesee et al., 2006) evaluated the effectiveness of different instruction techniques in helping ELs to improve vocabulary skills. Among the techniques that yielded significant improvements in performance were direct instruction in vocabulary to deepen knowledge of high-frequency words, strategies used to infer meaning from texts, use of cognates, recognition of root words, use of a keyword method, and use of a review-preview method of vocabulary development. All five vocabulary-related studies cited in CREDE focused on elementary school children.

The NLP review also found three experimental studies of English vocabulary teaching with elementary school children, all of which revealed positive benefits between the teaching of vocabulary and students’ ability to read (Carlo et al., 2004; Perez, and Vaughn-Shavuo, as cited in August & Shanahan, 2006). Carlo et al. (2004) showed that Spanish-speaking and English-speaking fifth graders benefited equally in learning targeted vocabulary when such techniques as explicit teaching of words, repeated exposure to words in a variety of meaningful contexts, use of cognates, and selection of culturally relevant topics, among other techniques, were employed.
Researchers have also concluded that interactive learning strategies can be effective in teaching oral language. However, the degree of effectiveness of such strategies as cooperative grouping of ELs and native speakers tends to be a function of the nature of the tasks given to the students, with more structured tasks yielding greater benefits (Cathcart-Strong, and Jacob et al., as cited in Saunders & O’Brien, 2006). Unstructured interactions between ELs and native English speakers may foster the use of nonstandard English (Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Administrators at successful EL schools in California reported that one strategy they used to teach listening and speaking skills explicitly involved requiring ELs to speak in complete sentences during structured “share-pair” activities (Parrish et al., 2006). In developing oral language proficiency, researchers have repeatedly stressed that educators must focus on academic language—not just day-to-day communication skills. Although both skill sets are important, the former is essential for promoting high levels of literacy and academic achievement (Genesee et al., 2006). The importance of academic language to the education of secondary ELs is addressed later in this paper.

**Instruction focused on ELs’ literacy development.** For ELs, literacy development and oral language development are closely related and must occur simultaneously (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010b). In fact, some researchers define “adolescent literacy” broadly as encompassing the breadth of reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills required to grasp content and to demonstrate understanding of that content to others (Meltzer & Hamann, 2005). Similarly, the Adolescent ELL Literacy Advisory Panel convened by the Carnegie Corporation of New York in 2005, defined “academic literacy”
as encompassing “reading, writing, and oral discourse required for school” (Short & Fitzsimmons, p. 8).

Given the paucity of studies focusing specifically on the literacy development of EL students—NLP researchers identified only 17 studies focused on ELs compared to more than 400 studies on native English speakers—researchers were unable to perform a true meta-analysis of studies in this area (August & Shanahan, 2006). Five of the 17 studies focused on phonemic awareness and phonics, two on oral reading fluency, three on vocabulary instruction, three on reading comprehension, and four on writing. Only three studies included children in middle and high schools.

As with oral language instruction, researchers again found evidence of the value of direct, explicit instruction strategies for the literacy development of ELs. The NLP concluded that instruction focused explicitly on writing instruction and such key components of reading as phonemic awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension influenced positively the literacy development of language-minority students (August & Shanahan, 2006). Explicit direct instruction often relied upon such techniques as teacher modeling, the provision of corrective feedback, or guided practice (Goldenberg, 2008). Teachers who model students’ tasks or appropriate language use contribute to improved comprehension and performance for ELs (Ballantyne et al., 2008). Additionally, in the case of adolescent ELs, their limited vocabularies and background knowledge, coupled with the complexity of the reading material, make the explicit teaching of compensatory strategies for understanding text especially critical (Torgesen et al., 2007). Among the studies of secondary students reviewed by NLP, one showed significant positive effects when language-minority
students were explicitly taught to write well through efforts to make texts more reader-friendly, intensive teacher guidance, peer evaluation, and ultimately self-evaluation with limited scaffolding (Sengupta, as cited in August & Shanahan, 2006). Another study showed positive, albeit statistically nonsignificant, effects (Shames, as cited in August & Shanahan, 2006) for the use of explicit reading comprehension strategies with ESL students in Grades 9-11. A final study, which focused on the explicit teaching of writing to EL students using argumentative texts, showed negative effects (Franken et al., as cited in August & Shanahan, 2006). Overall, however, the NLP conclusion that language-minority students benefit from the same explicit instructional approaches in literacy as native learners is based primarily on 10 studies showing significant positive effects for elementary school students.

The CREDE researchers analyzed EL literacy instruction based on type of instruction: interactive, direct, and process-based instruction, with the understanding that these approaches to instruction were not mutually exclusive (Genesee & Riches, 2006). Analysis of the limited corpus of CREDE-reviewed studies (10 studies, one of which included middle-school students) on direct literacy instruction revealed that it can be effective for teaching vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing skills. Researchers cautioned, however, that overall, empirical evidence is limited by the small number of studies. In a study focused on middle-school students, Echevarria, Short, and Powers (2006) compared changes in the writing skills of ELs of diverse linguistic backgrounds following their teachers’ year-long participation in training using the Sheltered Instruction
Observation Protocol (SIOP)\textsuperscript{21} instructional method. Students whose teachers implemented the SIOP model performed slightly better than did a comparison group on an expository essay-writing task.

Researchers also discovered that direct instruction is often combined with interactive approaches. In literacy, interactive instruction entails creating opportunities for such high-quality exchanges as conversations that develop higher-order cognitive skills (Genesee & Riches, 2006). Researchers have also stressed the importance of positive interactions between teachers and students (Genesee & Riches, 2006; Scarcella, 1990). Overall, CREDE researchers concluded that interactive approaches were particularly effective, with 12 of the 15 studies examined showing positive outcomes for ELs in reading, writing, and such reading-related behaviors as engagement in reading and writing and a broader appreciation of literacy. The sole study of interactive literacy instruction with secondary students examined the effects of two types of interactive interventions (reciprocal teaching and cooperative grouping) on the reading comprehension of learning-disabled, middle-school-aged ELs (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996). Students in both groups—those exposed to reciprocal teaching alone and those exposed to a combination of reciprocal teaching and cooperative grouping—made significant progress in reading comprehension.

Finally, Genesee and Riches’ (2006) analysis of literacy development studies by instructional approach, revealed that instructional approaches involving little direct teaching or structured learning, often referred to as “process approaches,” were not

\textsuperscript{21}The SIOP model is a comprehensive model of instruction that involves explicit instruction, among other strategies. It is discussed more thoroughly in subsequent sections of this chapter.
consistently supported by the empirical research. More specifically, attempts to expose students to literacy-rich environments as the primary means of instruction were not associated with higher acquisition of reading and writing skills. This finding on process approaches shed further light on the importance of direct instruction. Genesee and Riches have concluded that “presenting direct instruction in interactive learning environments ensures that it is meaningful, contextualized, and individualized” (p. 140).

Embedding Academic Literacy Into the Content-Area Instruction

Focusing on academic language. The provision of explicit academic language instruction in conjunction with content is cited as a primary means of affording linguistic minority students greater access to the curriculum (Minicucci, 1996.) Coleman and Goldenburg (2009) defined academic language as “the vocabulary, syntax, and other language forms necessary to participate in the classroom lessons and various other types of academic interactions” (p. 15). It differs from conversational language in that it assumes background knowledge on the part of speakers and listeners, and tends to be more abstract and more cognitively demanding. Academic language encompasses not only the specialized language of each academic subject area, but also academic cohesion words and academic process words (Rance-Roney, 2005). It extends beyond students’ abilities to comprehend text and academic discussions (receptive language) but also includes their abilities to respond to new content knowledge through academic writing and participation in oral exchanges (expressive language; Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010a). Additionally, it entails understanding multiple meanings for words depending upon context, e.g. the difference between “power” meaning strength and “political power” (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Academic language instruction should focus on
developing both the breadth (number of words) and depth (degree of knowledge of specific words) of EL students’ vocabulary (Torgesen et al., 2007).

Strong academic language skills are especially critical to the academic achievement of adolescent ELs who are regularly expected to decipher, discuss, and analyze complex, abstract content related to a variety of disciplines. ELs need to develop academic English language skills across the four language modalities of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as well as across content areas. In the absence of such skills, EL students effectively do not have access to the core academic curriculum.

Integrating content and language instruction. Research supports the notion that EL instruction should focus on language, literacy, and content simultaneously (Echevarria & Goldenberg, 1999; Henze & Lucas, 1993; Sherris, 2008; Walqui et al., 2010). Despite the importance of quality English language development to EL academic achievement, researchers have been critical of the system in California, which effectively creates a division for some ELs between the teaching of English through ELD classes and the learning of subject matter through content-area classes (Gándara et al., 2008; Walqui et al., 2010). According to these researchers, this division presumes falsely that students learn language first and subject matter second when, in actuality, these activities occur simultaneously (Walqui et al., 2010). More specifically, they insist that the teaching of disciplinary content necessarily involves teaching the academic language related to specific disciplines. “No good program for [linguistic minority] students at the secondary level should provide language development at the expense of content development” (Henze & Lucas, 1993, p. 58). By extension, effective EL instruction should require that ELD teachers integrate subject-area content with language development and that they be
familiar with both ELD and mainstream content area standards (Callahan, 2006; Rance-Roney, 2005). More specifically, ELD classes should address themes and develop skills that are connected to the various mainstream content areas (Walqui, 2000b). Similarly, effective EL instruction must also ensure that language development occur across the curriculum by supporting content-area teachers to integrate content and language instruction in their classrooms (Henze & Lucas, 1993; Meltzer & Hamann, 2005). In their study of effective EL schools, Parrish et al. (2006) found the following statement by an administrator typified that of many, “English acquisition has been systematically integrated into core content courses, by reinforcing basic ELD concepts within focus standards defined at the district level” (p. IV-28).

Meltzer and Hamann (2005), in an extensive review of the overlap between research on adolescent academic literacy development and that on effective content-area instruction for ELs, concluded that ELs require much of the same explicit support to develop academic literacy in each of the content areas as do native English speakers who are below grade level. They recommend eight instructional practices for content-area teachers.

The first practice encompasses teacher modeling of the appropriate use of academic language; explicit teaching of literacy skills in the context of reading, writing and learning; and employing multiple forms of assessment. A second recommended practice requires that teachers emphasize reading and writing in the content area, including creating frequent opportunities for students to write, receive feedback, discuss, edit, and revise their work. Of critical importance for ELs are teacher efforts to clarify the ways in which written language differs from oral language. A third recommended
practice involves the deliberate integration of speaking and listening skills into content-area classrooms. Much of the EL-related research supporting this recommendation overlaps with that discussed earlier under oral language development. Although teachers serve as models for the use of oral academic language, interaction with peers through instructional conversations and other collaborative work may provide important vehicles for learning how to use language more effectively to communicate. Gersten and Baker (2000) have noted that both extended discourse about academic topics and briefer responses to specific questions about content are critical to the academic growth of ELs. In recent research on middle-school ELs, Walqui et al. (2010) maintained, “The importance of practicing English orally in sustained discourse about academic ideas and processes cannot be overstated” (p. 72). A fourth practice requires that teachers support students in using cognitive and metacognitive strategies (higher-order thinking strategies) to develop the reading and writing skills they need to learn content. Teachers should explain strategies and steps for tackling instructional tasks, as well as assess and support students before they start a task independently (Chamot, 1995; Gersten & Baker, 2000). For example, writing answers to open-ended questions about what they have read is one important strategy for helping ELs to become independent thinkers regarding what they read and write (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, as cited in Meltzer & Hamann, 2005). Students who understand and are able tap into metacognitive processes are empowered to become autonomous learners (Walqui et al., 2010). A fifth recommended strategy involves creating learner-centered classrooms in which teachers facilitate active engagement by students in their own literacy development through such interactive strategies as collaborative learning, flexible grouping, and inquiry-based learning. Once
again, strategies used in content-area classrooms do not differ substantially from those used in ELD classrooms.

Meltzer and Hamann (2005) also culled three discipline-based strategies from the literature that teachers can use to support EL students’ academic literacy development in specific content areas. These include: (a) recognizing and analyzing the discipline-based discourse features—the speaking, listening, reading, writing, and thinking formats specific to a particular content area; (b) understanding the text structures or reading and writing conventions used in content-area texts; and (c) developing vocabulary knowledge—the essential words and concepts associated with a particular discipline. Although these strategies are useful for helping all students to grasp the particular content being taught, they are particularly useful for ELs who often have more limited academic literacy backgrounds or are familiar with differing literacy conventions from their primary languages. According to Walqui et al. (2010), “learning the language of a new discipline is part of learning the new discipline” (p. 72). Teachers must not only understand what these students need to know linguistically to express themselves in science, history, or mathematics, but they must actively incorporate opportunities to learn the relevant English into their lessons (Anstrom, 1997). As in ELD classes, explicit vocabulary instruction is essential to content-area instruction for ELs, and the research shows that students must be given frequent opportunities to understand and apply vocabulary in authentic contexts (Carlo et al., 2004; Henze & Lucas, 1993).

Using comprehensive instructional frameworks. The preceding sections have identified many of the research-based instructional strategies that have been shown to be effective for teaching secondary ELs. It is apparent that teachers of ELs, whether they be
ELD teachers or mainstream content-area teachers, must attend to a wide variety of EL learner needs and be comfortable employing a range of instructional strategies. However, ensuring that those practices become incorporated consistently and thoughtfully into teaching practice on a regular basis is another challenge. Researchers have asserted that educators need more than a set of multiple techniques and methods, but also require comprehensive instructional frameworks to guide the planning and delivery of an entire curriculum (Genesee & Riches, 2006; Hansen-Thomas, 2008). In this regard, the empirically-validated lesson planning and delivery approach known as SIOP appears frequently in the research on ELs (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). The model relies on careful lesson preparation that incorporates many of the aforementioned features of effective instruction for ELs. Using SIOP, content-area teachers are trained to:

(a) incorporate language objectives into all content lessons; (b) build background knowledge by explicitly linking concepts to students’ prior knowledge and experiences and emphasizing key vocabulary; (c) use comprehensible input, including appropriate speech, visuals, modeling, and so forth; (d) employ learning strategies and scaffolding techniques that engage students in problem-solving and higher-order thinking; (e) create opportunities for student interaction; (f) provide opportunities for practice and application of concepts; (g) pay close attention to the nature of lesson delivery (pacing, efforts to support language and content objectives, student engagement); and (h) frequently review concepts and assess learning. One possible limitation of the model noted by Coleman and Goldenberg (2009) is that the SIOP supports the development of receptive language in students by helping to make content comprehensible, but it does not necessarily develop ELs’ expressive language skills.
Although there exists considerable research on many of its components, there are few completed studies on the effectiveness of the SIOP as a model (Read, 2008). The first part of a 7-year study of SIOP used a quasi-experimental design to determine the effect of SIOP training on middle-school teachers’ practice. The impact of the SIOP model on student performance was measured several years into the study through the administration of a writing assessment common to both experimental and control groups. Students in the experimental group whose teachers had participated in SIOP training performed slightly better on an expository writing test (Echevarria et al., 2006). These effects have been described as modest (Goldenberg, 2008). More recent ongoing studies whose findings have yet to be published include a 2-year study conducted in two New Jersey districts with secondary ELs. Preliminary results revealed that the achievement of students whose teachers used the SIOP model increased significantly from spring 2004 to spring 2005 as measured by scores on oral, reading, and writing subtests. A year later in 2006, these same intervention students outperformed matched comparison students whose teachers did not use SIOP (Center for Applied Linguistics [CAL], 2010). Results from a 5-year ongoing longitudinal study examining the use of the SIOP model and instructional materials in middle-school science classrooms are expected to be released in 2011 (CAL, 2010). Read’s (2008) dissertation study of EL children in Grades 3-5 showed no noticeable difference in the performance on standardized reading tests between the experimental group students, whose teachers were exposed to SIOP professional development, and the control group. Despite the fact that the experimental group did not surpass the control group (which had outperformed the experimental group prior to the intervention), the experimental group’s performance did result in a narrowing
of the gap between groups. Read cited the 1-year time frame as a limitation to his study and suggested that the gap narrowing indicated that student achievement could be positively affected as a result of SIOP with more time.

Language of Instruction

The debate over bilingual versus English-only programs. Much of the debate and research surrounding the education of ELs concerns whether or not these students derive significant educational benefits from bilingual\textsuperscript{22} or other programs that rely on and support their primary language development (Crawford, 1999). Although most educators and researchers have acknowledged that English-language skills are critical for academic and career success, they are divided about how best to teach both language acquisition and academic content (Gándara et al., 2005; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Proponents of bilingual education have highlighted the importance of relying on students’ primary languages to teach content, the connection between home and school this bilingual approach affords, the sense of failure that may result when children are expected to learn both oral and written English simultaneously, and the value of bilingualism in society (Ochoa & Cadiero-Kaplan, 2004; Saiz & Zoido, 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). On the other hand, champions of rapid English acquisition have argued that non-English fluent students are educationally isolated and may be compromised in their ability to compete in the American mainstream (American Federation of Teachers (AFT), 2002; Rossell & Baker, 1996). Not surprisingly, the controversy over the use of native language instruction in schools is often mired in the politics of civil rights, multi-culturalism, and

\textsuperscript{22}The term bilingual is used more loosely by some researchers than others. For the purpose of this study, bilingual education refers to education programs that rely on students’ native languages as well as a second language for instruction.
immigration, and frequently has little to do with sound educational practice (AFT, 2002; August & Hakuta, 1997; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005). To complicate matters, there is even division among those who support bilingual education, with one camp viewing the development of native language capacity as an end goal in itself and another viewing it primarily as a tool for English acquisition.

These philosophical divisions manifest themselves in the panoply of existing programs for ELs, which vary according to program goals, their reliance on native languages, and the linguistic backgrounds of the participating students (August & Hakuta, 1998). Despite their differences, programs can generally be classified into two primary categories: those that rely on continued instruction in the student’s primary language and those that focus on the learning of English. The former include newcomer/primary-language submersion and maintenance-bilingual, transitional-bilingual, and two-way bilingual or dual immersion programs (see appendix for a brief description of each of these programs). Programs focusing on English include structured immersion, sheltered English or content-based English as a Second Language (ESL) (also called English Language Development [ELD]), pull-out programs, and English submersion.23 As mentioned in the introductory chapter, in the wake of Proposition 227, the vast majority of ELs in California are educated in English-language classrooms. English-language classrooms in California include Structured English Immersion (SEI) classes, also referred to as ELD classes by some districts, for students with less than “reasonable

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23In 1974, Supreme Court found in Lau v. Nichols that the English submersion approach violated the civil rights of language-minority students and required schools to provide extra support to help these students overcome language barriers.
A closer look at the research on primary language use. The controversy over the merits of bilingual education programs has spawned numerous evaluation studies aimed at measuring the comparative effectiveness of various bilingual programs relative to English-only instructional approaches. Research syntheses dating back to the 1980s have yielded differing conclusions about the effects of bilingual programs, with some reviewers concluding that the case for certain bilingual programs was weak (Baker & de Kanter, 1981; Rossell & Baker, 1996; Rossell & Ross, 1986) and others reporting the positive effects of bilingual programs (Greene, 1997; Rolstad et al., 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2005; Willig, 1985). Although it is beyond the scope of this study to provide an exhaustive review of research in this area, several of the most widely cited syntheses merit brief discussion. These include narrative reviews produced by Baker and de Kanter (1981), Rossell and Baker (1996), and Slavin and Cheung, (2005), as well as meta-analyses conducted by Willig (1985), Greene (1997), and Rolstad et al. (2005).

In a review of 28 studies, which they deemed to be methodologically sound, Baker and de Kanter (1981) compared transitional-bilingual education programs to submersion, ESL, and structured-immersion programs. Given the variation in findings across studies, these researchers concluded that there is insufficient evidence in support of transitional-bilingual education programs to merit sole reliance on this type of instruction. They also recommended that immersion programs, which provide structured curricula in English, be

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24 Less than “reasonable fluency” typically refers to ELs scoring at the beginning to intermediate levels on the CELDT (CDE, 2006).
given more attention. A subsequent synthesis by Rossell and Baker (1996) involving 72 studies led to a similar conclusion that transitional-bilingual education is not “a superior instructional practice for improving the English language achievement of English learners” (p. 19).

In a 1985 meta-analysis of 23 of the 28 studies originally reviewed by Baker and de Kanter (1981), Willig quantitatively measured the program effect of each study and concluded positive effects for bilingual programs in all major academic areas. Similarly, Greene, in a 1997 meta-analysis of studies examined previously by Rossell and Baker (1996), also found evidence in support of programs that relied significantly on native language instruction. Both Willig and Greene imposed stricter inclusion criteria for their studies than did Baker and de Kanter or Rossell and Baker. Greene found that when only those studies he deemed to be methodologically sound (11 of the over 70 studies identified as methodologically acceptable by Rossell and Baker) were included in the meta-analysis, there was evidence of positive, statistically significant benefits for bilingual education. Aside from differences in inclusion criteria, Greene and Willig also attributed the discrepancies between their results and those of Baker and de Kanter (1981) and Rossell and Baker (1986) to the latter researchers’ inconsistent application of their own program definitions, inclusion criteria, or rules for classifying studies as positive or negative (Greene, 1997; Willig, 1985).

In a 2005 “best-evidence” synthesis of 17 experimental studies comparing bilingual and English-only reading programs for English language learners, Slavin and

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25 According to Slavin and Cheung (2005), a “best-evidence synthesis” involves a systematic literature search, quantification of outcomes as effect sizes, and discussion of studies that meet inclusion standards.
Cheung (2005) concluded that, despite the limited number of high-quality studies, existing evidence supports bilingual approaches. Among the most effective approaches they found were paired bilingual strategies that involved teaching reading in the native language and English at different times each day. Significantly, Slavin and Cheung’s synthesis involved two high-quality randomized experiments conducted in high-school settings, both of which favored bilingual approaches. These studies included a dissertation by Covey (1973) in which 200 low-achieving Mexican-American ninth graders were randomly assigned to bilingual or English-only classes. Although Covey provided limited information on the exact nature of the bilingual program in which treatment-group students participated, it is understood that the program relied heavily upon Spanish to supplement English instruction in the areas of reading, English, and math. Although both treatment- and control-groups’ scores were nearly identical at pretest, the students exposed to the bilingual program scored significantly higher on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test following the intervention.

Following Slavin and Cheung’s (2005) research, Rolstad et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis that examined 17 studies, all of which post-dated Willig’s 1985 analysis. These researchers sought to include as many studies as possible without applying what they described as “arbitrary, a priori selection criteria” (p. 580). They also included studies that focused on developmental bilingual programs (designed to develop academic use of both native and secondary languages) in addition to transitional-bilingual programs. In their conclusions, the researchers reported that bilingual education is more beneficial for EL students than English-only approaches and that developmental bilingual programs are superior to transitional-bilingual education programs. They further
maintained that “a rational education policy, unencumbered by politics and ideology, should at least permit, and at best encourage, the development and implementation of bilingual education approaches in all U.S. schools serving ELLs” (p. 590). Of the 17 studies, four included middle-school-aged children (Grades 7-8) and three included high-school-aged children.

Over the past two decades, several expert panels, after reviewing much of the research base, have reached similar conclusions about the value of bilingual education. Two expert panels convened by the National Research Council in the 1990s concluded that some native-language instruction was preferable to none (August & Hakuta, 1997; Meyer & Fienberg, 1992). The more recent NLP and CREDE reviews, both released in 2006, confirmed these earlier conclusions by acknowledging that programs that build upon the link between ELs’ native languages and English convey benefits.

Depending upon their level of proficiency, EL students are able to draw on linguistic, metacognitive, and experiential knowledge of their first language to support literacy development in a second language (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006). Certain primary-language abilities are particularly influential in the development of secondary literacy and academic achievement (Genesee et al., 2006). These include knowledge of primary- and secondary-language cognates and the ability to provide formal definitions for words, among other things. Adolescent ELs with good reading-comprehension skills (e.g., the ability to make inferences from text) in their first language can apply them to reading in English. Additionally, ELs with conceptual knowledge in one language can more easily grasp similar conceptual issues in a second language (Torgesen et al., 2007). Adolescent ELs with proficient oral and literacy skills in their
first language should be encouraged to apply those skills to reading (Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003). Although the research to date on the developmental links between ELs’ first and second languages is far from exhaustive, the findings do provide impetus for educators to develop a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between students’ first and second languages and to explore ways to capitalize on these links for academic purposes.

**Concluding thoughts about language of instruction.** A number of experts have cautioned against focusing too much on the language of instruction (Viadero, 2009). Authors of a recent analysis of the effects of Proposition 227 have contended that the language issue distracts from more important factors affecting the quality of education for ELs. “A new paradigm, shifting away from the immersion/bilingual debate, is needed to focus more on the larger array of factors that make a difference for EL achievement (Parrish et al., 2006, p. VII-3). August and Hakuta (1998), in their summary report of literature on the achievement results associated with various EL programs, ultimately concluded that “the key issue is not finding a program that works for all children and all localities, but rather finding a set of program components that works for the children in the community of interest, given the goals, demographics, and resources of that community” (p. 147).

Overall promising features of EL programs, whether they be bilingual or ESL, include a strong grounding in theory and teachers who understand both the model they are teaching and the research-based practices upon which the model is based (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006). This research has also pointed to the value of programs that are consistent and sustained over time. Students exposed to a variety of approaches perform
less successfully than those who are consistently exposed to the same program over time. Evaluations have revealed that outcomes for students engaged in programs for brief periods are dramatically different from those of students who have participated for longer periods. Additionally, programs that are aligned across grade levels and developmental stages are more beneficial. Researchers have cautioned, however, that all findings about specialized EL programs must be viewed with some skepticism in light of a number of methodological and definitional limitations (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006).

The Role of the District in Supporting English Learners

The Research

Research on the role of the district in supporting ELs is limited. Several of the studies widely referenced in earlier discussions of effective EL schools and instructional programs conclude with a set of recommendations for district action on behalf of these students (Olsen, 2010; Olsen et al., 2010; Parrish et al., 2006; Walqui et al., 2010; T. Williams et al., 2007). Additionally, a 2006 study by Springboard Schools focused on school districts that had been successful in closing achievement gaps for students generally included findings specific to districts that were particularly successful with ELs. A 2009 study by researchers associated with the Council of Great City Schools compared the strategies of four large, urban districts that were successful in educating ELs with several unidentified districts labeled as struggling (Horwitz et al., 2009). Several research articles also contain several recommendations for districts (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010c; Koelsch, 2006). The following sections draw from this body of work to identify several key features of the district role in improving educational opportunities and outcomes for ELs.
Visible, Engaged Leadership

Researchers observed that leaders in the most successful districts demonstrated both the political will and capacity to address directly the needs of ELs (Horwitz et al., 2009). Successful districts invariably “depended upon the vision and leadership of a few committed, outspoken advocates for ELLs” (p. 34). Frequently, this leadership emanated primarily from those entities and persons within the central office most directly responsible for working with ELs. Horwitz and colleagues refer to them as newly empowered EL departments and their directors who finally had the decision-making and oversight authority, as well as the resources to effect meaningful change. Strong leadership is instrumental in establishing common expectations and beliefs (Parrish et al., 2006). Indeed, leaders in effective districts were often on the front lines in consistently communicating a district vision of high expectations and clear academic goals for ELs to stakeholders throughout the district (Horwitz et al., 2009; Parrish et al., 2006). School principals in effective districts surveyed by Springboard Schools (2006) reported that central office leaders were well informed regarding the current research-based information and materials for ELs.

A District-Wide Vision of High Expectations and Explicit Goals for EL Achievement

In a set of recommendations arising out of the Promise Initiative Pilot, researcher Dell’Olio (2010) remarked about the important role of vision in efforts on behalf of ELs, “A collective vision acts as the nucleus from which all school and district actions are born and ultimately results in school and district-wide coherence” (p. 299). These thoughts are echoed in findings by other researchers who emphasized the district’s role in establishing a clear instructional vision based on high expectations and specific academic goals for
ELs. In some effective districts, EL reform efforts occurred as part of larger instructional reform efforts. This coincides with findings that adolescent ELs benefit the most from reforms that advance learning for all students, such as improvement in curriculum, professional development, and school reorganization (Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000).

In their review of empirical research on EL education, Genesee et al. (2006) concluded that educators have a responsibility for building coherence across schools and districts rather than relying upon an assortment of strategies and techniques. More specifically, they insisted that classroom practices should be linked to a larger school- or district-wide vision of effective practices for ELs. Dell’Olio (2010) asserted that schools’ visions for instructional improvement for ELs need not match those of the district precisely, but they “should be in congruence with that of their district” (p. 299). Moreover, leaders should understand how district and school visions inform one another. District leaders also have a role in ensuring that their plan of instruction for ELs be articulated not only across schools but also across grades within schools and across classes within grades (Parrish et al., 2006).

In successful or improving districts, school leaders were actively involved in developing plans that elaborated school-level expectations for ELs. Based on her studies of long-term ELs at the secondary level, Olsen (2010) argued that districts must play an important role in clarifying expectations about what quality instruction should look like, as well as in publishing expectations for what results for ELs look like. Furthermore, she insists that these predetermined expectations should be a function of such factors as the length of time learners have been ELs and their proficiency levels. Gándara and Rumberger (2006) suggested that goals for the adequate education of ELs might include
both cognitive and noncognitive goals. While the former include academic and English proficiency, the latter might encompass such qualities as academic self-confidence, citizenship, or multi-cultural competencies. Stakeholders associated with the Promise Initiative included bilingualism, biliteracy, and multiculturalism as features of their vision for the success of ELs (Olsen, 2006; Olsen et al., 2010).

With respect to the content of the district’s instructional plan, researchers generally concurred that successful and improving districts make equal access to a rigorous curriculum a priority for ELs. Doing this involved district efforts to move ELs into mainstream courses, align curriculum and instruction for ELs with state standards, and equip ELs with the skills necessary to access grade-level content. Researchers recommended two specific areas of instructional focus: an explicit focus on building academic literacy across the curriculum and a strong language-development program. All classes should be designed for explicit language development, focus on academic language specific to academic content of the class, involve extensive reading, writing, speaking, and listening on the part of students. Similarly, language-development classes should focus on all language modalities and use appropriate grade-level curricula. Whenever possible, ELs should be offered opportunities to enroll in primary language development programs, including classes articulated across grade levels that potentially lead to Advanced Placement opportunities.

Channeling of External Forces in Support of Meaningful Reform for ELs

In their study of more successful districts, Horwitz et al. (2009) noted that these districts often used legal compliance mandates to support the change for ELs they envisioned. They treated federal accountability requirements, court orders, and state
audits as opportunities to pursue systemic reform in support of ELs. For example, district leaders in the Dallas Independent School District used a performance review by the state Comptroller of Public Accounts and a desegregation case against the district as foundations for many of its reforms. In San Francisco, *Lau v. Nichols* served as an important catalyst for reform. In St. Paul, NCLB was an impetus for focusing on ELs. Improving districts also strategically engaged community leaders in supporting reform efforts on behalf of ELs. In certain high-performing districts, parents of Latino and African-American children actively advocated on behalf of their children’s education and partnered with the district in supporting student learning. One district worked with outside organizations to lead the community in conversations about how the difficult issues of race, language, and equity affect instruction at the classroom level (Springboard Schools, 2006).

*Shared Accountability for the Performance of ELs*

As in the case with effective EL schools, effective districts have played a role in conveying the message that accountability for EL achievement is widely shared (Horwitz et al., 2009). Successful districts demonstrated that this responsibility extends system-wide. More specifically, it extends well beyond the realms of the categorical programs office, the EL Office, and the teachers of ELD. Staff in the most successful districts described a change in the district culture that manifested itself in the form of greater collaboration on behalf of ELs among staff within the central office and among school staff. Districts fostered this change in culture by ensuring that administrators and general education teachers—and not ELD teachers exclusively—became the recipients of research-based professional development related to ELs. These districts also placed
greater accountability for EL progress at the school level, while still maintaining
influence over the core curriculum and instructional programs. Some high-performing
districts gave schools the authority to make budget decisions, form partnerships with
outside groups, and explore their own professional development opportunities.
Successful districts had also established mechanisms for supporting and monitoring the
implementation of district goals beyond the submission of the written school site plan.
These included regular opportunities for school and district personnel to dialogue about
the alignment of their actions with their shared vision. The reciprocal nature of the
district-school relationship, actualized through frequent interactions, two-way
communication, and mutual problem solving, all served to foster greater program
coherence on behalf of ELs across the district.

*Investments in High-Quality Professional Development*

Investments in high-quality, long-term, site-based professional development
constituted a primary means for effecting improvements in the education of ELs in more
successful districts. Critical to creating a shared vision of effective instruction for ELs,
this professional development generally targeted multiple stakeholders and focused on
such key aspects of the districts’ instructional visions as academic literacy, differentiated
instruction, and the use of data to inform instruction. Significantly, district-provided
capacity-building focused on honing principals’ abilities to identify and support effective
instructional practice for ELs across classrooms. Districts also used professional
development investments to create opportunities for school leaders and teachers to reflect
collaborative on teaching practice for ELs. Effective districts also monitored their
professional development investments to ensure that they were effectively implemented and to measure effects on student achievement.

**Strategic Use of Resources in Supporting EL Reforms**

Districts committed to real reform on behalf of ELs demonstrated a willingness to make long-term investments of time and resources to actualize their visions. In addition to professional development resources, they made central office personnel available to oversee and support the implementation of reforms. They supported their goals for a rigorous curriculum by ensuring that teachers had access to EL-appropriate, grade-level materials. They also tapped resources beyond categorical funding, including general fund, Title I, and state funding sources to support instruction that benefited ELs.

**Data Systems That Inform and Monitor EL Placement, Instruction, and Achievement**

Systematic ongoing assessment and data-driven decision making are cornerstones of many successful districts’ EL reform efforts. These districts increased both the quantity and types of data they collected on their ELs. In many cases, these data encompassed information on EL background characteristics, their English proficiency levels, program placements, and academic attainment. Researchers have suggested that district leaders should also regularly collect and analyze data that reveals the extent to which ELs have equal access to district course offerings and programs, including gifted and talented programs and special education programs (Horwitz et al., 2009). Effective districts then used data to develop intake and placement systems designed to meet the needs of EL students, to ensure that school leaders truly know who their ELs are, and to track student performance.
Of critical importance are the efforts districts take to make these data accessible to stakeholders at various levels through user-friendly systems and training. One clear research-generated recommendation is that districts integrate their EL data into the district’s general database in order to ensure maximum access and to encourage its regular use by district, school, and others. Several researchers have also recommended that schools engage students in understanding their own performance data.

All California districts use data to inform their decisions to reclassify students from limited English proficiency status (EL status) to fluent English proficiency (RFEP). Although the state requires all districts to have clear reclassification criteria, it does not require that they all have the same criteria—a circumstance to which researchers have objected (Californians Together, 2004). In the absence of uniform criteria for reclassification, these researchers have urged districts to reclassify ELs only when they have demonstrated the English language skills and content knowledge necessary to meet grade-level standards. Researchers also argue for reliance on multiple measures that emphasize criteria beyond the CELDT test, such that ELs are reclassified when they have demonstrated deeper communicative abilities beyond mere grammatical accuracy (Walqui et al., 2010). Once they have been reclassified, ELs should be able to function in mainstream classes at the same proficiency levels as their English-only peers.

Concluding Thoughts

Despite a research base characterized by weak methodology and a limited number of studies focused on adolescent learners, a few important meta-analyses offer valuable guidance regarding the characteristics of effective EL schools and EL-oriented instruction in the classroom. Many of these findings have since been reinforced by other researchers
and educators in the field who have brought their own professional experiences and research to bear on the issue of EL education. An important development in the field has been an increased focus on issues other than the bilingual debate, which although a critical aspect of EL education, does address the many other facets of teaching and learning that affect ELs on a daily basis. By far the most limited realm of EL-related research to date is that focused on the role of the district in supporting the education of these students. In this area, a few studies by research organizations have begun to break ground. When considered in conjunction with the findings on effective EL schools and classroom instruction, they offer considerable initial direction for district action.

Subsequent sections of my research use the experience of a single case-study district to examine the extent to which district action on behalf of EL students draws upon what is known about both district roles in reform and best practices for educating ELs in order to produce positive changes in the educational opportunities and outcomes experienced by these students.
CHAPTER 3—RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the qualitative research design used to examine and analyze the role of the district in improving educational opportunities and outcomes for adolescent ELs. A number of specific research questions derived from the preceding theoretical framework guide the analysis. These include: What contextual factors influence district efforts to promote and support EL-focused reforms in secondary schools? What roles, systems, strategies, and practices does the district employ in creating more equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for ELs? In its efforts to address the needs of adolescent ELs, how does the district negotiate the change process? What lessons can districts learn about their roles in supporting the achievement of adolescent ELs?

Rationale for Employing a Qualitative Approach

The broad, exploratory nature of the questions at issue calls for the use of a qualitative research design. Qualitative research in its most basic form refers to “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). It is particularly suited to analyses whose purpose is to delve deeply into complexities and process; explore inconsistencies between policy and local knowledge and practice; understand actual, as opposed to stated, organizational goals; study holistically various constructed realities; and investigate phenomena about which little is known (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This research endeavor embraces all of the above.
Qualitative data focus on “naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Much of my attention is directed toward understanding how, in the pursuit of academic achievement for adolescent English learners, districts assume multiple, interrelated roles with respect to schools. A critical focus of this research involves deepening the understanding of how these various district roles influence one another and the conditions under which their intersection improves achievement for adolescent ELs. Exploring the nature and relationship of these roles in addressing the needs of adolescent English learners necessarily entails the collection of data about organizations, groups, and individuals whose activities and interactions are difficult to convey using quantitative procedures.

Of particular interest to this researcher is the change process and the extent to which, in adequately addressing the needs of adolescent ELs, districts must negotiate change that transforms the perspectives and thinking of multiple stakeholders regarding these students. In this regard, a qualitative approach enabled me to capture a thorough understanding of the change process through the generation of “detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behavior” (Patton, 1980, p. 22). I recorded “the perceptions of local actors ‘from the inside,’ through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding (Verstehen) and of suspending or ‘bracketing’ preconceptions about the topics under discussion” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 6).

Finally, district actions and strategies influence, and are influenced by, both internal and external contexts. Districts must not only negotiate issues of autonomy with respect to schools, but they must also attend to the broader economic, political, and social environments in which they operate. In this regard, the use of qualitative methodologies
afforded me the freedom to examine “settings and the individuals within those settings holistically, understanding that the subject of study is not reduced to an isolated variable or to any hypothesis but is viewed instead as part of a whole” (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p. 4).

The Research Design

Research design refers to the specific procedures used to collect, analyze, and report findings (Creswell, 2005). My decision to employ a case-study approach was predicated upon four factors delineated by Merriam (1988): the nature of the research question, the amount of control the researcher has over the variables under investigation, the desired end product, and the identification of a bounded system as the focus of investigation. In this instance, the specific nature of questions guiding this study called for a research strategy focused on understanding the particular dynamics co-existing within single settings. This research effort is concerned specifically with “how” a particular district increases achievement and advances equity for ELs. According to Yin (2003), case studies are particularly suited to addressing questions of this order. Secondly, the researcher’s limited control over the educational settings under investigation necessitated a holistic approach to the topic that was rooted in real life events; for example, the daily operations and activities of a school district with respect to ELs. Thirdly, in addition to providing a thick description of the specific case under investigation, case studies can be used to shed light on a broader phenomenon. In this case, they may inform the beginnings of a theory for district action in educating ELs. Finally, the case study is defined as an “in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., an activity, event process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection” (Creswell,
as cited in Creswell, 2005, p. 439). The bounded system for the purposes of this study encompassed activities performed/processes undertaken in a single district in California.

Data Collection

Site Selection

In order to best understand the phenomenon under study, I employed purposeful sampling to select a district that was “information rich” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Information rich cases enable the investigator to learn “a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Patton, p. 169). For the purposes of this research endeavor, the district was the primary unit of analysis. The decision to focus on the district was motivated primarily by a recognition of the fact that one of the most significant challenges facing education leaders today is the need to address the wide variability in the quality of learning experiences across schools. In this regard, the district, the primary organizational entity charged with supporting all schools, is uniquely positioned to transform pockets of success into wide-scale improvements in teaching and learning across entire systems of schools. Although some schools have been and will continue to be able to achieve success with all students without district support, the vast majority will require some support. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the issue of equity “sits squarely on the district’s plate,” with no other organization better situated to monitor outcomes and resources across schools (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003, p. 5). Studies of reforming districts suggest that districts are capable of providing the direction and support schools need to close the achievement gaps across student groups.

Both geographic constraints and the fact that one in three of the nation’s ELs are educated in a single state narrowed my focus to districts in California. Additionally,
because a major thrust of my research was to develop a deeper understanding of the district role in supporting adolescent ELs, I chose to focus the case study on a secondary district in which all learners were adolescents. This decision enabled me to hone in on the issues of adolescent learners more keenly. It also presented a situation in which secondary schools would not compete with elementary schools for district attention and resources.

Several additional criteria related to student demographics were considered in selecting the case study district. Firstly, given that the vast majority of adolescent ELs reside in urban areas, I selected a relatively large urban secondary district in which roughly one quarter of the student population carried the EL designation. Secondly, because most ELs in California and the nation are Spanish speaking, I selected a district in which 58% of the student body was Latino or Hispanic. Finally, since most ELs live in homes characterized as low-income, I identified a district in which slightly over half of all students (52%) received free and reduced priced lunches. These percentages corresponded closely to California state averages for these populations, which were 24% EL, 49% Hispanic, and 53% low-income (CDE, 2009b). Finally, the study district represented a typical sample in that it reflected an average district that was “not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual” (Merriam, 1998, p. 173). Significantly, the performance levels of the district’s EL students as measured by standardized tests did not differ significantly from those of many other California high school districts educating a similar demographic (CDE, 2009a, 2009c).

The decision to study a district whose performance was typical as opposed to exemplary was driven by several considerations. Firstly, there are few universal
quantitative indicators according to which districts can be compared other than standardized test scores. Not only are these scores limited in their representation of school effectiveness, but they also do not account for many of the equity-focused outcomes that are particularly relevant to EL educational success. Additionally, researchers have raised a number of specific concerns about the limitations of standardized tests as tools for measuring the performance of second-language learners in particular. Moreover, California districts demonstrating higher performance in terms of standardized test scores were either not secondary districts or did not have large populations of low-income, Spanish-speaking ELs. Finally, most of the research on schools or districts identified as “effective” sheds limited light on how these entities move from ineffective to effective. Although the case study district in this instance is not yet worthy of the designation “high performing,” its experience to date does illuminate facilitating factors and challenges in the improvement process—an often neglected, albeit very important part of the story. Researchers tend to view schools and districts that are experiencing high levels of success in increasing EL achievement as particularly valuable in providing insight into what works for these students (Parrish et al., 2006; Springboard Schools, 2006; T. Williams et al., 2007). Although I do not argue with this approach, I also believe that we can often learn as much—and sometimes more—about what works from districts and schools that are still struggling to achieve success. Indeed, in a recent study of district work with ELs sponsored by the Council of Great City Schools, the findings from districts that were not successful with these students were described as being equally enlightening as those from successful districts (Horwitz et al., 2009). In combination, all of the aforementioned considerations led me to
determine that an “information-rich,” “typical” district would offer the most instructive case study possible for answering the research questions at hand.

Following approval of my dissertation committee and university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), I contacted the superintendent of my proposed case study district via formal letter and telephone to request permission to conduct research in the district. Pursuant to receiving district approval, I made initial contact with research participants according to both IRB and district protocols.

Sample

Data collection for this research occurred in two stages over a 2-month period. The first set of data, which focused on understanding district policies and strategies targeted toward ELs, included interviews with a range of key informants within the district’s central office. Key informants serve not only as sources of insight into the matter under study, but they also often suggest and provide access to additional sources (Yin, 2003). I relied on purposeful sampling to select a cross-section of district leaders to be interviewed based upon their leadership role in the district and their knowledge of, and role in, district efforts pertaining to ELs. A preliminary list of persons to be interviewed included the district superintendent, the EL program coordinator, the assistant superintendent for education, and several district-level curriculum specialists. In identifying additional interviewees at both the district and school levels, I employed a snowball sampling strategy that relied upon the suggestions from initial interviewees regarding other persons whose experience and perspectives were likely to contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.
The second set of data focused on schools’ and teachers’ understanding and implementation of district reforms focused on ELs. For this purpose, a sample of six schools, including three junior high schools and three high schools, were selected from the district. In two out of three cases, both a junior high school and its feeder high school participated in the study. Although the original research design called for all schools to be studied in feeder patterns, the principal at one of the feeder high schools originally targeted for the study declined to participate.

All of the selected schools educated EL populations that comprised between 26%-43% of the student body. These schools and others with similar student bodies are charged with educating the vast majority of ELs in the district. Populated by low-income, Spanish-speaking ELs and large numbers of former ELs, they face the greatest challenges in getting students to perform at grade level. During the study, all of the selected schools were struggling to satisfy federal accountability requirements for student subgroups, including ELs. All three of the middle schools were in either year four or five of Program Improvement, and the high schools were in danger of entering Program Improvement. Additionally, student performance as measured by the California Academic Performance Index (API) at all of the case study schools lagged behind that of the district.

Interviews conducted at each school site included the principal, assistant principal (also known as the EL Administrator), a counselor (also known as the EL Coordinator), mainstream content-area teachers, English Language Development (ELD) teachers, and EL parents. Upon agreeing to participate in the study, principals identified and invited teachers and parents to participate in either one-on-one interviews or focus group interviews conducted by the researcher. Staff and parents alike were informed via written
e-mail messages and consent forms of the voluntary nature of their participation. They were also made aware of the fact that a decision not to participate would not affect their relationships with the district or school.

Types of Data

The use of multiple sources of evidence, also known as triangulation of data sources, permitted the corroboration of findings and thereby enhanced the credibility and accuracy of findings and, ultimately, the quality of the research (Yin, 2003). I relied upon a combination of data sources, including direct observations, interviews, and documents.

Observations

Observational evidence provided a new dimension for understanding the phenomenon (Yin, 2003). In particular, observations provide the researcher with “a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam, 1998, p. 94). They enable the researcher “to discover complex interactions in natural social settings” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 99), as well as “to hear, to see, and to begin to experience reality as the participants do” (Marshall & Rossman, p. 100).

Observations for this research endeavor included direct observations of 29 EL classrooms and one day-long teacher-training session conducted at the central office. These observations informed the research in several key ways: (a) they facilitated an understanding of the extent to which district-initiated visions and policies with respect to ELs were actually lived at the school and classroom levels; (b) they provided opportunities to discover the extent to which resources were being invested in accordance with the district’s vision and goals; (c) they revealed the use of “best practices” in the education of ELs; and (d) they exposed the way in which district and school-level
personnel negotiated the change process. Finally, consistent with my use of a social justice lens in shedding light on this issue, classroom observations permitted me to observe processes, such as opportunity to learn, which might otherwise not be measured formally through district tools.

Observations also afforded me the opportunity to make the connection between what people said was happening in interview situations and what was actually occurring. Given that a specific focus of my research was to understand the change process, observations of trainings where discussions related to the development and implementation of district and school policy for ELs offered an important opportunity to see people’s thinking in action. Observations also generated important questions for subsequent interviews.

Most observations were conducted following initial district-level interviews in which I was exposed to the district perspective regarding EL-focused reforms. At the school level, I conducted observations both before and after interviews with principals in order to gain context for the interviews, as well as to corroborate findings from the interviews. Finally, the number of classroom observations made at a school site was a function of both time and access. Although I was able to observe instruction across a variety of grade-levels and academic disciplines, time constraints and logistics prevented me from observing an equal number of classrooms at each of the six sites.

*Interviews*

District leaders are frequently the initial architects of district structures and strategies, while principals and teachers are often those charged with understanding and implementing them. Understanding the perspectives of all three is essential for
developing a complete picture of the education of ELs in a school district. Interview data enabled me to capture these participants’ perspectives on activities and events. My research was informed by interviews conducted with a total of 103 persons. These interviewees included 12 central office administrators, six school principals, six EL Administrators, four EL Coordinators, 37 mainstream content-area teachers, eight ELD or sheltered subject teachers, two bilingual aides, and one Response-to-Intervention Coordinator. I also interviewed 29 EL parents, one outside consultant working closely with the district, and a prominent community leader. Most interviews lasted between 45-70 minutes and were conducted either in person or telephonically.

As per Yin (2003), “the interviews will appear to be guided conversations rather than structured queries” (p. 89). I developed a semi-structured interview protocol composed of several orienting questions based on findings in the literature concerning effective practices for educating ELs and the district role in advancing equity and improving achievement. The semi-structured interview format afforded me the flexibility to probe and pursue relevant emerging lines of inquiry, while still remaining focused on predetermined inquiry areas. Questions for both district and school leaders were designed to solicit their perceptions of the current status of education of ELs in the district, as well as their awareness and understanding of district policies, procedures, and structures likely to contribute to learning opportunities for EL students.

In order to preserve verbatim accounts, interviews were audio-taped for later transcription. Additionally, in order to protect both the researcher and interviewee, consent forms, describing the rationale for the study, interview, recording, and
transcribing procedures, and assurances for voluntary participation and confidentiality, were provided to, and signed by, participants.

**Documents**

“For case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate evidence from other sources” (Yin, 2003, p. 87). Additionally, “the review of documents is an unobtrusive method, rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 107). Documents included a variety of district and school documents. These encompassed written policies and vision statements; strategic plans; school site plans; the EL Master Plan; school board agendas, minutes, and exhibits; monthly reports of teacher coaches, and newspaper articles. These types of sources are critical to helping the researcher comprehend the central phenomenon in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2005). According to Merriam (1998), “the researcher must keep an open mind when it comes to discovering useful documents” (p. 121). Finally, in using documentary evidence, I also ensured the authenticity and accuracy of the collected materials by asking a series of questions pertaining to the history of the documents, their authorship, purpose, and so forth (Merriam, 1998).

**Research Instruments**

**Researcher as Instrument**

The researcher served as the primary vehicle through which data collection and interpretation occurred. Humans possess a range of capacities for making sense of the phenomenon under study. These include their abilities to respond to environmental clues, interact with the situation, perceive situations holistically, process data immediately, and verify data, among others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer
specifically to the “theoretical sensitivity” of the researcher, which encompasses awareness of the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to distinguish the pertinent from the impertinent (p. 42). Despite limited practical experience in conducting qualitative research, I brought to this endeavor a familiarity with current research and thinking about the case study topic, as well as with the literature on data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Continual interaction with the data throughout the data collection process offered important opportunities for honing my theoretical sensitivity. Additionally, I frequently strove to interweave data collection with analysis, thereby increasing my sensitivity to key concepts and relationships on an ongoing basis. My decision to transcribe all interviews myself afforded me a deep familiarity with every facet of the data.

*Interview Protocols*

Using the research literature as a guide, I developed a semi-structured interview protocol for each of the following key participant groups: senior district leaders, district leaders/program managers, principals, teachers/counselors/school staff, and community members (including parents, school board members, technical assistance providers, etc.). Several tested protocols used in related research informed the development of these protocols (Bottoms & Fry, 2009; Supovitz, 2006).

*Observation Protocols*

For the purpose of recording observations, I utilized two existing, tested observation protocols. These include the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model and the protocol developed by the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) to evaluate high-performing urban schools across the nation.
The first of these protocols, the SIOP protocol, developed by Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2008), is grounded in current knowledge and research on the most effective practices for promoting learning with all students and especially with ELs. The SIOP Model is currently in use in most of the 50 states and hundreds of schools across the country. It aims to facilitate high-quality instruction for ELs in content area teaching. With verbal permission from the SIOP Institute, I used this tool for observing content-area classes in such subjects as math, science, and social studies. The NCUST protocol offers a thorough mechanism for recording systematically the activity that occurs during an observation. It has been used to observe and evaluate instructional practice in high-performing elementary, middle, and high schools since 2006. Observation notes included factual descriptions of what was occurring and researcher commentary, for example, interpretations, working hypotheses, and reactions (Merriam, 1998).

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis consists of analyzing text, developing a description and themes, and interpreting the larger meaning of the findings (Creswell, 2005). It involves a search for general statements about relationships and underlying themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Miles and Huberman (1994) define data analysis as consisting of three simultaneous activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing/verification. Although there is no one universally accepted strategy for analyzing qualitative data, it is important to have a general analytic strategy in place early in the research enterprise (Yin, 2003). Given the researcher’s relative inexperience with qualitative research, the use of a highly systematic procedure for analyzing data is preferable. Following the transcription
of interviews, I relied on coding, an inductive process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes (Creswell, 2005).

**Constant Comparative Method**

Specific guidelines for coding data have been developed by several researchers (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These guidelines enable researchers to analyze systematically emergent data. A process of focused coding enabled me to discover categories and themes from the data. I also used my knowledge of the literature and theoretical framework to clarify and expand upon these codes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Codes were reviewed using the “constant comparative method” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 101-116). “The constant comparative method is concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting (but not provisionally testing) many categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems” (Glaser & Strauss, p. 104). Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, thereby allowing one process to inform the other. I repeated this process until the information became redundant or saturation occurred. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), “analysis will be sufficient when critical categories are defined, relationships between them are established, and they are integrated into an elegant, credible interpretation” (p. 156). The entire coding process was guided by my specific intention to gather information that deepens understanding of the district role in improving EL achievement.

The final step in data interpretation involved recording my thoughts in writing. Throughout the analytic process, I engaged in memo writing to include reflective memos, thoughts, and insights designed to deepen the analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As categories and themes emerged, I began the process of linking and interpreting data. This
process involved not only drawing certain conclusions but also probing for alternate explanations and noting exceptions. The entire writing process was guided by a persistent desire to provide an in-depth and detailed rendering of the specific instances of the phenomenon under study. “Case studies take the reader into the setting with a vividness and detail not typically present in more analytic reporting formats” (Marshall & Rossman, p. 164).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Throughout the processes of data collection and analysis, I attended to issues associated with the validity and reliability of research. These include credibility (internal validity), transferability (generalizability), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (bias; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to enhance the credibility of the research product, I ensured that data were collected until the point of saturation, that key informants were thoughtfully selected, and that member checks were performed to confirm the accuracy of conclusions being reached. The use of multiple analytical perspectives and the triangulation of data sources as discussed above were also designed to enhance the credibility of the research. In order to enhance the transferability of findings, I used rigorous purposeful sampling to select the case study district. I also developed a thick description of the data that addressed counter-evidence. To ensure the dependability of the research, I have maintained an “audit trail” of project documentation for others to follow. This “chain of evidence” includes copious transcriptions, coding documents, and field notes, and is intended to enhance construct validity (Yin, 2003, p. 105). Finally, in order to avoid the effects of bias, I triangulated data.
Limitations of the Methodology

Despite attempts to address issues of trustworthiness, the research suffers from a number of limitations commonly associated with qualitative research. The primary limitations in the methodology are associated with the relative inexperience of the investigator and the reliance on a sole investigator. Other limitations concern my decision to focus attention on understanding the particulars of a single district, which will likely diminish the utility of the research in making generalization to other schools and districts. Indeed, no two districts face the same constellation of students, staff, or resources. Another limitation concerns the fact that much of the data about practices will depend heavily on the ability of informants to report experiences and events with accuracy and truthfulness. Although my decision to focus on a subset of schools with similar demographic characteristics afforded me the opportunity to understand more about how schools with large, low-income populations of Spanish-speaking EL students functioned, it did not allow me the opportunity to see the breadth of EL experiences throughout the district. Additionally, although my observations of 29 classrooms revealed certain trends in instruction, they represented only a small subset of all classrooms in the district. Moreover, in many instances, observations were limited to a 15-20 minute single visit to each classroom and may not have captured a typical day or even a typical lesson. My decision to incorporate findings from teacher coaches about their own observations of classrooms was prompted in part by this limitation. Indeed, throughout the research process, I made every effort to minimize and compensate for limitations inherent in the study design.
CHAPTER 4—THE CASE STUDY DISTRICT FINDINGS

Introduction

This study seeks to illuminate the role of the school district in improving educational opportunities and outcomes for EL students by analyzing the efforts of a typical district. The case study district described below was not selected because it outperformed other comparable districts, but rather because it provided an instructive opportunity to analyze the work of an urban district charged with educating a large proportion of Spanish-speaking adolescent English learners. The study’s scope encompasses the policies, programs, and practices pursued under the leadership of district superintendent Joseph Farley, covering the period July 2005 through June 2010. Dr. Farley announced his intention to leave the district in the spring of 2010.

This chapter presents the primary research findings related to the guiding research questions. It begins by providing the reader with an introduction to the case study district. This includes background on the relevant demographic features of the district, as well as an overview of student performance, with specific attention given to the performance of ELs. The chapter then sets the stage for the district’s reform initiatives by describing the policy, economic, and community contexts in which the district operated at the time. Against this backdrop, I present findings concerning the district’s vision and strategy for reform as they relate to the education of EL students. In a final section, I document findings related to the district’s efforts to negotiate the change process. This section includes a discussion of district efforts to shift organizational culture, overcome

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26The decision to focus on an urban district with predominately Spanish-speaking ELs was intended to reflect the reality that the vast majority of ELs in the United States come from Spanish-speaking homes and are educated in urban districts.
barriers to change, and maintain the delicate balance between school-level autonomy and district control. I conclude by presenting findings related to the role of social justice advocates in creating change on behalf of ELs.

Demographics

The case study district, Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD), is a secondary district located in a southern California urban community of approximately 350,000 inhabitants. Founded in 1898, AUHSD is the second largest secondary district in California. Its eight junior high schools, nine high schools, and five alternative schools educate over 33,000 students (Ed-Data, 2009). Most students come to the district from five elementary districts located in surrounding cities. Approximately 60% of the district’s students are Hispanic and a growing percentage, 63.6%, are considered to be socioeconomically disadvantaged (CDE, 2010).

Fully two-thirds of the district’s student population is composed of linguistic minority students. As of 2010, 9% of these linguistic minority students had arrived in the district initially fluent in both English and their primary language (IFEps), 34% were former English learners reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP), and slightly less than one-quarter were designated as English learners27 (Language Assessment Center [LAC], 2010). It is important to note that, although ELs are the primary focus of this study, there exist many linguistic minority students in the district with varying levels of English fluency.28 Many of these students may be former ELs who come from primarily

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27English learner numbers also include those RFEPs who have not reached grade-level standards in English-language arts for 3 years.

28Throughout this paper, the term English fluency groups are used to refer to linguistic groups ranging from English-Only students to English Learners. The term English proficiency is used to refer to
non-English-speaking families and communities.\textsuperscript{29} The fact that these students rarely have the same exposure to English or American culture as their English-only peers calls for special attention to their unique learning needs as well. Given this reality, to the extent possible, I consider the performance of all fluency groups in understanding district performance.

Over the past decade, the number of EL students in the district has averaged around 8,300 students, peaking at 8,859 in 2005 and dropping to 7,545 in 2010 (CDE, 2009b; LAC, 2010). Figure 2 provides a glance at overall EL population change over the past decade. The total number of ELs has been on the decline since 2005. During this time, the overall percentage of ELs as a proportion of the total student population has also dropped from 28\% in 2000 to 23\% in 2010. Additionally, the composition of the EL student body has changed as well, with fewer new immigrant students entering and more long-term ELs populating district schools. In 2010, only 2\% of the district’s ELs were newcomers (students who have been in the United States less than 12 months), while 66\% were born in the United States\textsuperscript{30} (LAC, 2010). Eighty-three percent of the district’s ELs have been enrolled in U.S. schools for 6 or more years (AUHSD, 2010b).

The vast majority of the district’s ELs speak Spanish. Sixty-nine percent of ELs and 58\% of RFEPs come from low-income homes, compared to 24\% of the district’s specific levels of English achievement as measured by state language proficiency exams. Within the RFEP and EL fluency groups, there exist students demonstrating various levels of English proficiency.

\textsuperscript{29}According to research by Gándara and Rumberger (2006), linguistic minority students represent 16\% of the school-age population. Nearly one-third of them reside in California.

\textsuperscript{30}This number can be misleading because it does not account for students who were born in the United States but whose U.S.-schooling was interrupted by years spent in between in places like Mexico. Based on these data alone, one cannot conclude that these students have consistently been receiving services in the United States since birth.
EO-speaking students. These linguistic minority students thus confront the dual challenges of learning a second language and dealing with the barriers to learning associated with poverty. Moreover, as in many other urban districts, EL students in the case study district tend to be concentrated in relatively high-enrollment schools that are heavily populated by other Hispanic English learners. Researchers indicate that the isolation of these students in schools attended disproportionately by other ELs can limit their exposure to strong English language models, as well as to experiences that increase their understanding of the U.S. school system (Gándara et al., 2008).
Educators frequently refer to an “east-west divide” in the district. The district, which covers 46 square miles, includes the cities of Anaheim, Cypress, Buena Park, La Palma, and Stanton. Most of the high-poverty schools claiming Spanish-speakers as the dominant EL group are located on the east side in Anaheim, while low-poverty schools with primarily Korean-speaking ELs are found in other cities on the district’s west side.

As one central office administrator explained:

The west side is the affluent, educated side of the district, so that includes the cities of La Palma, Cypress, a little sliver of Buena Park . . . Oxford Academy is over there, which of course is the epicenter. The bulk of our Koreans feed into those schools, and they are very upwardly mobile and push very hard and don’t take no for an answer on anything . . . We do have a few Latino kids on the west side, but they tend to feel like Martians.

The approximately 660 ELs attending schools on the west side comprise between 8-13% of the student population at their respective schools. Meanwhile, the vast majority of the district’s EL students reside in Anaheim, the largest of the district’s feeder cities. In 2009, nine Anaheim schools educated 50% of the total student population and 69% of its EL population. At each of these schools, ELs comprised 30% or more of the student body. Six of these high-EL concentration schools are among the 10 largest schools in the district. The average poverty level of schools with 30% or more ELs is 69% compared to 52% for the district as a whole. Additionally, 79% of the students at these schools are Hispanic, while only 62% of students are Hispanic in the entire district (CDE, 2009b).

Anaheim Union High School District Student Performance

Overview

This section seeks to provide an overview of the performance of AUHSD students, and in particular its EL students, during the period 2005-2010. It does this first
by comparing the district to other similar districts in the state and then by analyzing
AUHSD’s performance more closely according to several key indicators. The
measures used to demonstrate performance include those used in both federal and state
accountability systems, as well as other indicators of performance such as course-taking
patterns, which attempt to shed greater light on student opportunities to learn.

During the timeframe of this study, AUHSD entered into Program Improvement
Status, a designation earned after a district has failed for 2 consecutive years to satisfy
federal accountability requirements. More specifically, a number of key student
subgroups within the district, including its ELs, have been unable to reach grade-level
standards in several core subject areas. Despite the failure to meet these federal
requirements—and the indisputable need for significantly larger percentages of students
to perform at grade level—the general trajectory of performance in AUHSD schools since
2004-2005 has been one of slight overall growth in junior high schools and a downward
trend in many high schools.

District Performance Compared to Other Districts

In order to provide a more meaningful context for understanding the case study
district’s progress with its EL population, I have compared its performance to that of
other similar districts. Comparing the performance of a secondary school district to that
of unified school districts (Grades K-12) is difficult because the latter include elementary
schools, which generally tend to outperform secondary schools and skew comparisons.
This is especially true with respect to ELs in California, who tend to perform at higher
levels in elementary school than they do in secondary school (Gándara et al., 2008).
There are only nine California districts educating exclusively students in the 7-12 grade
span. Of these, AUHSD has the fourth highest overall API\textsuperscript{31} and the sixth highest EL-API. Relating AUHSD performance to that of California as a whole is not possible because the California Department of Education does not calculate an overall state API for districts covering the grade spans 7-12.\textsuperscript{32}

As indicated in Table 1, Salinas Union High School District and Sweetwater Union High School District are the only other secondary districts in California that share several key characteristics with AUHSD: they educate students in Grades 7-12, and their student populations are majority Hispanic, greater than 50% low-income, and at least 25% EL. All three districts also have nearly identical percentages of ELs scoring at the three lowest levels of English proficiency on the state’s language proficiency exam, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). Although AUHSD lags slightly behind Sweetwater Union High School District in both overall API scores and EL-API scores, API performance across the three districts does not differ substantially. The EL achievement gap is evident in all three districts, with EL-APIs far behind the district-wide API scores. Notably, AUHSD is the only district among the three in which the growth of the EL-API is higher than the overall API growth, indicating a possible closing of the gap. In fact, the EL-API has slightly outpaced overall API growth in

\textsuperscript{31} The California accountability system measures academic achievement according to the Academic Performance Index (API), which is based on growth in standardized test scores (the CST is used at the middle school level and the CAHSEE is used at the high school level) on a scale of 200-1000. The state requires that schools maintain a score of 800 or more or that they increase their API scores by 5% of the difference between the school API and 800.

\textsuperscript{32} Given the small number of districts educating the 7-12 grade span, the CDE does not compute a state API covering this span but rather computes state-wide APIs separately only for Grades 2-6, 7-8, and 9-12.
Table 1

Comparison of Similar 7-12 Districts in California 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Total enrollment</th>
<th>% EL</th>
<th>% ELs at English proficiency levels 1-3</th>
<th>% Hispanic</th>
<th>% low income</th>
<th>2009 API</th>
<th>2008-2009 API growth</th>
<th>EL API growth</th>
<th>EL gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salinas</td>
<td>10,930</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaheim</td>
<td>27,564</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetwater</td>
<td>34,178</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


AUHSD every year since 2005, the first year in which the EL-API was calculated (CDE, 2009b).

The comparison of the three districts’ performance on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in Table 2 shows AUHSD’s lagging behind the other districts in both English Language Arts (ELA) and math. It falls slightly behind the state in ELA and is on a par with the state in math. English learners in all three districts perform better on the math portion of the CAHSEE than on the ELA portion, presumably due to the relatively lower literacy demands of mathematics. The gap between EL performance and that of all students in both ELA and mathematics is in double digits for all three districts, as well as for the state. It is worth reiterating that the case study district was not selected because it outperformed other districts but rather because it provided an opportunity to analyze the work of a secondary district educating a large proportion of ELs. In this regard, any of these three districts would have served as an instructive case study.
Table 2

*Comparison of California High School Exit Exam Performance (CAHSEE) Among Similar 7-12 Districts in California*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Percent of Els passing</th>
<th>Percent of all students passing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ELA</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salinas</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaheim</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetwater</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* From *CAHSEE results for 2009*, by the California Department of Education (CDE), 2009a, retrieved June 1, 2009, from www.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/.

*A Closer Look at Anaheim Union High School District English Learner Student Performance*

Since 2005, growth in AUHSD’s EL-API, a measure of EL performance, has generally mirrored growth in its overall student API. Figure 3 shows API growth for all students and for EL students between 2005-2010. Not surprisingly, API scores in AUHSD correspond closely to the district’s east-west divide. As shown in Table 3, west-side schools, with the lowest percentage of ELs, boast the highest API scores in the district and east-side schools, with the highest concentrations of ELs, have the lowest API scores in the district. Five of the six west-side schools have overall APIs above the state’s standard of 800. In all schools, there exist double-digit gaps between EL-APIs and those of all students.

The federal NCLB accountability system measures academic performance according to average yearly progress (AYP) toward a number of annually established
Figure 3. Changes in AUHSD Academic Performance Index (API) for all students and EL students over time. From Dataquest, by the California Department of Education (CDE), 2009b, retrieved May 26, 2009, from www.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/.

Additionally, under Title III of NCLB, California districts and schools that receive federal funding to implement language instruction education programs for EL students must also meet specific annually measured achievement objectives (AMAOs) for ELs. These include yearly performance targets for: (a) the percentage of ELs in a district or school making annual progress on the state’s assessment of English language proficiency; (b) the percentage of ELs attaining English proficiency according to these assessments; and (c) the AYP attained by the EL subgroup in tested core subject areas at

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In order to make AYP, California districts and schools must meet performance targets for: (a) the rate of student participation on statewide tests; (b) the percentage of students scoring at the proficient level or above on statewide tests (the CST at the junior high school level and the CAHSEE at the high school level; (c) growth API; and (d) for high schools, the percentage of students graduating. Numerically significant subgroups within schools and the district must also satisfy participation rate and percentage proficient requirements.
Table 3

*Academic Performance Index (API) Numbers for Comprehensive High Schools and Junior High Schools in AUHSD (2009)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Percent EL</th>
<th>School-wide API</th>
<th>EL API</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford Academy* (west)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>983</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cypress High (west)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>852</td>
<td>820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John F. Kennedy High (west)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western High (east)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katella High (east)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loara High (east)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaheim High (east)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savanna High (east)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnolia High (east)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Junior high schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexington Junior High (west)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker Junior High (west)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orangeview Junior High (east)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brookhurst Junior High (east)</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale Junior High (east)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball Junior High (east)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Junior High (east)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sycamore Junior High (east)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>658</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Oxford Academy, which is the second-highest API-scoring school in the state and ranked among the top 10 schools nationally by several news magazines, uses selective admission criteria. In this regard, it is not always useful to make comparisons between Oxford and other district schools.*
the district level. Although not all west-side schools fully met the EL-AYP criteria in 2009, none of these schools receive federal Title I schools and are, therefore, not subject to NCLB sanctions. On the other hand, all of the junior high schools and two high schools on the east side have failed to meet AYP and are currently in Program Improvement Status. Overall, in 2009-2010, the district was in its second year of Program Improvement for failing to meet AYP in a number of areas, one of which is the underperformance of its EL subgroup. Table 4 lists the Program Improvement status of east-side schools.

As shown in Table 5, the proportion of EL 10th-grade students in AUHSD scoring at or above the proficient level on the CAHSEE lags well behind that of other student groups, except for special education students. The double-digit gaps occur in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. According to Table 6, the same is true with respect to the performance of EL students at the junior high school level on the California State Standards Test (CST).

Comparison With Other English Fluency Groups

District leaders identified differences in the performance of the three main groups of ELs within the district. Reclassified or former ELs generally tend to outperform other English proficiency groups, including English-only students. Many of these students, either because of strong academic experiences in another country or in the United States or consistent parental support, have developed sufficiently solid foundations in English to

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34 Schools (or districts) receiving Title I funds enter Program Improvement status after having failed for 2 consecutive years to meet AYP requirements in the same content area (ELA or math) school-wide (district-wide) or for any numerically significant subgroup and (for districts: having failed to meet AYP criteria in the same content area in each grade span, e.g., Grades 2-5, Grades 6-8, and Grade 10), or having failed to make AYP on the same school-wide (district-wide) indicator, such as API or graduation rate.
Table 4

_List of AUHSD Schools in Program Improvement (2008-2009)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ball Junior High</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brookhurst Junior High School</td>
<td>Year 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale Junior High School</td>
<td>Year 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orangeview Junior High School</td>
<td>Year 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Junior High School</td>
<td>Year 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sycamore Junior High School</td>
<td>Year 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaheim High School</td>
<td>In danger of entering PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katella High School</td>
<td>In danger of entering PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loara High School</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnolia High School</td>
<td>Year 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savanna High School</td>
<td>In danger of entering PI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western High School</td>
<td>In danger of entering PI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* From _Exhibit B: Frequently asked questions for 9th grade academy_, by Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD), 2009b, Meeting Agenda, Board of Trustees, retrieved May 27, 2010, from http://www.auhsd.k12.ca.us/pdf/ourpages/board/minutes/022009%20Meeting%20Minutes,%20Agendas%20and%20Exhibits/052009-May/05-14-09%20Notice%20of%20Regular%20Meeting.pdf?rn=9615860

enable them to perform reasonably well on standardized tests and even to pursue higher-level classes.

The second and largest group of ELs includes those students who came to the United States at a very young age or were born here and yet still carry the EL designation. These students, most of whom speak Spanish as a native language, have not received the kind of instructional and other support required to attain sufficient language skills in
Table 5

Performance of 10th-Grade Students on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) by Student Subgroup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>2008-2009 % proficient in ELA</th>
<th>2008-2009 % proficient in mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-wide</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>90.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic disadvant</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>43.3 (Y2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English learner</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 6

Performance of Seventh- and Eighth-Grade Students on the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) by Student Subgroup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>2008-2009 % proficient in ELA</th>
<th>2008-2009 % proficient in mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-wide</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic disadvant</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English learner</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

order to perform at grade level. Many of these students are referred to as long-term ELs by researchers or, more casually by educators within the district, as “ever-LEPs.”

The third group of ELs is that of the recent immigrants. These students comprise a diverse group that includes those who arrive in the United States with very high academic ability, including literacy in a primary language other than English. They are often able to transfer skills and move toward English and content area proficiency relatively quickly. Others who arrive with little or no regular formal education require more time. Finally, a fourth much smaller group of linguistic minority students (IFEPs) generally possesses strong foundations in both their primary and second languages and is able to perform at levels comparable to or better than their English-only peers.

Figure 4 shows that, when compared to other English fluency groups, all other English-fluency groups outperformed ELs at both the high school and junior high levels combined on the ELA section of the CST. In 2009, 94% of ELs were performing below grade level.35

*English Learner California Standards Test (CST) Performance Over Time*

Figure 5 shows that EL performance on both ELA and math standardized tests has improved over time at the junior high school levels. However, these numbers pale in comparison to the gains required by changing NCLB targets. According to Figure 6, at the high school level test scores of 10th-grade ELs on the CAHSEE during the 2005-2010

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35Anaheim Union High School District’s Language Assessment Center defines English learners more narrowly than the California Department of Education. This accounts for the differences in proficiency rates of these students in the reported data. While the latter includes students who were reclassified and have not yet scored proficient three times on the CST/ELA in its definition of English learners, the former does not.
Figure 4. Percentage of students proficient and above on California Standards Test (CSTs) in ELA by English fluency groups. From Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) Director of Language Assessment Center, 2009, Language Assessment Center (LAC), unpublished raw data.

Figure 5. Performance of AUHSD junior high school ELs on English language arts (ELA) and math standardized tests: Five-year trend data with state targets. From Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD), Office of Testing and Evaluation, 2010, unpublished data.
According to Figures 7 and 8, over the same period of time, the gap between EL students and all other students narrowed at the junior high school level and increased for 10th-graders at the high school level.

**Grade Point Average**

Although student grade point averages (GPAs) are not a focus of state and federal accountability systems, the case study district relies upon them as another important indicator of academic achievement. Reliance on indicators of performance other than standardized test scores is particularly useful in light of concerns that standardized tests developed for English speakers are not reliable or valid indicators of ELs content knowledge (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, National Council for Measurement in Education [AERA, APA, & NCME], 1999). As illustrated in Figure 9, as of the second semester of the 2008-2009 school year,
Figure 8. Widening of gap between EL students and all students on EL and math portions of the CAHSEE in 10th grade: 2004-2010. From Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD), Office of Testing and Evaluation, 2010, unpublished data.
a higher percentage of EL students had a cumulative GPA that was lower than 2.0 than students in any of the other language groups. The percentage of ELs with GPAs below 2.0 is 2.5 times as large as that of RFEP and IFEP students and nearly double that of EO students. The strong performance of the district’s RFEPs should not be overlooked. In fact, researchers have suggested that one true measure of a system’s success is how well its former EL students are doing in mainstream content classes (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Anaheim Union High School District’s RFEP students, who still may struggle with English proficiency issues, are outperforming EO students.

**Movement Toward English Proficiency**

Another significant indicator of EL performance is movement toward English language proficiency. California measures English language proficiency using the
Districts use annual CELDT results to identify which students are ELs, to monitor annual progress of ELs in learning a variety of English skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing); and to determine when ELs are ready to be reclassified as fluent English proficient. Figure 10 shows the breakdown of AUHSD students by CELDT level. Over two-thirds of the district’s ELs are clustered in two levels: intermediate and early advanced. Overall, EL movement through proficiency levels is sluggish. An analysis by the district’s Language Assessment Center (LAC) of a cohort of 7,200 students who took the CELDT in both 2007 and 2008 revealed that only one-third of these students moved up one level of proficiency, while 66% either remained at the same level or decreased a level (LAC, 2009). Most advancement occurred among beginning and early intermediate level students with 62% of beginning level and 51% early intermediate students gaining one or more levels. Meanwhile, only 35% of intermediate-level and 10% of early advanced-level students jumped one or more levels.

Meeting Title III Accountability Requirements

As mentioned above, Title II Accountability requires that districts meet three AMAOs. As shown in Figure 11, in 2008-2009, AUHSD demonstrated sufficient progress on AMAO 1, with 57.7% of ELs gaining one or more proficiency levels on the CELDT. However, students at the intermediate proficiency levels did not meet the target. Oral fluency is still a significant challenge for these students. For example, during the 2-year period from 2007 to 2009, 9th- and 10th-grade EL students’ mean scale scores

\[36\] California English Language Development Test test-takers may score at one of five proficiency levels: beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced.

\[37\] The difference between percentage of students increasing one level of proficiency according to the LAC’s cohort analysis and that reported for the Title III AMAO 1 is attributable to different timeframes during which data were analyzed, as well as to the use of the cohort.
**Figure 10.** Anaheim Union High School District EL according to English proficiency levels. From *District Summary English Learners Annual Report*, unpublished report by the Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) Director of Language Assessment Center, 2009, Language Assessment Center (LAC).

**Figure 11.** Title III progress toward annual measurable objectives (AMAOs). From *Dataquest*, by the California Department of Education (CDE), 2009b, retrieved May 26, 2009, from www.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/.
on the CELDT were significantly lower in speaking than in the domains of listening, reading, and writing (AUHSD, 2010b). The district came close to satisfying requirements for AMAO 2, the percentage of students achieving English proficiency, with 30% of students achieving proficiency (the target was 30.6%). Anaheim Union High School District did not, however, meet AMAO 3, which required that 45% of ELs reach grade-level standards in English and 45.5% reach these standards in math. Only 30.1% of ELs achieved grade-level standards in English, and only 29.4% reached grade-level standards in math.

As in other urban districts, most of the case study district’s ELs tend to get stuck at the intermediate and early advanced levels of proficiency. Researchers have observed that California EL students who attain a basic level of proficiency, equivalent to intermediate on the CELDT, experience increasing difficulty in reaching the higher levels of early advanced and advanced proficiency (Gándara et al., 2008). According to one analysis, the likelihood of an EL’s being reclassified as “fluent English proficient” after having attended California public schools for 10 years is less than 40% (Maxwell-Jolly, Gándara, & Benavidez; 2007). In AUHSD, 84% of all EL students who tested at either the intermediate or early advanced levels have been enrolled in U.S. schools for 6 years or more (AUHSD, 2010b). These long-term English Language Learners constitute the majority of EL students in California’s secondary schools (Olsen, 2010).

Unable to meet their districts’ criteria for reclassification (exiting the EL program), long-term EL students carry the EL designation for most of their secondary

38 The board of education of each school district in California sets its own criteria, based on state guidelines, for reclassification of ELs (exiting the EL program). In AUHSD, these criteria include 1 year of enrollment in the EL program, a score of 325 of the ELA CST, an overall GPA of 2.0 or greater, a most
careers. Even when these students are able to progress to the higher levels of proficiency on the CELDT, they are not always able to demonstrate the level of content knowledge required for reclassification. For example, in 2009, 37% of AUHSD’s ELs scored either advanced or early advanced on the CELDT, the two highest English proficiency levels (LAC, 2009). At the same time, a mere 6% of the AUHSD’s ELs scored proficient or advanced on the CST in ELA (LAC, 2009). Researchers point out that CELDT proficiency constitutes a much lower level of English proficiency than that required to score at levels of Basic or above on the CST in ELA (Olsen, 2010). Despite the slow movement of ELs out of the EL program, AUHSD’s reclassification or redesignation rate of ELs as fluent English proficient was 11% in 2009, higher than that for both Orange County (9%) and California (11%; CDE, 2009b).

Other Indicators of English Learner Performance

Overrepresentation in special education and remedial classes and underrepresentation in more advanced/honors classes and gifted programs are important indicators of equality of opportunity for EL students. For example, in many districts, including AUHSD, gifted students are afforded access to extra enrichment activities. Teacher expectations may also vary depending upon whether a child is designated as gifted. Table 7 reveals that in 2009-2010, ELs comprised 23% of the overall student population, yet only 2% of the district’s gifted population. Meanwhile, they accounted for 51% of its special education population. Once again, RFEP students do much better.

recent quarter GPA of 2.0 or above, no recent Ds in the current ELD class, no recent Fs in current core subjects, and an overall CELDT score of Early Advanced or above. Other requirements include specific listening, speaking, reading, and writing scores on the CELDT, and passage of a district writing proficiency test (11th & 12th grade only; AUHSD, 2004b).
Table 7

*English Learner Participation in Gifted and Special Education Programs Compared to Their Representation in the Overall School Population*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English fluency</th>
<th>District enrollment</th>
<th>Gifted</th>
<th>Special education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total # enrolled</td>
<td>% of enrollment</td>
<td>Total # enrolled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>7,545</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFEP</td>
<td>11,167</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFEP</td>
<td>2,794</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>10,942</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32,448</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6,656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Accounting for 34% of the overall district population, RFEPs comprise 43% of the gifted population and 4% of the special education population.

Other important indicators of student performance and, in particular, students’ preparation for college are course-taking patterns. Students taking high-level mathematics and science courses beyond the core coursework are more prepared for college and careers than those taking only the core curriculum or less (ACT, 2007). Researchers have linked advanced course-taking in high school, especially in mathematics, with higher college success rates (Adelman, 1999; Koelsch, 2006). Table 8 provides the numbers of AUHSD high school students taking such advanced math classes as algebra II and higher by English language proficiency during the second semester 2010. One-quarter of all former ELs were taking advanced math classes, outpacing their English-only peers. Fluent English proficient students accounted for 45% of all students.
Table 8

*Anaheim Union High School District Students Taking Advanced Math Classes by English Fluency Levels*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English fluency</th>
<th># of students taking advanced math</th>
<th>% of students in each English fluency group taking advanced math</th>
<th>% of all students taking advanced math</th>
<th>% of total enrollment in the district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>2,011</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFEP</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFEP</td>
<td>2,781</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* From Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) Director of Language Assessment Center, 2009, Language Assessment Center (LAC), unpublished data.

taking advanced math, roughly equal to their 43% representation in the total student body. Once again, ELs were severely underrepresented in this category, comprising only 7% of all students taking advanced math compared to their 23% representation in the student body. Only 6% of ELs were taking advanced math in 2010.

Participation and performance in Advanced Placement (college-level courses) is another frequently used indicator of college readiness. Advance Placement exams are considered valid measures of students’ mastery of college-level content. Research has found that scores of three or higher are predictive of college success and graduation (The College Board, 2010). Table 9 shows AUHSD 12th graders take AP exams at a slightly higher rate than 12th graders in the nation, but at lower rates than 12th graders in
Table 9

**Advanced Placement (AP) Exam Participation and Performance Rates for All Students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of 12th-grade students taking at least one AP exam</th>
<th>Percentage of 12th-grade students passing (score of 3 or higher) at least one AP exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AUHSD (2009-2010)*</td>
<td>27.2% (1,223/4,500)</td>
<td>13.9% (627/4,500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California (2008-2009)*</td>
<td>32.0% (124,154/387,759)</td>
<td>20.8% (80,728/387,759)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation (2008-2009)*</td>
<td>26.5% (798,629/3,019,361)</td>
<td>15.9% (479,349/3,019,361)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) Director of Language Assessment Center, 2010, Language Assessment Center (LAC), unpublished data.

The College Board, 2010.

California. Anaheim Union High School District lags behind both the state and the nation in the percentage of 12th graders passing these exams.39

Table 10 reveals an equity gap between EL students and other fluency groups with respect to both AP exam participation and performance. English learner students comprise only .8% of the successful student group, yet constitute 17% of the 12th-grade student population. Genuine equity would not be achieved until 17% of the passing students were ELs. On a more positive note, both IFEP and RFEP students represent larger percentages of the successful student group than the percentage these students represent in the 12th-grade class. For English-only students, there exists a small equity gap.

Several other critical indicators of college readiness include completion of “a-g” classes. High school seniors who have not completed these classes are not eligible for

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39In order to demonstrate the extent to which the overall student population is succeeding in advanced courses, the numbers of students taking and passing exams are each divided by the total number of 12th-grade students or graduating students rather than by just the AP student population.
Table 10

*Advanced Placement Participation and Performance Equity Matrix by English Fluency Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English fluency</th>
<th>Percentage of 12th-grade class</th>
<th>Percentage of 12th-grade students taking at least one AP exam</th>
<th>Percentage of successful 12th-grade AP examinees population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>16.7% (750/4,500)</td>
<td>.7% (9/1,223)</td>
<td>.8% (5/627)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>37.6% (1,690/4,500)</td>
<td>32.5% (398/1,223)</td>
<td>35.3% (221/627)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFEP</td>
<td>10.9% (489/4,500)</td>
<td>23.1% (283/1,223)</td>
<td>21.9% (137/627)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFEP</td>
<td>34.9% (1,571/4,500)</td>
<td>43.6% (533/1,223)</td>
<td>42.1% (264/627)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) Director of Language Assessment Center, 2010, Language Assessment Center (LAC), unpublished data.

Admission to California’s public university systems. The fact that ELs are frequently enrolled in ELD and intervention classes, many of which are not eligible for “a-g” credit, makes it more difficult for these students to graduate eligible for admission to the state’s 4-year universities. At the high school level in AUHSD, ELD I and ELD II are not counted as “a-g” classes; however, ELD III is. Such intervention classes as intensive literacy and math support do not earn “a-g” credit.

By the end of their senior year of high school, students must have completed 4 years of English and at least 3 years of math, although 4 years of math are recommended. Unfortunately, AUHSD does not regularly track graduates’ completion of “a-g” classes by fluency group. In the absence of these data, I analyze the extent to which EL students had completed and passed at least one “a-g” English and math class by the end of their first year of high school. These data serve as an early indicator of the extent to which ELs are on track to be college eligible. This analysis is modeled on research by Finkelstein, Huang, and Fong (2009), whose study of ELs in 54 California
high schools revealed that by the end of ninth grade, greater percentages of EL students did not meet the “a-g” requirement in English or complete a year of college-preparatory mathematics compared to their non-EL peers. Table 11 shows that the vast majority of EL students are enrolled in “a-g” math classes. Excluding EL students in Special Education Math, 94% of ELs in the ninth grade are taking “a-g” eligible math classes and 85% of those students are taking Algebra 1P. Table 12 shows that two-thirds of ELs are not passing Algebra 1P compared to slightly over half of students from other fluency groups who are not passing.

Table 11

*Ninth-Grade Participation in “a-g” Math Courses by English Fluency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Math course</th>
<th>EO</th>
<th>IFEP</th>
<th>EL (%)</th>
<th>RFEP</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academy Algebra</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30 (3)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alg 2/Trig Hp (a-g)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2 (.2)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra 1P (a-g)</td>
<td>1,205</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>1,027 (85)</td>
<td>1,074</td>
<td>3,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra 1 Plus (a-g)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 (.3)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra 2P (a-g)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3 (.3)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra P (a-g)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30 (3)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra Readiness</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>23 (2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometry P (a-g)</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>72 (6)</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math (Spec Ed)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>39*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI Sol Geom Hp (a-g)</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>14 (1)</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>1,863</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>1,244</td>
<td>1,878</td>
<td>5,489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Not included in percentage calculations.
Table 12

*Ninth-Grade Performance in Algebra 1P—All English Fluencies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English fluency</th>
<th>Percentage passing As, Bs, &amp; Cs,</th>
<th>Percentage failing Ds &amp; Fs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFEP</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFEP</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Tables 13 and 14 show ninth-grade enrollment and performance in English classes. Table 13 shows that approximately 90% of ninth-grade ELs (excluding special education students) were enrolled in an “a-g” English class. Eighty-three percent were taking English 1P. Table 14 reveals that of the 83% of ELs taking English 1P, 62% of them are failing compared to between 36%-42% of their non-EL peers.

Researchers report that California’s English learners are twice as likely to drop out of high school as all other students (Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000). Graduation rates disaggregated by language fluency were not available for AUHSD. Figure 12 shows graduation rates by school, for the latest year available, based on the concentration of ELs within each school. With the exception of a few schools, schools with the lowest concentrations of ELs generally had the highest graduation rates.
### Table 13

**Ninth-Grade Participation in “a-g” English Courses by English Fluency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELA Course</th>
<th>EO</th>
<th>IFEP</th>
<th>EL</th>
<th>RFEP</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELD I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52 (5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELD II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>54 (5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELD III P (a-g)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80 (7%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng 1Hp (a-g)</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>7 (.6%)</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>1,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng 1P (a-g)</td>
<td>1,444</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>927 (83%)</td>
<td>1,342</td>
<td>4,013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (Spec Ed)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>55a</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English 1 (Spec Ed)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>64a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td>1,894</td>
<td>504</td>
<td>1,239</td>
<td>1,878</td>
<td>5,515</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*a*Not included in percentage calculations.

### Table 14

**Ninth-Grade Performance in English 1P by English Fluency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English fluency</th>
<th>Percentage passing As, Bs, &amp; Cs,</th>
<th>Percentage failing Ds &amp; Fs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EO</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFEP</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFEP</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anaheim Union High School District’s Instructional Program

California school districts are legally required to ensure that all students identified as ELs participate in a program of English Language Development (ELD) aimed at helping them develop proficiency in English as rapidly as possible. Districts must also ensure that ELs are meeting grade-level content and performance standards in core curricular areas. Anaheim Union High School District operates a Structured English Immersion Program (SEI). Under this program, AUHSD’s ELs are assigned to either ELD or mainstream classes, depending upon the overall level of proficiency they demonstrate on the CELDT. Prior to 2005, AUHSD had offered a preliterate program at one campus to educate recent immigrants who possessed little or no literacy skills in English or their primary language. Given the declining numbers of newcomers entering

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40Parents of ELs retain the right to have their children opt out of the ELD program.
the district over the past decade, the district no longer receives supplementary funding for immigrant students and the preliterate program has been discontinued.

English Language Development classes are divided into four course levels: ELD I for newly arrived ELs scoring at the beginner proficiency level; ELD II for those scoring at early intermediate proficiency levels; and ELD IIIA (junior high) and ELD III (high school) for students scoring at the overall intermediate proficiency level on the CELDT who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for less than 5 years and score up to 310 on the ELA/CST, and ELD IV, a support class offered at a few schools for students leaving the sheltered program and moving into mainstream classes. English Language Development IV is taken concurrently with English 1 or 2. The number of ELD classes varies from school to school, depending upon resources and the number of EL students at each level in a particular school. East-side schools with large EL populations tend to offer more ELD and sheltered classes, while those schools with smaller EL populations place students with “less than reasonable” fluency in mainstream classes and make bilingual aides available in the classroom to support them. Additionally, students identified for ELD classes may also participate in sheltered classes in content areas in addition to English.

English language students demonstrating “reasonable fluency” at the intermediate and early advanced overall levels of proficiency, depending upon their scores on the

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41 Students demonstrating overall intermediate proficiency on the CELDT, but with higher scores on the reading and writing sections of the test or CST levels of basic or above, may be considered for mainstream classes.

42 The district permits two levels of ELD classes (ELD I & II or II & IIIA) to be combined at the junior high school level provided there are no more than 25 students per class. Similarly, ELD I and ELD II may be combined at the high school level. English Language Development III is the equivalent of English 1 and cannot be combined with other classes.
reading and writing sections of the test, are placed in an English Language Mainstream (ELM) class. Over time, the percentage of students enrolled in the district’s ELD program has been shrinking as the district has focused on moving more students into mainstream classes. The vast majority of AUHSD’s ELs—over 80% of them—have been placed in mainstream English classes. Most students transition out of the ELD program within 3 to 4 years. One of the more interesting analyses conducted by the district shows that EL student performance corresponds to their program placement. Specifically, students in ELM classes perform more poorly than those in the Structured English Immersion classes, as illustrated in Figure 13.

![Figure 13. Cumulative GPA by EL program placement. From District Summary English Learners Annual Report, by the Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) Director of Language Assessment Center, Language Assessment Center (LAC), 2009, unpublished report.](image)

These data are corroborated by administrators as well as ELD and mainstream teachers who see notable differences in the skills of students in ELD and ELM programs. One teacher explained:
Kids who come from the ELD classes are more responsible and conscientious of their writing than a kid who doesn’t come from it. And I’ve always noticed the writing is always better, there is a lot more following of conventional rules, and they want to learn. The foundation is so much better . . . I’ve heard it already this year recently from a teacher who said “it’s amazing how much better the kids from the ELD classes are doing.”

A principal described the dramatic difference between the ELD and ELM worlds:

When you speak with our ELD teachers, you can see their passion for working with the students on whatever level they are at . . . They generally have smaller class sizes and support systems in place. They spend a lot of time and energy focusing on those students’ specific needs, and they are quite skilled and knowledgeable in different tools to utilize to help meet their needs. Once the students start getting out into the mainstream classes, I think that with class sizes—and you’re not dealing with the same needs for all your students . . . there is less time to change up instruction.

Interpreting the data on GPA by program placement should be done with caution. Although the above quotes make it appear that students’ needs are being met more effectively in ELD classes, Callahan’s (2006) research on EL track-placement in high schools, which demonstrated that track placement of ELs was a better predictor of academic achievement than English proficiency levels, suggests a more sinister cause. Her research raises the question as to whether or not higher performance by beginning ELs in ELD I and ELD II classes relative to that of ELs placed in higher-level ELD and mainstream classes is related to lower teacher expectations for the former than the latter.

The English Learner Challenge

The under-performance of ELM students—who constitute the majority of AUHSD’s ELs and who, in many cases, have carried the EL designation since elementary school—is among the district’s greatest challenges in educating the EL population.

Twenty percent of all students in mainstream or general education classes are ELs and
another 36% are reclassified ELs. According to one high school principal, “Our issue is understanding the mainstream EL.”

Not unlike other California districts with significant populations of ELs, AUHSD has been slow to recognize and truly understand the distinct needs of its long-term English learners. In many respects, the focus of AUHSD’s EL initiatives in the past has been on the development of its ELD program. Although the district’s Master Plan states “the expectation is that EL students will be served in which ever class they are placed” (AUHSD, 2004b, p. 11) and the district has recently made significant strides in ensuring that ELM classes are taught by appropriately certified teachers, the reality is that the instruction in many of these classes still falls short of meeting EL student needs.

According to the district’s EL program coordinator, “In the past, our ELD has really gotten a lot more support and attention, whereas it almost seemed like the ELs in the mainstream were not even paid attention to, and teachers did not even think that they had ELs.”

Among the reasons cited for the failure of mainstream teachers to appreciate the number of ELs in their classes is the strong performance of the district’s reclassified students, who are also in mainstream classes. “[Former ELs] are doing fantastically, and that’s where we get that misconception that the ELs are fine in my class,” reported one district curriculum specialist. According to a district data specialist, “There are plenty of data but when you talk to these kids—they have no accent. They’re not speaking Spanish. . . . People forget that they do not have the vocabulary necessary to really understand things.” The district’s ELA teachers are more aware that they have ELs in their classrooms than are teachers of other subjects. This is partly because the CEDLT is
administered in ELA classes and partly because these teachers often see students’ writing, in which their language issues become more apparent.

A number of those teachers who are aware that many of their students are ELs or former ELs often do not know what to do with this information. Most teachers reported that they did not disaggregate student performance based on language fluency. They knew little about the varying needs of their language minority students—some of whom are long-term ELs and others who were recently reclassified. One teacher’s observation was powerfully revealing, “I was surprised because I would say, ‘How long have you been in this country?’ And a kid would say, ‘I was born here.’ I was shocked because that is the student that I am having problems with.”

When asked to describe the challenges they faced in educating their mainstream EL students, teachers described students who were socially fluent in English but exhibited significant gaps in basic reading, writing, and numeracy skills. According to one teacher:

I’m teaching seventh grade standards, but a lot of these kids don’t have the number sense so they may memorize how to do something but they don’t really understand. And on the CST, they really get confused with directions—evaluate—they might just guess at the question because they don’t understand what evaluate means. And the word problems, they just shut down on those . . . they just absolutely get overwhelmed when they see words.

Another teacher commented on the challenges in speaking and writing, “Kids can write and speak in a very conversational way . . . but getting them to speak and write with more complexity is a huge challenge.”

Teachers described students who lacked study skills. One teacher reported, “I’m learning that it’s not that they can’t read, but they don’t know how to read . . . they don’t know how to study.” Many EL students generally have access to only a few words to
describe complex phenomena. They suffer from a lack of background knowledge or referential vocabulary. One junior high school English teacher articulated the challenge:

We use words all the time that we assume all eighth graders should know. It’s not a higher-level vocabulary. It’s common usage, but our kids don’t have that referential vocabulary. I always use the example of Tom Sawyer seeing pie on the window sill, and not one of my kids will ever know what a window sill is.

Teachers also pointed to a lack of confidence on the part of their students. One teacher explained, “A lot of our underperforming students don’t believe they can do it. . . . They don’t trust it when they get the right answer.” Teachers also mentioned pervasive disengagement and low-level motivation. They cited as evidence students’ failure to complete homework, participate in classroom discussions, write things down, read outside of the classroom, or generally take ownership of their learning. According to one teacher, “I call them attendees. Students study outside of class, but they’re not, so I call them attendees. They attend class.” Several teachers used the words lazy or apathetic in describing these students. One described students’ lack of motivation as the “Disneyland” effect,” referring to the nearby amusement park and implying that her students were mostly focused on having fun. Teachers noted that ELs in mainstream classes do not possess the same urgency to learn as their ELD newcomer counterparts. Science teachers were the exception when it came to describing the engagement of their students. They reported students who were focused and motivated because of the hands-on nature of their lessons. In several of the study schools, science scores had risen dramatically.

Teachers in all content areas described using strategies that included such visuals as graphic organizers, cooperative learning, and scaffolding techniques. Nevertheless,
many teachers expressed frustration that their EL students were not performing at grade level. High school teachers were especially concerned about high dropout rates. A number of teachers blamed the poor performance of their students on standardized tests, which they felt did not reflect the true knowledge of their students. Several were open about needing more direction and support in reaching their EL students. As a result of principal-initiated conversations on one campus, teachers identified their own concerns about the quality of instruction. They cited their desire to increase student engagement, employ Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies more effectively, target academic vocabulary, and conduct more effective group work, among others.

Classroom observations conducted specifically for this research, as well as observations conducted by site-based coaches, revealed wide inconsistencies in teaching and learning across classrooms. Consistency in the type of content being taught across subject areas was more evident than consistency in the quality of instruction. Although there were teachers whose lessons incorporated both language and content objectives, utilized visual teaching strategies, encouraged student interaction, probed for students’ thinking, and checked regularly for understanding, these teachers represented the minority. Students in these classrooms were engaged, raising hands and commenting thoughtfully on the subject matter. Most teachers, however, employed only one or two of these strategies. Observations of instructional strategies revealed heavy reliance on teacher-directed instruction, minimal student interaction, reliance on limited technology, few hands-on activities, group work that disintegrated into social conversations, and students who could not explain the directions for, or purpose of, in-class group
assignments. Many teachers conducted only superficial checking for understanding by soliciting choral responses from students. Others issued general inquiries such as, “Are there any questions?” which elicited few responses. Teachers struggled with students’ refusal to complete homework assignments or to memorize information required for tests. Overall, students asked few questions. On those occasions when they did ask questions, their questions revealed that they had not grasped key concepts. Interviews with principals validated classroom observation findings. Principals across the board described the need for better instructional strategies in their classrooms. Several remarked that teachers were consistently presenting lessons that reached only a portion of their students.

Over the past several years, AUHSD, like other districts, has taken steps to ensure that its teachers are properly certified to teach ELs. As shown in Table 15, the number of EL-assigned uncertified teachers dropped 80% between 2007 and 2009, with only 3% of the EL-assigned teaching staff uncertified as of 2009.

Table 15

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EL assigned</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Certified</td>
<td>550 (86%)</td>
<td>502 (93%)</td>
<td>562 (97%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not certified</td>
<td>87 (14%)</td>
<td>40 (7%)</td>
<td>17 (3%)</td>
<td>-80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not EL assigned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certified</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>772</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not certified</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-65%</td>
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*Note.* From Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) Director of Language Assessment Center, 2010, Language Assessment Center (LAC), unpublished raw data.
Despite state-mandated efforts to ensure that all teachers be certified to teach ELs, many teachers have not changed their lessons as a result of certification. According to the district’s EL program coordinator, “We put kids in essentially EL mainstream programs with teachers who are [certified to teach Els] . . . . So the question becomes where is the ELD in ELA?” Principals remarked that certified teachers may be more familiar with special strategies for teaching ELs, but they are not always incorporating that knowledge into their daily practice. Under the current accountability system, having a CLAD credential is tantamount to having the skills necessary to teach ELs when in actuality much more is needed (Olsen, 2010). Several principals noted that many content-area teachers are also unfamiliar with what is involved in passing the CELDT test.

According to one teacher leader:

I think that part of the resistance with the ELs is that we were all forced to get the CLAD. . . . Some teachers resented that. Even the teachers that didn’t resent that they got this credential, and they’ve got the certificate on the wall, but their lessons haven’t changed. So this year . . . what my role is going to be is to help the teachers implement the SDAIE strategies.

Considering the Research Questions

Over the past several years, a number of internal and external forces, including new district leadership and the pressure of federal and state accountability systems, have focused the district more intently on the needs of its EL population. Meanwhile, other forces continue to fuel resistance to changes in this direction. The preceding descriptive analysis of the case study district provides an important backdrop for understanding the findings associated with this investigation’s primary research questions: What contextual factors influence district efforts to promote and support EL-focused reforms in secondary schools? What roles, systems, strategies, and practices does the district employ in
creating more equitable educational opportunities and outcomes for ELs? In its efforts to address the needs of adolescent ELs, how does the district negotiate the change process? The final question, “What lessons can districts learn about their roles in supporting the achievement of adolescent ELs?” falls more appropriately into the analysis of findings presented in Chapter 5.

Key Contextual Factors

The Policy Environment

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the education of ELs has been influenced by a number of federal and state legislative decisions over the past several decades. These decisions have in some instances broadened educational opportunities for ELs. For example, the recent *Williams v. California Settlement* (2004)\(^{43}\) required California public schools to provide the basic necessities of educational opportunity, including textbooks and instructional materials, clean and safe school facilities, and qualified teachers. This case has helped ensure that teachers of ELs were appropriately credentialed. On the other hand, in 1998, Proposition 227, aimed at eliminating bilingual education, narrowed the educational opportunities available to ELs. The education of ELs has also been influenced by the growth of federal and public school accountability systems. These include the 2001 federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the California’s Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) enacted in 1999. Both acts hold schools accountable for student performance on standardized tests.

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\(^{43}\)Pursuant to *Williams vs. State of California* (2004): “if one or more students in the class needs English learner services or requires instruction in a subject area, that teacher providing the English learner services must hold an appropriate English learner credential or authorization.”
A recipient of approximately $5.5 million in Title I funds, AUHSD has been profoundly impacted by federal requirements under NCLB ever since its implementation in 2002. As of 2009-2010, all of the district’s eastside, high-EL concentration schools received Title I funding. Although five out of eight of its middle schools have been in Program Improvement for 4 or more years, the district itself did not enter Program Improvement until 2008. Its inability to exit Program Improvement since that time will move it into Corrective Action in the 2010-2011 school year.

The district’s failure to meet NCLB requirements is the result of the underperformance of five student subgroups on state standardized tests, including economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, African-American students, Hispanic students, and English-language learners. Although the district is showing a generally upward trend in most of these areas, it still falls far short of NCLB targets. Student groups that have the farthest to go to meet federal proficiency requirements are Hispanic students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.

District goals for ELs are guided primarily by NCLB targets, which are reflected in the district’s strategic plan and school-site plans for student achievement. According to one district leader, the district is in the standards movement, talking about standards, implementing common assessments, and using assessment results to guide decision-making. “[NCLB] is a goal, and we are strategically using our data to sort our kids out so that we can address their specific needs to help move them up.”

A district that advances to its third year of Program Improvement Status becomes identified for Corrective Action and is subject to new Title I accountability requirements.
commitment to meeting NCLB targets is tempered by a desire to create sustainable change. He explained:

I want to see the sites moving as quickly as they can toward NCLB improvement without losing significant relationships along the way. I want a principal to move forward with deliberate speed as quickly as his staff and he can pull it off but not at the expense of destroying everything about the school.

With respect to ELs, one central office leader explained:

[No Child Left Behind] has had an effect on our commitment to ELs in this district. Before [the current leadership] we did not have a leadership team that cared about this . . . they are very insistent that all of our subgroups have access to the core curriculum.

Current district administrators cited both NCLB and the Williams Settlement as important catalysts in their efforts to ensure that teachers have the appropriate certification to teach ELs. According to the EL program coordinator, “Teachers must accept that if they have at least one EL in their class, they must be certified. There were 1,400 who were not.” No Child Left Behind and state requirements that increasing percentages of ELs reach proficiency in ELA and mathematics have propelled district efforts to put in place rigorous standards-based courses, focus the curriculum, develop common assessments, and create intensive support classes. They have also catalyzed efforts to improve the quality of classroom instruction for ELs and involve EL parents in the education of their children.

One of the most dramatic effects of policy has occurred in Program Improvement schools, which were encouraged to apply for Comprehensive School Reform Grants (CSR). Through these grants, schools embarked upon major initiatives directed at transforming their school cultures. According to one principal, “We used that as the urgency to really create change at our school.” Although these investments did not
always produce the deep change needed initially, they did put schools on the path toward change. For example, many teachers reacted negatively to outside consultants, whom they saw as imposing change from above. Gradually, however, with guidance in some cases from thoughtful principals who invested in building collaborative networks among teachers, more and more teachers have taken ownership of the change process. Ultimately, even the most resistant of teachers willingly implemented many of the initiatives they had initially resisted.

At one high school, teachers took the initiative from the very beginning and designed and implemented their own CSR grant program. According to one teacher leader, “Anything we do is going to be better than having a company come in and tell us what to do.” They used the CSR grant to build a collaborative culture on their campus to which they now attribute some of the most impressive API gains in the state. Some of the team-building strategies used at this campus, including Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) and classroom walkthroughs, have since been incorporated into the district’s strategic plan and funded at several other district schools (see discussion of Critical Friends Groups in subsection, Encouraging Collaboration).

State mandates requiring double periods of ELA for students who are performing poorly in these subjects have unintentionally created situations in which some districts deny ELs access to full curriculum or compromise the quality of ELD they receive in order to make room for these interventions (Callahan, 2006). Specifically, Program Improvement schools have been required to increase the number of hours their students spend in ELA, forcing some ELs to forfeit such electives as music and art. Some ELs have been placed in intensive reading classes in lieu of ELD classes. In some instances,
the reading curriculum is not broad enough to cover all key literacy domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, effectively denying ELs the breadth of ELD curriculum they need.

Another area in which state policy has directly affected the language development of ELs revolves around state requirements for English Language Development (ELD) instruction in schools. California’s failure to develop an ELD curriculum framework based on the state’s ELD standards means there is no assurance that standards-aligned curriculum materials will be produced and adopted in districts serving ELs (Callahan, 2006; Parrish et al., 2006). Anaheim Union High School District has adopted new curricular materials for the middle school ELD program, but is still relying on a program that the high school level that has been criticized by researchers as pedagogically and conceptually weak (Walqui et al., 2010).

Several district leaders and site administrators expressed frustration by what they described as the “compliance mentality” surrounding the education of ELs. For this, they primarily blamed the state, which, in turn, has obligated the district to move in certain directions. One principal shared her frustration about how compliance requirements cloud the vision:

There are so many rules and regulations that I feel that we are following through with and the district is making sure that we do, which they need to do for EL funding, that the next steps seem to get a little lost in the mix.

One district leader commented that as the AUHSD moves into Corrective Action, the dialogue around compliance has crowded out deeper reflection and discussion about the best ways to meet ELs needs. “People simply say, ‘That will be handled under Corrective Action.’” Meanwhile, researchers have expressed their own concerns that the framework
for Corrective Action required of low-performing schools does not reflect an understanding of the research on ELs and does not account for varying differences in the needs of ELs (Olsen, 2010).

*The Economic Context*

The 2002 implementation of NCLB focused significant resources statewide on EL students’ English-language development and academic achievement. In the late 1990s in the wake of Proposition 227, the state had also made funding available through the English Language Acquisition Program (ELAP) to assist districts in the provision of supplementary EL services for students in Grades 4 through 8. Despite these increased resources, the case study district, not unlike other districts in the state, has been profoundly affected by California’s budget crisis. For the 2008 and 2009 school years, AUHSD was forced to cut $65 million from its budget and faced another $35.6 million in cuts in 2010. Budget-related negotiations and contingency planning have consumed countless hours of time on the part of the Board of Education, as well as district and site leaders, often distracting from their ability to be present on campuses and in classrooms focusing on instruction. Morale has suffered each time pink slips have been circulated. In the spring of 2010, after issuing lay-off notices to 71 certificated employees, the district finalized layoffs of 21 employees, including eight teachers, one nurse, and 12 counselors (Leal, 2010).

Financial pressures have produced several tangible changes on campuses across the district. These have included, among others, teacher furlough days, the elimination of summer and after-school programs, and increased class sizes. Teachers have insisted that increased class sizes make it more difficult for them to provide students—especially EL
students—with the kind of personalized attention they require. Counselor cuts will also translate into less individual support for these students. Movement of teachers caused by budget cuts has also jeopardized classes like AVID and Spanish for Spanish Speakers (SFSS), among others, which may not be offered on certain campuses because of limited teacher availability. Austerity measures have also reduced the number of bilingual instructional aides available to support beginning ELs and forced some schools to combine EL students of significantly differing language abilities into a single class.

Anaheim Union High School District’s remedial and acceleration summer school programs, which served between 10,000-12,000 students annually, have been identified for elimination. The latter provided students with opportunities to move into higher-level coursework by offering them calculus, chemistry, and biology during the summer months. Budget cuts also make it difficult for the district to offer Saturday or extended-day opportunities outside the regular school day, opportunities many ELs need to stay on track for graduation and college preparation.

Financial pressures have also pushed some schools to switch from a block schedule (longer classes) to shorter periods, although the impact of this change on ELs is not clear. Some teachers believe that shorter periods are preferable because the effort required by ELs to stay focused in a second language for long-periods is exhausting. On the other hand, teachers valued the extra time to work with them and the flexibility that longer classes afforded them to engage students in more time-consuming but valuable interactive learning. Staffing shortages have also made it more difficult for schools to operate flexible master schedules. Despite district efforts to encourage teachers to prepare ELD students for the mainstream and to support counselors in monitoring student
data each semester, schools often have little or no flexibility in the master schedule to enable progressing ELD students to move into mainstream classes mid-year. Given this reality, district leaders must ensure that teachers have the skills to facilitate student growth within the ELD program so that students are prepared to move into the mainstream the following year.

Finally, the district’s investments in professional development have been pared back. According to one of the district’s curriculum specialists:

In the past, we’ve always had many, many workshops and trainings. Now because of the budget crunch, we’ve had to become more and more creative how we deliver those training sessions, so we have a couple of early start days or late start days and they have a couple of hours to train teachers and to bring them up to speed.

In supporting its reform efforts, the district has encouraged and supported the efforts of Title I schools to apply to become Title I Schoolwide Programs, thus enabling them to employ these resources more broadly in the service of more of their student populations. Since 2005, the number of school-wide Title I programs has grown from 0 to 10. Additionally, in funding its newest Lesson Design Specialist (LDS) program, which provides training for teachers who will serve as models for other teachers, the district redirected general-fund teacher salaries to categorical resources. Resources channeled to the effort have included federal and state categorical funds as well as new federal dollars aimed at supporting innovative uses in education. According to district reports, the LDS saved teaching jobs that would have otherwise been eliminated.
Community Context

The Role of the School Board in Supporting Reform for ELs

Educators and community leaders alike have repeatedly described Anaheim city politics and the AUHSD’s school board as conservative. Twice in the past, the AUHSD Board of Education has made national headlines for its conservative positions. In 1978, the board decided to ban *Gone With the Wind* for its depiction of the behavior of Scarlett O’Hara and the freed slaves (Online Books, 2010). Two decades later, in 1999, at the urging of trustee Harold Martin, the board passed a resolution proposing to bill the federal government for the cost of educating the children of undocumented workers enrolled in its schools. Martin’s supporters at the time included the conservative Christian Coalition and Barbara Coe’s Coalition for Immigration Reform, a sponsor of a 1994 ballot initiative to prohibit illegal immigrants from accessing social services, health care, and public education in California (Fernandez, 1999). In an undated internet article, Martin wrote that one of the reasons he ran for the school board was “to try to stop the expanding level of bilingual education.” He described a young Hispanic girl who was “held back by an education system demanding that she work in Spanish and English” (Martin, n.d.). Other controversial behavior by Martin included his support for the expansion of police on school campuses to require students to prove legal residency.

In the summer of 2007, the school board appointed the polarizing Martin, who had lost re-election bids in 2004 and 2006, to an open board seat created by the death of another member. Although the board’s decision fueled a bi-partisan effort led by a local Latino activist organization to force a special election to overturn the appointment, it raised concerns about the trustees’ true colors (“Let Anaheim,” 2007). Three of the board
members supporting the decision to appoint Martin were still serving on the board during the time period covered by this research. Of the five current school board members, one is of Hispanic descent, and neither he nor any of the other board members has been particularly vocal on matters concerning Hispanic or EL students.

Central office administrators described the AUHSD’s work with ELs as “under the radar” and “all internal,” with little involvement from the school board. District leaders cited an overall lack of board involvement in issues of instruction. According to one district leader, “If they were generally involved that would be fine, but they’re not. They choose not to. So we just move ahead.” Most district administrators believed that, although board members would be unlikely to sabotage district efforts in support of ELs, they are generally disinterested in data associated with the performance of student subgroups. One administrator observed, “You could see them glazing over when we’d share data. . . . So they grab onto something that they do understand like construction.” Another administrator explained, “I don’t know if they know the right things to ask about our ELs. So they just trust what we say.” Teachers at the “east-side” schools perceived board members to be more focused on “west-side” schools than on their schools. They reported having no advocate for their needs on the board.

A review of board agendas covering the period July 2005-April 2010 revealed very little board attention to EL needs specifically. The board has not requested or received regular reports on the performance of ELs. In 2007, board members participated in several goal-setting sessions led by an external facilitator. These sessions culminated in the articulation of the following five broad goals, but nothing specific to equity, ELs, or other student groups: (a) provide all students will receive high quality instruction;
(b) create multiple pathways to high school graduation, focusing on career and postsecondary education, training, and experience; (c) maintain a professional culture that attracts, supports, and retains the highest quality professionals in every position in the district to deliver effective and efficient service to internal and external clients; (d) build and maintain alliances with businesses and industry; and (e) support the development of positive character and civic responsibility (AUHSD, 2007). Board study sessions since 2005 have focused on the implications of having schools identified as “Program Improvement” sites; the relationship between California instructional standards and classroom instruction; and community use of school buildings and grounds, but there have been no study sessions on either ELs or special education students, two of the primary reasons the district is in Program Improvement. The board last approved a Master Plan for ELs in 2004, which according to district staff is currently being updated by a task force of EL parents, and EL administrators and counselors. The most recent board policy on English learners was last revised in 2004, as well.

District leaders reported that they are educating the board about EL issues. In January 2010, district leaders shared their Title III Improvement Plan Addendum with the board. In this plan, they acknowledged that AUHSD EL students have not received consistent daily standards-based ELD instruction appropriate to their CELDT proficiency levels. Leaders cited a number of reasons for AUHSD’s failure to meet NCLB targets for ELs, including: (a) the need for training and school-wide implementation of effective instructional strategies to address the English language development needs of mainstreamed and long-term ELs; (b) the need for a system to address the linguistic and academic goals and objectives for low-performing ELs with disabilities; and (c) the need
for a consistent district-wide process to provide on-going information to classroom teachers and counselors related to the instructional needs, academic progress, and achievement of ELs (AUHSD, 2010b).

According to one community leader who has been active in the local education arena for many years, in many instances district leaders are aware of what needs to happen to improve education for ELs—but “under the radar of their boards.” Recalling local board history, he lamented the fact that school leaders have been effectively forced to work under the radar for fear that others in the community would be critical of efforts that appeared to cater to the needs of immigrant children. He remarked, “There is that cadre of people that will go to board members to raise those alarms.” Overall, there appears to be a lack of urgency on the part of board members regarding improving the academic performance of ELs.

_The Teachers’ Union_

District leaders did not consider the current president of the Anaheim Secondary Teachers Association (ASTA), installed in 2008, to be a major source of resistance to change for ELs or students in general. They described her as a thoughtful teacher with whom they have worked closely in designing professional development initiatives focused on changing instructional strategies to serve such students as ELs more effectively. Although union pressure played a role in ensuring that these initiatives be teacher-driven and voluntary, friction with the union has decreased dramatically since the previous union administration. According to district leaders, past union presidents have been more vocal in resisting district reforms, often citing teachers’ rights to academic freedom. These rights, memorialized in the ASTA’s contract with the district, include a
guarantee that teachers retain the authority to select the methodology they use in teaching the standards, provided they receive satisfactory evaluations. As with the school board, the teachers’ union was not portrayed as a major player in district efforts focused on ELs.

**New Leadership**

*The New Superintendent*

Throughout its more than 100-year history, AUHSD has experienced relative stability in superintendent leadership. Six of the last 10 superintendents served 7 or more years. Two superintendents served more than 15 years each. Such stability in superintendent leadership is extremely rare, especially in large urban school districts in which the typical tenure is about 3.5 years (Council of Great City Schools, 2008/2009). This relative stability was interrupted briefly in 2003 when two superintendents in succession each served 1-year terms. In the wake of these short tenures, Dr. Joseph Farley assumed leadership in the summer of 2005. Although his renewed contract extended through July 2012, he resigned suddenly in 2010 to assume the leadership of a nearby unified school district. This study focuses on the roughly 5-year period beginning with his hiring in July 2005 and extending through June 2010.

In many ways, Superintendent Farley appeared to be the ideal candidate to assume leadership of a district charged with educating a large number of English learners. His resume included bilingual language abilities, college majors in both Spanish and English, and experience as a teacher of English learners. He also had also served as superintendent in the nearby largely Hispanic urban district of Oceanside, which educates 21,000 K-12 students, approximately 24% of whom are EL students (Ed-Data, 2010).
Designated as a Comité\textsuperscript{45} district while under his leadership, Oceanside benefited from the support of EL experts and outside monitors who helped it develop what Farley described as a “state-of-the-art English learner program that accounted for the intricacies of second language acquisition.” Although he expected that he would be able to build on that work in his new position, Farley believed early on that AUHSD lacked Oceanside’s sophistication and depth of experience in working with Els.

\textit{Early Struggles}

The rare superintendent in Anaheim who had not worked his way up through the Anaheim system, Farley described his initial reception as less than warm. In fact, he remarked that “a bunch of people quit when they heard that I was coming.” One principal explained the challenge, “There is a lot incestuousness in the district where everybody’s related to everybody, everybody knew everybody. And you couldn’t get anywhere in the district unless you were related or had the right connections.” District leaders described Farley as an instructional leader committed to change who brought a more business-like style to a district that had long functioned more like a family. In fact, “the Anaheim Way” had long been coined to describe the close personal connections that characterized working relationships within the district. Farley’s recruitment from the outside, and what some observers described as his early criticism of past district leadership and the state of the district upon his arrival, did not earn him friends easily. Moreover, his efforts to bring in new leadership personnel and ideas from other districts fueled anxiety and distrust

\textsuperscript{45} The Comité Consent decree and Compliance Unit were outcomes of the \textit{Comité De Padres et al. v. Superintendent of Public Instruction} 1985 ruling. They required greater attention to the education of ELs in the monitoring of categorical funding and made available additional support for schools and districts seeking to bring their programs into compliance.
among people within the district. Despite Farley’s 5-year tenure in the district, for some, this trust was never fully restored.

Farley detailed early struggles with a few members of the board of education who, accustomed to the more submissive styles of his immediate predecessors, were reluctant to grant him the flexibility he needed to make change. At one point during his first year, he threatened to leave the district, a decision that, according to his contract, would have required him to pay the district the $35,000 search fee for a new superintendent. He recalled telling the board, “You hired me to do a job, and you’re not letting me do the work.” Farley’s threat worked, the board backed off, and he began his work by replacing many key leaders in the central office.

Shortly after his arrival, Farley was confronted with the results of an independent audit of AUHSD’s multi-million dollar bond program, which showed that earlier mismanagement had effectively cut in half the number of planned projects the district would be able to complete under the program. In addition to handling mounting legal issues associated with bond mismanagement, the new superintendent spent much of his first year sizing up the situation. He explained:

I spent that first year gathering data about what the issues were. Then (my assistant superintendent for education) came on board. So my second year, we were figuring out what we were going to do with that data. The next two years—this is the beginning of my fifth year—were about implementing those changes.

Farley recalled the daunting nature of the reform task ahead of him. “I expected the district would need instructional improvement . . . . I’ve never seen anything like it. I can’t even tell you how dysfunctional literally everything was: HR [the Human Resources department], business, warehousing, accounting, education, personnel.” Farley recalled
that, in addition to the many systems issues, “The English learner program was a disaster. Usually the worst teachers were assigned to their classes. . . . We had to start from scratch.”

District Roles, Strategies, and Practices

Restructuring Efforts

Transforming the EL Office

According to Farley, the district had a history of transferring people who were not successful at the school sites to the district office. He ultimately replaced over a dozen management staff, including all but one cabinet-level staff person, and brought in trusted advisors from other districts to fill key assistant superintendent and director positions. These leaders, in turn, brought in new curriculum specialists in the areas of literacy, ELA, special education, and ELD. For his EL program coordinator, he looked inside the district, relying upon a veteran, outspoken AUHSD leader with extensive experience in the field. Frequently described by principals and teachers as a strong advocate for ELs, the EL program coordinator has since become a critical player in Farley’s leadership team.

The district’s initial work on behalf of ELs involved restructuring the EL program. For a long time, the ELD department had operated relatively autonomously. Physically located at a site outside the district’s central office and operated by a small staff, it was regarded as a highly efficient, customer-service oriented, skilled organization within the larger organization. “We almost had a certain mythic quality,” described one administrator, “good data, good services, good training, good materials, good
everything.” Nevertheless, despite its reputation, the department remained isolated from the rest of the work of the district.

Under Farley’s restructuring efforts, the EL Office, which includes the EL program coordinator, EL curriculum specialist, the Language Assessment Center (LAC) director, among others, was relocated to the central office. The EL program coordinator’s office currently sits squarely in the center of the education division, and she is a regular contributor to district-level planning and other meetings on a range of topics. She is frequently present at principals’ meetings and hosts regular meetings with site-level assistant principals and counselors who have been assigned responsibility for EL programs. Recent budget cuts have forced her to wear several hats in addition to that of EL coordinator, including shouldering responsibility for the district’s AVID program, college fair, and Puente program.⁴⁶ Although her attention is now divided among more activities, she is also more connected to other work in the district and constantly looking out for the interests of ELs in all that she does. “I never put the EL hat away. . . . They are going to get a slice of every pie—I’m not going to allow anything else.”

*Increasing Collaboration Among Central Office Staff*

Central office staff reported that moving the EL Office to the central office has facilitated greater involvement on the part of other district staff in the education of EL students. The EL program coordinator explained that, although having total responsibility for EL initiatives in earlier times had given her greater authority and

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⁴⁶ An interdisciplinary academic preparation, Puente incorporates writing, counseling, and mentoring components. In addition to engaging in intensive writing, reading, and critical thinking activities in class, Puente students work with counselors to build their awareness of college opportunities. Students are also connected with local community leaders and organizations, with the long-term goal of serving their communities in the future.
autonomy, it did not produce ownership among others across the district for the education of ELs. “I think what we’ve really tried to do is to turn it from ‘those kids’ and ‘your kids’ to ‘our kids.’” Within the central office, the EL, ELA, special education, and literacy curriculum specialists have become accustomed to planning together on a regular basis. According to the assistant superintendent for education, “The smartest thing that the curriculum specialists did was to become one unit . . . they are actually having most of their meetings combined.” The EL program coordinator explained that, “Bringing them together has created a synergy that has been very positive relative to the embedding of many of the things that we have wanted to see occur with ELs in all of these areas.”

This synergy among leaders at the district level has, in turn, facilitated greater collaboration at the site level. Curriculum specialists described ELA teachers as increasingly “on board” in understanding their role in building academic language. Additionally, special education staff have taken on the work of writing and incorporating linguistically appropriate goals into students’ Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

According to the EL program coordinator:

There was a time when you’re special ed, forget about the EL because you’re special ed. . . . We’ve had a huge coming together from a curricular standpoint of how do we integrate the needs of our students and how do we bring these teachers together to see what needs to be done.

Collaboration at the district level with such other disciplines as math and science remains more limited. Despite the fact that AUHSD students struggle with reading comprehension on the math portion of the CAHSEE, the district’s math specialists have been described as less focused on academic language issues. According to some in the central office, this more limited collaboration at the district level with the math specialists
has translated into greater challenges in bringing more math teachers at the site level on board regarding the importance of academic language for ELs.

Most staff acknowledged that there is still much work to be done across all content areas to educate teachers about the importance of academic language. The EL curriculum specialist lamented that she is still viewed more as an ELD curriculum specialist than as the curriculum specialist for all ELs. Although her hope is to work across all content areas, she does not yet have site-level department area chairs requesting her support as much as she would like.

*Increasing Shared and Reciprocal Accountability*

*Involving principals and other site-based EL staff.* Other promising restructuring efforts included steps taken by the superintendent to transfer from the central office to the site level the responsibility for implementing major initiatives. According to one central office administrator, whereas in the past, district staff would train assistant principals on compliance issues, and so forth, “now the thrust is to train the principals to train their own people, keep their own people informed . . . hold the principal accountable.”

According to the superintendent, bi-weekly meetings with principals and central office staff are no longer focused solely on administrative responsibilities. Central office administrators have regularly convened principals, EL administrators (site-based vice principals charged with handling EL compliance issues), EL coordinators (site-based counselors) and Title I site coordinators to discuss EL needs and initiatives, among other things. As a result, central office staff reported that principals have become more invested in understanding the EL programs. “What would happen before is the principal
would just step aside . . . [and say] ‘just tell me what you want me to do so I can get my EIA-LEP\textsuperscript{47} money.’”

In monthly meetings with site-based EL administrators and EL coordinators, the district’s EL program coordinator and EL curriculum specialist now lead discussions on issues ranging from data to compliance issues. Although they described the meetings as useful, school staff have remarked that the meetings have yet to involve much collective visioning about the overall goals for EL students. One EL administrator described the meetings as follows, “Those meetings are: ‘This is what we are going to do at this time,’ or ‘You have this window to complete this task.’ There isn’t much reflection going on to better the system, the process.”

School-site planning. Using a template that incorporates the district initiatives, schools are expected to prepare individual school plans for student achievement, which follow federal NCLB and state guidelines and include specific goals and strategies for meeting the needs of ELs, as well as other critical student subgroups. Principals are charged with making sure that their site plans are responsive to EL needs. The entire district-based EL team is part of the review process of these plans, making certain that EL-related goals and objectives have been incorporated into site plans. One principal described the process as “top down” but added that “it has worked very well because there has been support. There has been guidance. There has been communication.” A review of student achievement plans from the case study schools revealed variation in the extent to which ELs were targeted specifically. Plans made reference to “school-wide

\footnote{\textsuperscript{47} Refers to Economic Impact Aid for low-income students and funding for Limited English Proficient students.}
academic vocabulary programs,” training in EL instructional strategies, and support for ELD students through sheltered classes and technology. All plans included such outcome indicators as “meeting AYP” for evaluating progress toward these objectives.

**Decentralizing training and financial resources.** The district has supported sites in assuming greater accountability by making resources, training, and data available to site-level teams. As mentioned earlier, the district has encouraged and supported the efforts of Title I schools to develop school-wide Title I programs. The district has also set aside 10% of Title I funding for professional development and given control of a significant portion of these funds to schools to use as they see fit in preparing staff to meet their student achievement plan goals. The district has made resources available to the sites for training of their school leadership teams in developing school-wide achievement plans. According to one principal, “I’ve always had discretion with my EIA money, my Title I money. I’ve always felt that I have their support and the discretion to use that categorical money as I’ve needed to.”

**Centralizing Assessment and Monitoring**

Efforts to decentralize accountability have been balanced by the centralization of such functions as the initial assessment of ELs within the Language Assessment Center (LAC). Language Assessment Center staff assess all incoming students to the district using the CELDT and primary language assessments. They interview and inform parents about their rights. They follow up on special education designations. The LAC also trains all of the district’s CELDT coordinators to ensure that the test is uniformly implemented across the district. It also provides school sites with detailed data reports on the CELDT levels of EL students. Centralizing assessment activities, which had formerly
been conducted at the site level, has not only relieved the sites of this responsibility, but it has also enabled the district to monitor student data closely and ensured consistent procedures for identifying and placing EL students in the appropriate classes. The LAC now provides school site counselors with regular data reports on each student, including CST performance, CELDT levels, years in U.S. schools, and primary language literacy. These data are evaluated against clear criteria to determine the appropriate placement. According to the assistant superintendent for education, schools are also expected to dig deeper and consider student history, teacher recommendations, and other measures they might have in making placement decisions. These changes, along with Title III AMAOs, have helped ensure that students are placed in appropriate ELD levels and that fewer students linger in lower-level ELD classes when they should be moved to more advanced ELD or mainstream classes.

Anaheim Union High School District’s restructuring efforts also include plans to create a new central office position, instructional analyst, during the 2010-2011 school year. This person will be charged with working with administrators and teachers at school sites to help them understand and use student-specific data to inform classroom instruction. Although not assigned to work within the EL office, the instructional analyst will use deeply disaggregated data to help teachers make better decisions about such instructional strategies as grouping, interactive work, and so forth.

Revamping Alternative Education

Other restructuring efforts have involved the downsizing of the district’s alternative education programs, which serve mostly ELs, through the consolidation of four campuses into two. The district also restructured the program from a half-day
independent study program into a full day of standards-aligned instruction, which, according to the EL program coordinator, better meets the needs of ELs. The district also stopped allowing schools to send ELs who needed the structured support of ELD programs to alternative education schools. Formerly, many of these EL students, who arrived in the district in the middle of a school year, were sent directly by their schools to alternative education schools. One curriculum specialist reported that “it was so unfair before . . . there were so many kids that were just sent to alternative ed and never ever brought back to comprehensive ed.” According to the district’s EL program coordinator, it took 2 years to stop the hemorrhaging of ELs into alternative education programs. “We have put an end to sending students who are at the beginning, early intermediate, and even intermediate levels to the alternative programs.” Alternative education schools now serve primarily “at risk” long-term ELs who have experienced severe attendance issues, are behind in credits, or have severe literacy issues.

A District-Wide Instructional Improvement Strategy

The Vision for Change

Superintendent Farley’s vision for change in AUHSD was a direct response to the state in which he found the district upon his arrival. Walkthroughs conducted by central office staff early in Farley’s tenure quickly revealed that aligning the curriculum with state standards would need to be the first order of business. According to a central office administrator, “I thought the problem would be bad instruction . . . Instead, I saw fifth grade level work in the seventh grade. How are kids going to improve if we give them low-level curriculum?” Farley’s first concerns revolved around ensuring that all students
had access to a rigorous curriculum. Other immediate concerns included putting in place support systems that would enable students to be successful in those rigorous courses.

In a district that lacked pacing guides, benchmarks, or formative assessments, the superintendent’s vision for EL students did not differ significantly from that which he desired for all students. One principal explained the strategy, “What they tried to do initially was start with the basics. Let’s get everybody to know what standard they are teaching and when they are teaching it. That’s how basic it was when we first started 5 years ago.” The district pushed sites to begin the important work of collaborating around the development of pacing guides and benchmarks. While some schools were slow to move on this front, others—particularly those schools in Program Improvement—had little choice but to implement changes.

Farley shared his overall vision for ELs as follows, “to give them rigorous instruction in language and content and simultaneously provide support for them to be successful in those courses.” This focus on English and academic proficiency is echoed in AUHSD Board Policy, which establishes the expectation that ELs be provided a challenging core curriculum and rigorous instruction “that develop proficiency in English as rapidly and effectively as possible in order to assist the students in becoming productive and responsible members of our society” (AUHSD, 2004a). The policy also emphasizes the need to rely on research-based methodologies and data to evaluate program effectiveness.

Expressing some concern that a district-wide vision for ELs might not be entirely appropriate given the diversity of schools in the district, Farley explained that his specific goals for ELs varied depending upon site needs:
We individualize [our goals] by school because there are so many other conditions other than just EL. One school might have a math problem partly because they haven’t dismantled their math instruction yet, and they still have a lot of tracks and that is going to be our focus. Another school might have a more developed EL program and the data is O.K. there, so they need to be working on something else.

An assistant principal at one of the study schools confirmed that the sites have had to assume responsibility for tailoring the district’s vision to their needs.

They’ve given the schools the responsibility . . . we are responsible for having programs and a vision—but not just a vision but implementing plans to catch students up to grade level and to prepare them post-secondary education . . . it is up to the school to decide how that is going to happen.

Teacher leaders at the site level echoed the need for the vision to vary depending upon the sites. One high school teacher articulated these concerns: “This is a very complicated district. . . . If they are going to have a vision it needs to have subcomponents to it, allowing the schools, which know their own cultures and what can work, to run with the ball.”

Given that such a large proportion of the district’s student population is composed of linguistic minority students, many of those interviewed viewed the needs of all linguistic minority students as being similar to those of ELs. Interviewees at all levels of the district repeatedly shared the belief that what is good for EL students is good for all students. Those most committed to the education of ELs, however, were quick to point out that the inverse of this statement—“what’s good for all students is good for ELs”—did not hold true.

Not surprisingly, the most precise visions for AUHSD’s ELs emerged from those at the central office who had been charged specifically with focusing on the education of these students: the EL program coordinator and the EL curriculum specialist.
These leaders, who bring a wealth of experience and commitment to the EL issue, acknowledged the need to attend specifically to the district’s long-term ELs and to work closely with mainstream teachers to make certain that they are truly aware of EL needs and equipped to focus on both the language and academic needs of these students. They profoundly appreciated the need to use data to understand student needs so that the district could tailor programs to meet those needs. They also discussed a need for more programs that provide ELs and linguistic minority students in general with the kind of social and emotional support they need to compete at the highest levels in the district. Finally, they understood the value of building on students’ primary language capacity to create opportunities for them to undertake advanced work. Nevertheless, this clarity of vision did not extend to everyone in the central office. According to one district administrator:

I think the gap is the vision. What is the vision of the district? . . . I’m at the district and I’m not clear to tell you the truth. It could be clearer. . . . It seems like the same message until you get out there and really start talking to people . . . by the time you get down to [the school site] the message has changed.

These leaders attributed the lack of clarity of vision to a number of different causes. These included the district’s practice of conveying messages to different stakeholders through separate meetings, a multitude of concurrent initiatives whose interrelationship is not always understood or whose linkage to the bigger picture is not clear, and the lack of a strong communication loop between the district and the sites. Another central office administrator remarked:

There is a vision . . . . It will go to the directors and the specialists at each site or certain cohorts of teachers at each site, but there is no connectedness back and forth here with what’s going back at the sites.
Although many principals believed there was an implicit vision for ELs that included English proficiency, exposure to a rigorous curriculum, and success in grade-level or above work, most could not readily articulate an explicit district vision and expectations for ELs apart from the need to reach NCLB targets for this subgroup and to satisfy compliance requirements. Among the six principals interviewed, one was the exception who had truly made himself an advocate for the ELs. He credited his depth of understanding of the district’s vision to the particular lens he brings to this work as a former EL himself and outsider to the district with extensive experience working with ELs in other districts.

To me, it has always been clear—their expectation, their vision, and what they are trying to do. . . . I see what they are trying to do, and I see that the culture change that the district needs to make about who our kids are and how we’re going to serve them in a different way.

At the site level, teachers had received messages about the importance of rigor. One teacher, however, questioned the lack of specifics:

That’s what we’ve heard from the district. We want our curriculum to have rigor. . . . it’s left up to the individual teacher what rigor looks like. They’ve told us what they don’t want to see anymore . . . have they said what rigor is? Not really.

Many teachers also reported hearing the message about ELs from either central office staff or their principals. Most felt that these leaders had communicated a sense of urgency about the need to focus more effectively on the district’s ELs. The majority described the thrust of these messages as centered on the need to increase test scores for ELs so that schools and the district can exit Program Improvement status.
Overview of Key Initiatives

English learner reform in AUHSD is embedded within a much larger systemic effort designed to improve curriculum and instruction for all students. One district administrator asserted, “ELs are not making AYP—and it comes down to curriculum and instruction.” The superintendent’s initial information-gathering process culminated in a set of district initiatives that have been in various stages of planning, implementation, mastery, or maintenance since 2006. Together, these initiatives constitute the core of the district’s efforts to reform curriculum and instruction for all learners. They can be broadly categorized into six key areas of focus: (a) ensuring a rigorous, standards-based curriculum for all students, (b) increasing the use of formative assessments and collaboration at the site and district levels, (c) improving the use of student achievement data in school and district planning, (d) accelerating the learning of identified student groups through intervention and enrichment activities, (e) increasing communication and involvement of parents and the community in supporting student learning, and (f) improving the various systems that are integral to the district’s daily functioning, including its information technology system, as well as its facilities, fiscal, and personnel management systems (AUHSD, 2009a). The following paragraphs highlight those initiatives and practices that are most relevant to the achievement of ELs.

Strategies Focused on Ensuring a Rigorous Curriculum

Standards-based courses and curriculum pacing. Under the leadership of a cadre of new curriculum specialists and central office directors, and in collaboration with the department chairs at the various school sites, the district concentrated its initial efforts on aligning curriculum to standards in each of the core subject areas. In so doing, it relied on
in-service summer workshops, outside consultants, local universities, and institutes to work with school staff throughout the school year to develop standards-based courses of study, curriculum maps, and common assessments. Many of these efforts were directed at the junior high school level, where schools, as a result of their prolonged Program Improvement Status, were pushed to take corrective action.

The assistant superintendent for education recalled the litany of nonstandards-based math classes that existed upon his arrival, including business math, pre-algebra, and general math in high school. He and other district leaders described a reluctance among teachers to push students into higher level classes because they did not believe students could achieve in those classes. District leaders told of EL students who were regularly placed in sheltered and support classes that did expose them to grade-level curriculum. The assistant superintendent for education remembered telling teachers, “We’re not going to be teaching courses that are not standards-based anymore. Look at the standards. Where does it say algebra is? It is in eighth grade so we need to move to this. . . . The state requires this. We’re going to do this.”

When it comes to teaching the standards, district leaders have regularly emphasized “less is more.” “Our common push is for curriculum pacing plans to focus on the power standards,” related the assistant superintendent for education. These “power” or “essential” standards refer to those standards that are most frequently assessed on the state-standardized tests. District leaders have observed that teachers who struggle to cover a lot of material in a short period of time often fail to differentiate sufficiently so that all students have access to the content. According to one curriculum specialist, if a teacher were to teach to mastery only a minimum course of study that included most of
the essential standards, the district would be able to avoid Program Improvement for a long time.

The decision to focus on the essential standards is not without its issues. Unlike the junior high schools, which have been in Program Improvement for a long time and have grown accustomed to focusing on the essential standards, the district’s high schools, according to one administrator, “are just starting to feel that pain,” and many teachers are reluctant to narrow the curriculum. For example, one curriculum specialist pointed out, “There are many sites that are more focused on making sure that the student can think, and write, and read critically rather than take multiple choice tests.”

Although junior high schools are farther along the continuum than high schools in offering a common, standards-based curriculum across sites, high schools are making some progress. Many of them have developed their own pacing guides using the blueprints of the CAHSEE. That the high schools are beginning to feel the pain was particularly evident in one conversation with a high school ELA department chair, “We’ve identified the essential standards. . . . The essentials per grade level and now we’ve broken them down even more. I also think . . . and I’m not alone on this, there is such a panic about being taken over [by the state].” District plans for the 2009-2010 school year called for the development of common curriculum maps in all core courses across the district.

Another critical aspect of district efforts to ensure a rigorous curriculum has involved investments to ensure that site-level administrators are able to determine whether or not students are being pushed to think critically. Investments in training for school administrators have included equipping them with strategies for spending more
time in the classroom, coaching and communicating with staff through accountability measures and staff evaluations, and conducting “Curriculum Calibration Walks.” The assistant superintendent for education described his regular walks with school leaders:

When they walk with me, we look at the curriculum and we ask ourselves, “Is that outstanding?” We calibrate the curriculum. . . . Sometimes we find out that teachers are teaching a fourth grade standard. O.K., but why? Maybe they’re scaffolding to the [grade-level] standard, so that’s an important question to ask. But if that is the culminating lesson for that standard, we’ve got a problem. The second thing we do is we ask them to focus on the language being used in the classroom. What are the teachers asking the kids to do? Are they asking them to repeat, to copy . . . or are they asking higher-order thinking questions? Are they asking them to evaluate, create, compare, or contrast? Those are the two questions: “Is the curriculum on target?” and “Are they pressing their kids to be good thinkers?”

By the end of 2008, district leaders had introduced all campuses to curriculum calibration strategies designed to ensure grade-level curriculum in English, math, and science. Efforts to ensure a rigorous curriculum were particularly evident in math where, with the support from the University of California Irvine (UCI), sites began implementing new courses in algebra and higher math courses for all ninth graders. The district reported that by 2008 there were no below grade-level mathematics classes being offered, although newly piloted pre-algebra and algebra 1 courses at the junior high school level still required accurate calibration to ensure that content reflected the appropriate level of difficulty. As of 2009, a new standards-based earth science class was in place, and efforts were underway to develop a new integrated science 1 program.

Adoption of standards-based textbooks materials also became a critical focus of district efforts during early years of Farley’s administration. According to one administrator, “Our new adoption—unlike our last adoption—is completely aligned to the California standards.” Professional development resources have been directed toward
training teachers on using the newly adopted materials. District leaders admitted that the use of adopted materials tailored for ELs by teachers is uneven across classrooms. At the middle-school level, adopting materials for struggling readers, district curriculum specialists chose a balanced literacy program that is appropriate for EL students.

Developing common assessments. At the time of Dr. Farley’s arrival, only a few schools had fully implemented school-level common assessments. Since 2007, the district has pushed for the development of teacher-designed common assessments in core subject areas at each school site. By the end of 2009, all high school and junior high school sites had developed common school-level assessments in English and math, although district leaders reported concerns about the frequency and quality of some of these assessments. Not all assessments were considered rigorous enough to measure grade-level content. District leaders have acknowledged that work must still be done to ensure that school-wide common assessments are appropriately aligned with curriculum maps, textbook materials, and content standards.

In order to provide timely, effective feedback to teachers and to students, district leaders have also taken steps to ensure that assessment results are in the hands of teachers immediately following the administration of the exams. In 2007, the district subscribed to an assessment management software product, Data Director, which enables schools to analyze their own exams. It also purchased high-speed scanners for use at the school sites. The placement of assessment scanners at school sites, however, has made district-wide analysis of assessment results more difficult, as results were not readily available to the district. The district has since assigned one vice principal at each site to be trained to oversee the processing of assessment results and debriefing of the district on those results.
In addition to school-wide assessments, district-wide assessments in ELA and math were designed by teachers working closely with the district staff or outside consultants and were first administered in junior high schools in 2008-2009. Initial results indicated a need for continued refinement of the ELA exam to ensure that it is appropriately aligned with standards. The district is currently focused on developing district-wide English writing assessments. District plans for 2010-2011 include initiating a district-wide planning process focused on developing common curriculum guides and a common timeline for district-wide quarterly assessments in all of the core subject areas for Grades 7-10. Schools will have the freedom to develop their own pacing guides but will need to ensure that their teachers have covered certain standards by the assessment dates.

District leaders also understand that formative assessment encompasses far more than benchmark tests. One district curriculum specialist shared her work with literacy teachers to make regular authentic assessment a regular part of their practice. “They would see a benchmark—a 6-week unit test as formative, which I do not. How can you go back 6 weeks, which you just wasted? For me formative is daily, and it’s weekly.”

Curriculum and assessment in the ELD department. In many respects, the district’s ELD department was ahead of other departments when it came to providing a standards-based curriculum and district-wide common assessments. In fact, it had developed its own content and performance standards based on the TESOL standards in the late 1990s. According to the district’s EL coordinator,

The good news was that ELD teachers as a group were a lot more comfortable [than other teachers] with standards and how they fit together and how you
chunked ELD and ELA standards together. . . . ELD teachers have lived it, they get it, they own it—they understand what the standards movement is about.

The district’s ELD department has relied upon research-based, standards-aligned curricula at both the junior-high and high-school levels. The newest curriculum selected by the district for its ELD program at the junior high school level is aligned to Grades 6-8 ELD standards and elementary school ELA standards. The curriculum used at the high school level has been state adopted as an ELD and Reading intervention for Grades 4-12. The high school curriculum is supplemented twice yearly by units offered through the San Diego County Superintendent of Schools’ Writing Reform Institute for Teaching Excellence (WRITE). The WRITE Institute’s standards-aligned curriculum, instruction, and assessment components are designed to prepare teachers to help English learners and other struggling students to write effectively and think critically. They include writing units based on multi-cultural literature, reading comprehension activities, and literacy process strategies differentiated for different levels of English proficiency, among other features.

English Language Development was the only department in the district that had its own common, district-wide assessments prior to Farley’s arrival. According to one site-level EL program coordinator, “We’ve had common assessments for years because, with our high transiency rate in the district, how can we know how kids are doing if we don’t have a common yardstick?” While teachers in other disciplines were just beginning to collaborate in the design and analysis of assessment results, ELD teachers had long been accustomed to collaborating at the district level and using assessments results to guide instruction. The district’s 2008/2009 strategic plan included notation of the fact that ELD
students tend to move up one level of proficiency each year, but stall upon achieving intermediate level proficiency. District plans called for closer examination of the ELD curriculum and closer alignment with ELD standards to ensure greater progress with these students.

*Focus on academic literacy.* District leaders and teachers alike talk about the importance of helping mainstream EL students develop academic language. Beginning in 2008, the district established English for Academic Purposes (EAP), a support class to be taken in addition to regular English class. English for Academic Purposes was initially designed to ensure that ELD standards would be taught and assessed for mainstream EL students. The course, limited to an enrollment of 25 students, was initially intended to help EL mainstream students develop literacy specific to mathematics, science, and history courses. Long-term ELs or those transitioning to the mainstream scoring at the intermediate through advanced levels on the CELDT and between 281 and 324 on the ELA/CST are eligible for EAP classes as are those with slightly higher CST scores who have not yet achieved an overall score of English proficient on the CELDT. The EL program coordinator described the mainstream ELs’ need for EAP:

> We recognize that we have moved into a new phase of our EL program . . . we need to help teachers to be more sophisticated in the way they teach kids. . . . We have the kids who have one word for everything and one word is not enough . . . just knowing one word can keep you keep you completely off task . . . that’s the power of academic vocabulary.

The course has since been expanded to include any Title I students regardless of language fluency scoring between 281 and 324 on the ELA/CST. According to one district administrator, “There is a stronger correlation between poverty and achievement than between ethnicity and achievement.” Indeed, many district and school
administrators shared the belief that the same strategies that benefit ELs work equally well for all struggling students.

District leaders describe the EAP curriculum as evolving. Schools sites, all of which were required to implement EAP classes using their site funds, received some overall guidance from the district, but were on their own in determining which eligible students would participate in these classes and how student needs would be met. This arrangement has resulted in a program that is not universal across the district. In some schools, teachers have chosen to use EAP as a reading class that serves struggling students who are both EL and non-EL. In other schools, the curriculum has been geared specifically toward ELs. Although district documents specify that ELs who are not yet CELDT proficient or who are CELDT proficient with low CST scores should receive English language development instruction as part of their EAP, it was not clear whether this was consistently occurring across campuses.

Interviews with principals and ELA teachers who teach EAP courses revealed frustration concerning a lack of training and curriculum for the course. Concerned about the pressure to improve the performance of these students, some teachers indicated that they would have preferred more guidance working with these students. According to one EAP teacher, “There is a lot of pressure to get these kids’ scores up. I don’t have very much guidance or research, and I would feel horrible if I was doing just what I thought was the right thing, and it didn’t work.” At one school, the EAP teachers collaborated closely with the ELD department to tailor the course exclusively to EL students, only to discover later that the school’s counselors had been told they could enroll non-EL students with low CST scores in EAP as well. According to one teacher:
It threw things off. Now I have all these grammar books for ELs, and I have students who are low but who don’t necessarily have language issues—they might have reading issues or low motivation issues, which are very different.

Another teacher, whose EAP students did experience some success, attributed their growth to a new reading/writing program that she and her colleague had researched and implemented for their EAP kids. “They read twice as many novels as the kids in English class did. They had extra writing practice.” Although some sites have seen improvement as a result of EAP, the variation in program design across campuses has precluded district-wide evaluation of the program. It is not clear the extent to which EAP teachers are sharing strategies that work across sites.

Other district efforts to improve academic literacy have included the district’s intensive literacy program for junior high school students and intensive reading program for high school students. These courses, capped at 25 students per class, are offered to any students scoring below 281 on the CST and to EL students who have been continuously enrolled in U.S. schools for 5 or more years and have CELDT scores ranging from intermediate to advanced. Qualifying junior high school students participate in two periods of intensive literacy instead of regular English classes. English learners who are enrolled in intensive literacy receive their ELD instruction through the two-period intensive literacy block. In order to accommodate the extra instructional time, intensive literacy students forfeit one elective. The implementation of the double-block of intensive literacy is a direct response to a state mandate requiring that mainstream ELs testing two levels below grade level on state standardized tests must be offered an “intensive” ELD intervention. This intervention consists of any of the following combinations: ELD and ELA, two periods of ELA, or a reading intervention in place of
or in addition to ELA. At the high school level, EL students needing extra academic literacy support have several options. They may either participate in ELD III (a sheltered English 1 class) or some combination of English 1 and a support class, either ELD IV or EAP, depending upon their CELDT and CST scores. In 2009-2010, 63% of the roughly 1,000 students participating in intensive literacy or reading classes carried the EL designation.

Researchers have documented the growth in reading intervention programs across California in response to federal and state accountability policies that emphasize reading skills over those of listening, writing, and speaking (Callahan, 2006). Historically, the district’s intervention classes have focused mainly on reading. The new intensive literacy curriculum the district has been using at the junior high school level is designed for balanced literacy, and, according to district leaders, curriculum maps (to be developed in the near future) must show that all domains of English language development (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) are being addressed. In fact, the district’s junior high school intensive literacy curriculum is the same curriculum used by the district’s ELD department. Students exiting the program are expected to be reading at the sixth or seventh grade level. A district curriculum specialist described the program as offering far more than the basic decoding skills taught through Read 180 programs. At the high school level, however, intensive reading classes still rely on Read 180. District leaders report that teachers are gradually understanding and implementing lessons and strategies

48Researchers Meltzer and Hamann (2004) have identified the components of balanced literacy instruction as encompassing background information, vocabulary development, and strategies for constructing meaning through listening, writing, speaking, and reading.

49READ 180 is a reading program for students with below proficient reading achievement. It relies on the use of a computer program, literature, and direct instruction in reading skills.
that focus on all four domains of literacy. They acknowledged, however, that both
intensive literacy and ELD teachers still need training and support in structuring their
classes for better oral language development. District leaders are committed to working
with all teachers on oral language development across all content areas. According to one
curriculum specialist, “We’re still working on getting the message out.”

Making the Curriculum Accessible

One of Farley’s early observations of district classrooms raised serious concerns
about the ability of most students to access the curriculum:

You can go from classroom to classroom, and many of the teachers are not really
conscious of the fact that they are only teaching to a handful of kids, . . . . The lack
of engagement when you sit in the back of the room—you can touch it.

One district-level administrator described the district’s priority, “First-learned instruction
is the most important. How do we improve this so that kids can access the curriculum the
first time around?” Although most of the district’s initial efforts concentrated on
improving quality of curriculum and assessments, some early emphasis was also given to
improving instructional strategies in the classroom. Notably, school-site walkthroughs
paid increasing attention to helping principals identify effective teaching strategies.
Additionally, principal meetings at the district-level involved group readings of books
about differentiation. According to the assistant superintendent for education, “We had
been planting seeds all over the place on explicit direction instruction . . . we were talking
about the elements of effective instruction. We’ve been talking about that for 3 years in
principals’ meetings.”

District leaders, intent on encouraging the use of research-based instructional
strategies that provided more students with greater access to the curriculum, also
concentrated on expanding the AVID curriculum across and within schools. An active member of AVID’s National Advisory Board, Farley made increasing the number of AVID elective classes and infusing AVID instructional strategies into courses beyond the AVID elective his early priorities. Advancement Via Individual Determination strategies include a strong emphasis on writing skills, inquiry, student-to-student collaboration, and critical reading skills. Between 2006-2009, the number of AVID sections offered in AUHSD grew from 70 to 85. During this same period, AVID enrollment jumped 32% at the high school level and 29% at the junior high school level. By 2009, 14% of all AVID students were ELs compared to 8% in 2008. The single largest group of students participating in AVID electives were reclassified ELs, comprising 49% of all AVID students in 2009.

By 2008-2009, district leaders expected that schools would begin to transition from focusing on structural curriculum improvements to making improvements in instructional delivery. District plans called for school-level staff development meetings to include a focus on lesson design and effective instructional strategies. Some schools, with the support of UCI math consultants and outside science grants, had already begun to expose math and science teachers to more effective instructional strategies.

In the summer of 2009, the board of education approved the district’s most extensive initiative to improve the quality of instruction in the classroom. The Lesson Design Specialist (LDS) program is in large part the district’s response to its Program Improvement Status. District leaders also viewed this as an opportunity to improve teaching and learning throughout the district. They described it as “not a ‘program’ but one integral piece of a complex solution that we are implementing collaboratively to
improve student achievement” (AUHSD, 2009c, n.p.). Anaheim Union High School District leaders had determined that if state standardized tests—the primary indicator of progress—focused on evaluating students’ understanding of content, context, and language, then the district would similarly need to focus on ensuring that content, context, and language, were being taught in classrooms across the district (AUHSD, 2010a). According to district documents, the purpose of the LDS is two-fold: (a) to improve student academic achievement for both long-term ELs and other students who struggle to access the curriculum, and (b) to support teachers in designing lessons that include scaffolding strategies for higher levels of thinking and oral and written academic language development (AUHSD, 2009c). The superintendent articulated his concerns:

Because of the complexity of kids that we serve in a diverse urban district . . . you can’t just teach off the cuff. Your lessons have to be strategic. They have to be articulated carefully with a lot of time and attention to detail. . . . The development of language, no matter what the subject area, of content language or other language, is an integral part of every lesson even if it isn’t an English class.

The LDS program marries two concepts of importance to district leaders: teacher coaches and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model. The first of these, supported strongly by the superintendent, places an expert teacher at each campus upon whom other teachers can rely as a resource. Under the LDS program, the district funds a lesson design specialist at each school site (two LDS positions are funded at high schools). This person is a certificated staff member selected through a competitive process by a committee of district, school, and union leaders. Each LDS coach teaches students classes half of the day and is released the rest of the day to work with a volunteer cohort of teachers in designing and delivering lessons. The district has made an
exception to this arrangement at one high school, where several teachers who have been
trained as cognitive coaches will jointly assume the responsibilities of two LDS teachers.

Generally, district leaders, site administrators, and other teachers described those
selected to serve as their school’s LDS teachers as reflective practitioners and genuine
teacher leaders. Anaheim Union High School District’s director of professional
development emphasized that, “The program is only going to be as good as our front line
people.” All of the principals interviewed for this study felt strongly that the people
selected to serve in the LDS position were the right people. According to one principal,
“They can sell the program on their own.”

The lesson design model, referred to by the district as the Lesson Design Protocol
(LDP), is modeled closely upon an instructional model valued by district leaders and
implemented across the country, the researched-based SIOP. The SIOP was specifically
designed to promote high quality instruction for ELs in content-area classes. It provides a
framework for organizing teaching strategies that helps ensure that effective practices are
consistently implemented across content areas and grade levels (Echevarria et al., 2008).
Drawing upon his own experience, AUHSD’s assistant superintendent for education, a
former high school principal, shared his perspective about the value of this approach:

As a principal, I knew what kind of an impact it could make—not that often are
high school teachers known for developing good lesson plans. But at my school,
it was evident that it helped us become good lesson designers.

Although many within AUHSD recognize the LDS program as the SIOP model used
primarily with ELs, the district officially refers to the program as Lesson Design partly to
convey the importance of designing good lessons to all teachers for working with all
students. According to one district administrator:
We’re trying to lower their affective filters and not make them feel like we want them to do something they don’t know how to do, so we’re trying to capitalize on their strengths . . . even though you and I are going to look at this and recognize that this is about EL students.

Through the LDS initiative, as a result of comprehensive lesson design training and coaching provided by an outside consultant, AUHSD classroom teachers are expected to implement the eight elements and 30 features of the LDP lesson planning model. These include incorporating content and language objectives into lessons, building upon students’ existing knowledge, providing comprehensible input, pacing lessons appropriately, scaffolding lessons, encouraging student-to-student interaction, using hands-on activities, and assessing student understanding informally, among others. District training sessions will focus initially upon content objectives, language objectives, formative assessment, and comprehensible input.

Training sessions led by an outside consultant have included district staff, principals, and LDS teachers from all of the school sites. Some training has included “fish bowl” observations, in which several LDS teachers observed a colleague teach a class and listened to the consultant provide feedback on their lesson. Participants described these experiences in their monthly reports as positive learning opportunities.

The program also includes several “supports” for the LDS teachers. In addition to meeting with their campus-based cohorts, LDS teachers meet regularly in small cohorts of other LDS teachers from other campuses to discuss their successes, struggles, and other issues related to their work. They also communicate regularly via a blog established by the district’s director of professional development. Initial monthly reports covering the period September through November submitted by LDS teachers at all campuses
revealed that many found their LDS cohorts to be an important “helpful and calming” support. They were less enthusiastic about the role of the blog, describing it alternately as confusing or a litany of complaints. Several reported receiving strong support from the district’s director of professional development and EL curriculum specialist in the form of e-mails, phone calls, or visits to their campuses.

Site administrators, along with the district’s curriculum specialists, are also expected to participate in certain LDP training sessions, with the goal being that they will ultimately oversee the implementation of the lesson design model on their campuses.

District leaders felt strongly that principals be well schooled in the elements of this effective lesson design so that they could begin to converse with teachers about it. They have used principals’ meetings to train about the initiative and included principals in coaching visits made by the LDS outside consultant. Principals will accompany the LDS consultant as she observes and provides feedback on classes taught by LDS cohort members. The consultant will then coach principals on what to look for in classrooms and ways to support teachers. According to one district administrator:

They should be having the same sort of conversations with teachers or be out in classrooms like the LDS are, or teachers will get the impression that this is an initiative that is important to nobody except the LDS, and that’s the kiss of death.

Principals at the case study schools believed that, in addressing lesson design and specifically the incorporation of academic language into mainstream classrooms, the district’s LDS program was responding to a genuine need on their campuses. Although only one of the six principals interviewed for this study said they had been consulted about the program design, principals were generally receptive to the program. Many principals had encouraged specific teachers apply for the LDS position, and most
believed that their school cultures had evolved to points at which critical masses teachers would be willing to open their classrooms to the coaches.

Principals valued the fact that, although all schools were required to participate in the program, the district approach gave each campus latitude to determine how to implement the program in ways that would best respond to their school cultures. One principal expected that they would have to move slowly at her site. Monthly reports by the LDS teachers at this site indicated their plans to refrain from presenting the program to all staff until after they have a strong foundation with their cohort teachers. All principals liked the fact that the initiative would be driven by teachers themselves. They believed that this approach was particularly appropriate in the wake of what they perceived to be a number of top-down initiatives in the areas of standards and assessments, among others. They also felt strongly that having the initiative come from their own teachers was critical to securing buy-in and respecting the nonevaluative nature of the LDS approach.

Although all of the LDS teachers interviewed for this research reported receiving support from their principals, some principals appeared to be more actively involved in, and knowledgeable about, the effort than others. Certain principals actively created opportunities for success by purchasing materials for their cohorts, incorporating LDS work into their leadership team meetings, and making time available for teachers to collaborate, among other things. One LDS teacher, in her monthly report, offered the following insight:

I do like that our district has engaged both teachers and administrators in this and that we are actually taking our time in thinking through how the model should be
shaped. Usually, we just rush through to the product and neglect the process, and the educational impact suffers as a result.

The initial response to the LDS initiative among the general teacher population has been positive, with 237 or 15% of all district teachers volunteering to participate in school-level cohorts. These teachers represent all disciplines: nearly half of them teach either math or science, 20% teach English, 20% teach electives/special education or physical education, and 10% are history teachers. District goals include reaching 30% of all teachers during the initiative’s second year and as many as 60% by the third year. According to one curriculum specialist, “With the LDS . . . administrators and teachers alike are excited because we’re finally shifting the focus to strictly what is going on in the classroom . . . it is going to be very directed and very focused.” Teachers also expressed a readiness to focus on instruction. One junior high school teacher shared:

We’ve worked for the past several years creating a curriculum map that we follow and can utilize. I think we as teachers have seen that the missing component is now that instructional piece, so we are talking a lot more about student work, how to teach this. We’re beginning to share a lot more about what works.

Although many LDS teachers did not view the SIOP as new information, many reported experiencing changes in their own teaching styles as a result of their efforts to adjust their lesson plans to conform more closely to the SIOP. One LDS teacher described the SIOP as “a great tool for organizing instruction.” Another described it as “not another program that will ‘come and go’ but . . . the framework for pulling together all of our current reform efforts.” Lesson Design Specialist teachers reported implementing changes in their own classrooms that included more clearly identified content and language objectives into their lessons, new strategies for checking for students’ understanding, and greater time for students to converse among themselves. Teachers credited the LDS
experience with opening up their dialogue with other teachers and exposing them to a wide range of teaching techniques and strategies. Lesson Design Specialist teachers related activities they had undertaken, including assembling binders for staff to use on SIOP components and best practices, developing computer presentations about SIOP, and making data presentations focused on CELDT, CST, and GPAs of their schools’ ELs. They described eye-opening cross-curricular conversations focused on such critical questions as: “What is an EL?” “What is standing in the way of their achievement?” and “Why do I need a language objective if I don’t teach English?”

Lesson Design Specialist teachers were generally excited about the initial response of their colleagues to the LDS role on campus. They reported teachers, some of whom were not even in their cohort of volunteers, who solicited help and expressed gratitude for the direction and resources they received. They mentioned that lunch conversations suddenly turned to language objectives. At one high school, LDS teachers described their cohort as a group of people pulling in the same direction at a campus where people often pulled against each other. Although it is early to expect results, some LDS teachers described changes in the classrooms of teachers with whom they worked that included greater incorporation of technology, more reliance on group interaction, and changing the vocabulary they use. Lesson Design Specialist teachers also built trust among their colleagues by working to meet teachers’ self-described needs through lesson design. Teachers interviewed for this study shared anecdotal successes they had seen with students. Several remarked that they had seen increased engagement on the part of their students after having implemented components of SIOP. One teacher attributed the
growth in her class’ first unit benchmark scores to her incorporation of content and language objectives into her lessons.

When asked about their concerns about or possible barriers to the success of the LDS initiative, LDS teachers shared their frustrations concerning a lack of initial direction in the effort. A few believed that the training did not provide enough substantive information about lesson design itself. One teacher articulated this concern as “a need for more nuts and bolts.” Several LDS teachers described their initial months as “floundering” and “stress-filled” as they struggled to understand the scope of their responsibilities and determine how best to roll out the implementation of SIOP on their own campuses. Many used a combination of contrasting terms like “excited” and “anxious” or “invigorating” and “scary” to describe their initial months on the job (Lesson Design Specialists, 2009).

Lesson Design Specialist teachers expressed a number of time-related concerns. These included inadequate time to meet with and serve well all of their cohort teachers, the time-consuming nature of designing good lessons, and the pressures on their time that many teachers felt to adhere to pacing guides and still incorporate all eight components into their lessons. District leaders closely associated with the program believed that the district would have to provide some flexibility in the pacing of lessons for cohort teachers and offered to intervene with principals and department chairs in those cases where pacing took precedence over lesson design. They stressed the need to focus on quality of instruction over quantity of instruction. A few teachers reported that the investment of time was worthwhile. One wrote that she was falling behind on the pacing guide, but that
her students “really are understanding better.” Another teacher insisted, “Now that I’ve cut out the extra stuff, lesson design is a time saver.”

Administrators and teachers alike expressed concerns about the litany of past district initiatives that had been short-lived. Many feared that district or funding restrictions would prevent this initiative from surviving long enough to make an impact. District leaders currently view the LDS as a 2-year investment. Teacher leaders felt that a longer-term investment would be needed to build deep ownership and sustain change. A final concern was shared by several of the LDS teachers who, upon seeing how frequently the word “LDS” appeared in their school-site plans, remarked that the district may be “putting too many eggs in the LDS basket”—expecting more of the program than it could realistically accomplish.

According to district documents, the ultimate measure of the initiative’s progress will be a significant district-wide rise in academic achievement across all subgroups, especially ELs. District leaders plan to compare the performance of students whose teachers have received support from the LDS to those whose teachers have not participated in the LDS cohort. Analysis of the LDS program will also include information collected about changes in participating teachers’ pre- and post-LDS practices. The timing of this dissertation study coincided with the initial implementation of the program, precluding the collection of any definitive findings concerning its impact.

Initial goals for the effort, according to the assistant superintendent for education, are “low-level.” He shared his expectations: “We do expect to see in their school plans that they are implementing this. . . . We want to have the LDS teachers learn their craft really well. . . . Just having a conversation about lessons is a really good thing to have.”
According to one district leader, as administrators and teacher coaches are exposed to more components of the LDS model, the district’s operational assumptions regarding what is accepted practice in classrooms are changing:

These are what we expect to see in all classrooms. Conceptualizing and communicating to students what they should learn that day is an accepted practice. Conceptualizing and communicating to students how they use language is an accepted practice, and checking for understanding and adjusting to their learning needs is accepted practice.

According to the EL coordinator, the LDS is a critical piece in helping the district to fulfill its new daily mantra, “What we teach is important, how we teach is important, and how we treat our most challenging and challenged students is of the utmost importance.”

Building on primary language skills. Anaheim Union High School District does not operate a dual-language or other district-wide bilingual program. Only one of its feeder elementary schools offers a dual-immersion program, so many EL students arrive at AUHSD without a strong foundation in their primary language. Although ELD and sheltered classes are taught in English, AUHSD bilingual aides reported providing some primary language support in working with ELD students one-on-one. Content area teachers have been provided with lists of cognates, but otherwise do not rely on primary language to support mainstreamed EL students’ learning. According to district leaders, most EL families of Asian descent prefer full English immersion programs, and the Latino parent community has not generated the number of waivers required by state law to require any district schools to offer primary language instruction. Interestingly, however, 23% of EL parents surveyed by the district in 2009 indicated that they either were not sure if they had been or had not been informed about their right to request a bilingual program (District Survey of EL Parents, 2009).
The district has long offered Spanish and other foreign language elective classes and a special accelerated Spanish class for those students who had prior knowledge of the language. In 2007, district leaders decided to expand AUHSD’s existing work with the WRITE Institute to upgrade its accelerated Spanish classes into a multi-year Spanish for Spanish Speakers Program (SFSS). Under this program, teachers would receive support to improve the literacy and academic achievement of bilingual students. The district appropriated Title III funds for curriculum development, instructional alignment, procurement of materials, and professional development for foreign language teachers.

District leaders described SFSS as an important opportunity for EL and RFEP students to shine academically. According to the EL program coordinator, these students can feel that they “bring something to the party.” It also potentially provides them an opportunity to move into Advanced Placement (AP) classes in Spanish at the high school level, instead of moving into Spanish 2 or 3. Interested students must take a placement test to qualify for the class. Although most of the students are native speakers of Spanish, some have come through the elementary school dual-immersion program. They are placed in one of two levels in junior high school and one of three levels in senior high. In 2010, 2,298 students participated in a total of 68 SFSS classes at the high school and junior high school level. Sixty-five percent of these students were former ELs, and 22% were ELs. There were also 462 students combined taking AP Spanish and/or AP Spanish Literature, although it is not known whether or not these students also participated in SFSS in previous years. Once again, former ELs comprised the vast majority, accounting for 70% of AUHSD students in these AP classes. Nine percent of students taking these advanced classes were ELs. Principals shared that it has been a challenge to convince
some students to take the language classes when they are presented with opportunities to take such other electives as woodshop. One principal expressed the need for a “happy medium” because the curriculum for SPFF being proposed by the district was too high level for many students, while Spanish 1 was too low. She reported that students at her school who took the class did not perform well because it was above their literacy levels.

The implementation of SFSS has been uneven across schools. According to observers, the passion for primary language instruction is not shared equally across schools. A few campuses do not offer the program at all, while others offer multiple sections. One junior high school principal activist has truly championed the program, presenting the idea formally to his colleagues with the district’s support and serving on a local task force exploring the possibility of bringing a dual-immersion program to the district. His school offered 12 sections of SFSS, the highest of any school.

Preliminary analyses completed by the district on the impact of SFSS are not conclusive. As shown in Table 16, in 2010, approximately 35% of Spanish-speaking seniors were taking an SFSS class. Early indications show that seniors who had participated in the program were more likely to experience 10 point or greater gains on the CST and the CELDT than those who did not participate at all. Only 19% of nonparticipants experienced 10 point gains, while 25% or more of those participating in SFSS classes experienced 10 point gains. It is not possible, however, to make a causal link between participation and performance.

District leaders also reported on new efforts to seek board of education approval for the creation of a seal of bi-literacy, which would be added to the diplomas and transcripts of graduating seniors who had demonstrated proficiency in a second language
Table 16

Student Participation (12th Grade) in Spanish for Spanish Speakers Program (SFSS) and Performance on California Standards Test (CST) and California English Language Development Test (CELDT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SFSS Program 3 years</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFSS Program 2 years</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFSS Program 1 year</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Spanish</td>
<td>1,060</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. From Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) Director of Language Assessment Center, 2010, Language Assessment Center (LAC), unpublished raw data.

by satisfying district-established criteria. This measure would convey the value AUHSD places on achieving bi-literacy. In anticipation of the first class of elementary school dual-immersion students feeding into AUHSD, several district leaders are also exploring the possibility of establishing a dual-immersion program at one of the district’s junior high schools.

Focusing on postsecondary planning. District efforts to ensure a rigorous curriculum have also included creating a more equitable college-going culture among students. The aforementioned expansion of AVID is one example of this work. Under Farley, the district also continued its long-time relationship with the University of California Puente Program. This partnership aims to create opportunities for socio-economically disadvantaged students to gain entry into 4-year colleges and universities. Four of the district’s east-side high schools participate in the program, with several hundred students participating at each school. Students of varying abilities are admitted
to the Puente elective based on teacher recommendations and potential for success. Although the program is not offered exclusively to Latino students, they have long constituted its primary participants. Of the 561 students in the district who participate in the program, 20 or 4% are ELs and 408 or 73% are former ELs.

Other efforts associated with the district’s initiative to prepare students for post-secondary opportunities include developing its Career Technical Education Program (CTE). Career Technical Education Program courses are more rigorous than traditional vocational education and will eventually meet “a-g” requirements for eligibility to University of California and California State University systems. Career Technical Education Program classes are particularly important for ELs because they were designed to elevate student engagement by making school relevant to students by offering them connections to future careers. All high schools offer at least one career pathway. These include, among others, an engineering pathway, a health careers pathway, and a culinary pathway. All CTE pathways are aligned with state frameworks.

Encouraging Collaboration

A critical facet of the district’s instructional improvement efforts has involved encouraging teachers within schools to collaborate more frequently in improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment. It is worthy of note that assessment in this regard refers not only to teachers’ collaboration in developing, administering, and analyzing benchmark exams, but also school-wide efforts to encourage all teachers to collaborate around, and begin to use within individual classrooms, frequent and formative assessment. Specifically, teachers are being pushed to rely not only on quarterly
benchmarks but also to check regularly for student understanding in a variety of ways, including using exit slips, student-to-student sharing, and so forth.

District schools have used Title I, Title II, and Program Improvement funds to invest in training, available through the county and other consultants, to improve the collaborative leadership and planning skills of school leadership teams. This work has been especially deep at a few of the junior high schools. Principals described the transformation that has occurred in the way their schools make decisions as a result of the training. According to one junior high school principal, “It is not top down where I come out and say we need to do this. We discuss and then we share our ideas with the next group. . . . It has changed things dramatically—dramatically.” Another principal described the extent to which he has pushed collaborative work with departments at his school.

I’m taking everything off their plates because all I want them to focus on is that curriculum, that pacing guide, that benchmark or common assessment. . . . I want them to like each other as a team. . . . I’ve purposefully taken everything away from them. . . . I almost have caused that division among the departments because I wanted them to work together [as content teams] and it has happened. . . . I was able to hold them accountable as a department.

The district has used Title I funds to support a number of other key collaborative efforts. For example, several schools have used Title I funds to contract with the UCLA School of Management to train teachers in conducting classroom walkthroughs. Teachers are taught to observe classrooms with an essential question in mind, such as “What is the evidence that students are engaged in critical thinking?” They learn to focus in a nonjudgmental way on what students are learning rather than on what teachers are doing. Some schools have also used their Title I funds to form Critical Friends Groups (CFGs)
among teachers. Critical Friends Groups are opportunities for teachers to engage in nonjudgmental conversations about what is occurring in classrooms by using predesigned protocols to examine student work. Initiated by one high school using CSR grants monies, CFGs have spread in recent years to a several other campuses. Teachers at one high school described the power of CFGs to change the school. According to one teacher:

We had people in CFGs who were kind of closed about their classrooms, so it was a chance for us to meet and let them be more confident . . . and let them learn from people who were using all these techniques in their classrooms. It was a way to open up people who weren’t very open to change.

The district has also pushed collaboration by requiring all schools to involve their leadership teams in developing annual school-site plans. Beginning in 2007, the district has provided sites with a planning template that reflects key district initiatives. Sites are then charged with identifying specific measurable goals and priorities within the context of these initiatives based on their collaborative analysis of their own student assessment results and other data. A review of several schools’ plans revealed that most schools are deliberate in scheduling time for teachers within core departments to collaborate regularly in reviewing pacing guides, analyzing benchmarks, and calibrating curriculum. Professional development collaboration time is also planned for teachers to share engaging strategies with one another, to identify areas requiring re-teaching, and to share effective strategies for re-teaching.

To encourage greater vertical collaboration among schools in preparing their plans, the district has also implemented a peer review process. This process involves cohorts of two middle schools and their feeder high schools reviewing each other’s plans
to ensure a clear and direct articulation between middle and high school curriculum and instruction. Each school presents its plan formally to district leaders and their cohort schools for feedback before submitting final plans to its respective school-based groups and ultimately the board of education for approval. According to district reports, initial efforts to encourage peer review among feeder schools has resulted in low-level articulation and revealed a need for additional training to encourage greater engagement on the part of school leadership teams in the vertical planning process (AUHSD, 2009a).

Some important cross-discipline collaboration has occurred on several campuses in the area of writing. Individual site plans called for school-wide writing processes. After 2 years of asking mainstream subject area teachers to incorporate writing on a voluntary basis, one activist principal charged his department chairs with embedding quarterly writing assignments into their pacing guides in all subject areas. He also made available the support of a writing professor to those teachers who were not comfortable with the writing process. Finally, he convinced his teachers to discuss writing samples across core departments. “My expectation is that through that conversation, I’m going to model what I hope will be happening in their departments.” At many sites, teachers described their work as increasingly collaborative, although most collaboration still occurs primarily within departments.

The district’s EL program coordinator described the significance of getting teachers in all content areas to understand the importance of language and teaching language to support the acquisition of content. Her plans for the future include asking ELA and ELD teachers to evaluate jointly writing assessments and share their
perspectives. She would eventually like to extend this to other disciplines. She described the focus of AUHSD’s writing assessments:

We want to train teachers so that when they look at writing, particularly for an EL student, they are not only looking at the conventions of language from an ELA point of view, but they are drilling down and looking at the linguistic pieces. How much nonnative language is there? How often are those the kinds of mistakes kids are making?

**Collaboration with ELD departments.** Regular collaboration between ELD departments and content-area departments is still infrequent. English Language Development teachers are not regularly included in departmental meetings with teachers from other disciplines. One teacher described the ELD department as “sort of an island of their own.” An assistant principal described the lack of connection between ELD and ELA programs. “They [the ELD kids] are their own program. They go into sheltered math and sheltered history but English teachers know nothing about that program—they don’t see those students.” English Language Arts teachers reported having limited knowledge of the skills students exiting ELD bring to their English classes. Meanwhile, ELD teachers said for the most part, they lose contact with their former ELD students once they have moved into mainstream classes.

Despite efforts by district curriculum specialists to encourage collaboration between ELA and ELD teachers and specifically to increase ELD teachers’ awareness of ELA standards and vice versa, the extent of collaboration varied from site to site and appeared to be determined greatly by the personalities involved. For example, at one high school, where the ELD department chair is also a mainstream English teacher, there has been more regular collaboration. The chair described this kind of collaboration as critical to making sure that students who move from ELD to ELA are prepared. “I don’t know
about other schools, but when we have department meetings, it’s reading, ELD, and special ed. We’ve been meeting in a big group like that for a few years now—it’s been great." He discussed his decision, as a result of this collaboration, to prepare his ELD students for the research papers they would be writing once they moved into mainstream English classes. “Otherwise, we would be in our own little corner doing our ELD thing and launch a kid into a mainstream class who says I never heard about citations or footnotes.” He described students who had been on an upward trajectory in terms of performance while in the ELD program, only to fail dismally when moved into mainstream classes. At another campus, the ELD Chair has actively made herself available to ELA teachers, helping them in designing the EAP classes.

Encouraging the Use of Student Achievement Data

Under the current administration, AUHSD has become an increasingly data-driven district. Leaders reported using data to create urgency, dispel myths, counteract excuses, assign students to classes, monitor student performance, evaluate programs, and drive planning and instruction. By 2008, the district had replaced its antiquated information technology system with such web-based data analysis and student information database technologies as Data Director and Zangle. The district now relies on the former to disaggregate and analyze student assessment data and the latter to report on attendance, behavior, and grades.

According to Superintendent Farley, “We use the data to make [schools] uncomfortable. . . . We show them comparisons with other schools that are like theirs and ask ‘Why should their kids be performing differently?’” The assistant superintendent for education recalled showing math teachers grade distributions for students who were
moved into more challenging courses. “There is no difference—the kids who had been in
all those lower level courses were not doing any worse in the higher level courses. . . .

That’s what we do with data, we eviscerate myths.” The district’s director of assessment
reported using data to determine the effectiveness of reading programs and steer the
district toward changes. She reported, “I ran the data and saw that the classes the way we
have been running them have not resulted in growth.”

*Using data to identify and place ELs.* Perhaps the most significant change for
ELs has been the district’s increased reliance on data to identify EL students’ needs and
place them in appropriate classes. Farley described widespread ability grouping in core
subjects upon his arrival:

> Kids were grouped all day by EL—no integration. So there was EL history, EL
> math, EL English . . . EL electives, even. And then, because they were grouped
together for all those classes, there were only certain segments left for them to
take the PE so they were all together in PE. They were segregated all day. . . . If
> students transferred in after start of school, regardless of EL level, they were sent
to a special school.

District leaders pride themselves on relying upon multiple measures, including CST
scores, failures in certain classes, years as an EL, and overall GPAs, to place students in
intensive literacy, EAP, or other support classes. As mentioned earlier, the LAC
considers CELDT scores, assessments from other districts, primary language skills, and
previous year’s placements in making recommendations for placement in various levels
of ELD or in mainstream classes. The assistant superintendent described the role of data:

> What we needed to do was really help our sites understand their students, what
> their strengths were, what their weaknesses were, and identify as best we could a
> process for them to use multiple measures so they put the kids in the right places,
> and the kids would get the right treatment. When we sat down and looked at it,
> we had a lot of decisions being made about students that really didn’t fit the
profile of the kid that we are putting in this class or that class and maybe our kids were getting the rigorous program and maybe not.

The district-provided data is the first step in what district leaders hope will become an increasingly thoughtful placement process. The assistant superintendent explained the complementary roles of the district and its schools:

We feed them the data. We ask them the questions, and we kind of guide them in the direction they need to go. And they make the final decisions in what happens with the student . . . . They are supposed to dig in a little deeper and look at [students’] history, see how they are doing in classes, what teacher recommendations might be, other measures they might have.

English learner administrators and counselors at the site-levels reported that they truly valued data reports produced by the LAC. Unfortunately, however, even the most thoughtful placement decisions have occasionally been thwarted by resource limitations, which have forced ELD I and ELD II classes to be combined in some instances or caused children to be placed in mainstream classrooms prematurely or too late because of master schedule inflexibility. Depending upon the school, beginning ELs are also more likely to be grouped together in classes with other beginning ELs. In schools with smaller EL populations—many of the west-side schools—ELs are more frequently placed in mainstream classes and provided assistance from bilingual aides who are assigned to them. Over 50% of the district’s ELs in the structured ELD program (about 13% of the total EL population) spend the majority of their days in sheltered classes with other ELs. For example, a newcomer student might receive two periods of ELD, sheltered math, sheltered science, and sheltered social science; depending upon their grade level. These students would be placed in the mainstream only for physical education and an elective class, if they still had room for such a class.
Administrators acknowledge that there are still not enough ELs in higher-level classes. Since students must generally perform at certain levels in order to gain access to an honors class, ELs rarely qualify. Many of the students who do qualify, however, are RFEPs—an indication that the district is succeeding with a significant portion of its linguistic minority students. The assistant superintendent for education reported that the district is beginning to look at data on ELs and other students who are showing significant achievement and asking schools about their decision-making processes for placing students in advanced classes. He pointed out that the data can be confounding.

We have EL students who are proficient [or advanced] on CSTs, and yet they’re failing courses in English . . . . There are other things in the mix that we have to address because those are the things that are keeping them from reclassifying as a fully English proficient student.

District EL leaders explained that data on the number of ELs completing “a-g” classes, honors classes, and AP classes are available to them but are not yet being tracked in the LAC’s reports. According to one district administrator, although these types of data are important, “[They are] not being used to guide decisions at this point or to guide progress.” Overall, however, both central office and site leaders believed that ELs were being placed more appropriately with the support of the LAC’s centralized system than they had been in the past.

*Using data to discuss and monitor EL performance.* District EL leaders reported regularly using CELDT and other assessment data to understand where student deficiencies lie and to develop priorities in the way they work with the sites to meet student needs. The district’s EL team has recently focused on making tools available to the sites so they can monitor the performance of their own ELs. In addition to its annual
report on ELs in the district, the LAC regularly generates several EL reports for each school site. These include mandated reports that show ELs’ movement through the language proficiency program and mandated reports that monitor the performance of IFEPs and RFEPs for 2 consecutive years following their initial designation. The LAC provides these monitoring reports twice yearly to the school-sites’ EL coordinators who are, in turn, responsible for completing this monitoring process. Although not mandated by law, the LAC also monitors the performance of EL students who have been in mainstream classes for 4 years or more using this same report. The monitoring report includes information on EL students’ CST or CAHSEE, CELDT, overall GPA, and grade performance in English and math. If a student is performing below standards in any core academic area, a report is generated and shared with the student, his or her teachers, and parents. Counselors also have regular access to the district’s database system to view multiple measures of student progress throughout the course of the school year.

Additionally, the LAC has produced site-specific annual EL reports showing students’ academic performance and movement toward fluency. In the fall of 2009, the central office EL team visited all principals and their EL site teams individually to review and plan around the data in this report. The EL program coordinator explained, “We do this so that they can really understand who their ELs are.” One school team, which included the school’s new LDS, used the data to identify about 180 ELs who were within 25 percentage points of proficiency and planned to recruit teacher volunteers to provide these students with extra support during the school’s advisory period.

In 2010, the LAC also created preliminary AMAO 1 and 2 reports for each of the schools, along with pivot tables, which enabled users to click on CELDT levels and
generate lists of students at each level. The EL program coordinator emphasized, “They’re spending their time working on kids—not on developing lists.” The district is exploring ways to make much of this EL data available on-line so that schools can work with their own data electronically.

Using data to guide change instruction in the classroom. While school counselors have appreciated the data-driven guidance on EL student placement, sites are still relatively unsophisticated in using EL data as a tool for driving conversations and planning around instruction. The greatest initial challenge has involved simply getting mainstream teachers to use the data to acknowledge firstly that large numbers of ELs or RFEPs sit in their classrooms. Several of the LDS teachers have led school-wide conversations directed at helping teachers appreciate the significant numbers of ELs they have in their classes. In the past, teachers received printed rosters of EL students each semester. With the introduction of Data Director and Zangle, these data are still available to them but not in a single-page format. Teachers must now use the computer system to generate the reports. In several schools, the LDS has demonstrated to teachers how they can access these data. Teachers reported knowing the data are available to them through both Zangle and Data Director in pivot tables. Those who do use these data systems describe them as user friendly. Nevertheless, many teachers still have not taken the initiative to learn the systems.

Although many of the teachers reported discovering that they have large numbers of ELs in their classes—many as a result of conversations with their respective LDS teachers—few reported using this information to change instruction. Many teachers feel overwhelmed by the amount of data available to them and uncertain about what to do
with the information. According to one LDS, “It is very confusing when they give you all this [sic] data and they expect it to inform instruction.” He described teachers as “data rich” and “information poor.” Teachers complained that even when the data indicate a need to re-teach, there is no time to re-teach. One teacher explained, “With creating pacing guides, we don’t have time to go back and re-teach. So we have the information, but we don’t have the time.”

District plans called for continued focus on EL-related data in periodic meetings with EL teams at the site level, regular meetings with principals, as well as regular meetings with EL administrators and EL coordinators from the sites. The EL program coordinator has emphasized the need to work more closely with principals to help them understand the link between data, particularly the CELDT, and instruction and ways that they can support teachers in using the proper instructional strategies in the classroom. Of the principals interviewed, one was clearly in the forefront in working with his teaching staff to change instruction in ways that affect their EL subgroup. He shared how he used data:

I showed them our general API and achievement data, but then I took our EL population out of the equation and then I showed them everybody else. . . . We were outperforming many of the schools in the district. When you take out our EL population, this is what’s happening. This is 50% of the kids. That means that there is an EL in every classroom. Now, they knew they were working hard and I proved to them that they were working hard, but they weren’t focusing in on a very important population. . . . The data is [sic] showing that we need to work with this population.

One assistant principal explained that her school has worked hard to make teachers aware of the importance of the CELDT, but teachers still need more training in how to use CELDT performance to design their lessons and assessments. In many cases, both
district and school leaders are looking to LDS teachers to help teachers in using data to change instruction for EL students. District-funded training has focused on helping teams of teachers at some sites analyze student assessment data for all subgroups, set data-driven goals and objectives, and plan instruction through collaboration with the goal of implementing systems of continuous improvement.

*Using data to evaluate EL programs and performance.* As of this writing, the district had just begun analyzing data to produce district-wide evaluations of several of its major initiatives, including the impact of intensive literacy reading classes and ninth grade academies. Whether or not these analyses will differentiate among the performance of ELs and other fluency groups is unknown. Although the district Office of Testing and Evaluation reports subgroup data for NCLB reporting requirements, it does not otherwise regularly disaggregate for ELs. Some analysis has been completed on AVID programs, but this does not look specifically at performance by fluency group, other than to indicate enrollment percentages for ELs and RFEPs. Other district-wide indicators of performance such as graduation rates, “a-g” completion rates, and attendance rates are not regularly disaggregated by fluency group. This will need to change as NCLB requirements that graduation rates be disaggregated are enforced in the near future. To a great extent, data on ELs are not integrated into the district’s general database system but rather compartmentalized in the LAC. Within the LAC, much of the data generated on ELs are those required by federal and state accountability systems. For example, within the LAC, there is very little reporting that computes indicators such as “a-g” completion by fluency group, ELs on-track to graduate, or other measures of participation in programs not required by external entities. Although the district did agree to produce
some of these numbers to support this research, they are not regularly generated and used
to monitor EL progress.

Offering Interventions and Enrichments for Identified Students

One of Farley’s early observations upon arriving in AUHSD was the paucity of support programs in place to help struggling students:

We had to create support mechanisms . . . so you could begin to understand what was the barrier in addition to the language. Sometimes it was a language issue, but it also was a social issue, a home issue, a poverty issue.

In 2006, the district began introducing principals, counselors, and special education teachers to Ready-to-Learn and Response-to-Intervention (RTI) strategies for meeting the needs of struggling students within the school day. Together these programs comprised the district’s “System of Care.” District-funded Ready-to-Learn consultants began working with multi-disciplinary school teams to implement comprehensive student assistance programs directed at helping students improve attendance, behavior, and academic achievement. The Response-to-Intervention Model is a tiered system of academic intervention designed to offer children experiencing learning and behavioral difficulties early, effective needs-based assistance. This program has been evolving slowly at campuses across the district. Although many campuses have components of RTI in place, as of this writing, only two schools had RTI coordinators, and a few junior high schools had incorporated RTI pyramids into their school-wide plans for student achievement.

Both Ready-to-Learn and RTI programs affect EL students directly because so many of AUHSD’s ELs struggle academically. Under RTI, EL and other struggling students are placed in EAP, math and/or literacy intervention classes, often in addition to
their regular grade-level classes. Response-to-Intervention programs have helped to reduce the number of students referred to special education services by providing schools with a continuum of interventions and pushing teachers to have data-based conversations about student needs before referring them to higher intervention tiers. This change is particularly significant for AUHSD’s ELs who are severely overrepresented in the district’s special education program.

District leaders reported that in the 2009-2010 school year, the Special Youth Services unit conducted initial special education evaluations on less than 80 students in the entire district—“a dramatic drop” from 6 years ago, according to one central office administrator. Increasingly, students who receive the special education designation are those who suffer from severe emotional issues or autism. District leaders have also made efforts to declassify existing special education ELs, if eligibility for special education does not appear warranted. Approximately half of the students in special education are ELs. For the majority of these students, their eligibility determination for special education was made while they were in elementary school. Most often, these students have been identified due to lagging language development. By the time they reach secondary school, they have already fallen several grade levels behind, not only because their initial language development needs have never been met, but also because the special education process has limited their exposure to the core curriculum.

In the 2009-2010 school year, AUHSD’s Special Youth Services Department convened an EL Task Force to examine issues related to practice, procedures, and policies for these students. This work has included plans to collaborate with feeder elementary districts on the special education identification process for ELs. Anaheim
Union High School District has also begun assessing existing and prospective EL special education students with an eye toward distinguishing between their language-based needs and other learning issues. The district has increasingly referred these students to the ELD program and other literacy intervention programs in an attempt to address their language needs outside of the special education program. In this regard, the strong collaboration among the district’s special education curriculum specialist, intensive literacy specialist, and EL curriculum specialist has facilitated this process. Additionally, the ELD, special education, and intensive literacy programs all utilize the same curriculum, which incorporates a strong language development component. The use of universal curriculum also facilitates the comparison of student performance across programs.

Another significant EL-related development over the past 4 years, given the large percentage of ELs in special education, has been a district-wide effort to include special education students in general education classes, as mandated by federal special education law. The inclusion initiative also falls under district’s efforts to ensure that all students have access to a rigorous curriculum. According to one district report, students with mild-to-moderate learning disabilities have been included in general education classes at most schools. Once again, the extent of inclusion varies by site, with the district’s giving individual schools the latitude to move toward inclusion at their own pace. District leaders emphasized that general education teachers are also still learning how to accommodate special education students. They noted that sites where teachers were required to implement inclusion by principals did not experience as much success as sites where teachers willingly made the change. According to one district leader, “A lot of our general ed teachers—just like they don’t know how to work with our EL students—they
don’t know how to work with our special ed students.” Leaders described continuing struggles to move both special education and general education teachers in the direction of using knowledge about language needs and CELDT levels to drive instruction.

Other notable district supports that affect ELs predominantly include ninth-grade academies, first implemented at several district high schools in 2009. In an attempt to avoid retaining students in eighth grade, ninth grade academies effectively constitute a 5-year high school program in which academically at-risk students participate in an educational program designed to accelerate their below-grade level literacy and computational skills (AUHSD, 2009b). These students are assigned specific teachers and attend an extra period of class after school. According to teacher leaders at one high school, the district provided the school with the general structure for the program but allowed school staff to develop the program themselves—“make it our own” explained one teacher. According to one assistant principal, the program has seen early successes:

We’re taking kids that would have been retained in the eighth grade and putting them into a program where they are told that they could do 5 years of high school—2 years of ninth grade. And, in one year we’re taking them through enough content in English and math to get them to be sophomores by their second year in high school.

The EL program coordinator stressed that especially for those ELs who start high school speaking mostly Spanish and reading far below grade level, the district would like to offer them a 5-year option up front. “We’re really encouraging a fifth year for students who want one and working with parents proactively on the front end rather than reactively on the back end.”

The district also has plans to pilot at one of its high schools in 2010 an independent learning center for students who have left the school early. This center will
serve between 70-80 mostly EL students, who have been actively recruited by district staff. The center will offer career technical education and on-line classes. Students will be permitted to juggle school and work commitments. They will also be able to take intensive literacy or elective classes at the high school. Teachers assigned to the center will provide individualized support as well.

A number of other district supports, including its remediation summer school program and acceleration summer schools, have been canceled due to budget cuts. Although after-school homework support was made available at all of the study schools, teachers regularly remarked that, although ELD students take advantage of these opportunities, few mainstreamed ELs do.

Principals and teachers in focus groups shared several perspectives on the support structure for students. In some cases, principals felt pushed to implement and use site-funding to finance certain district-mandated support programs, including EAP classes. Interestingly, although most teachers appreciated the extra supports for their struggling students, a few expressed concerns that the laser-like focus on specific skills that support classes offered was not the best way for students to learn, as it caused them to lose connection with the full curriculum. They insisted that smaller class sizes in which students of all levels could be interacting more frequently and in which teachers would be more able to focus on student needs in the classroom was a better use of extra teachers than support classes.

*Communicating With and Involving More Stakeholders*

*Within the district.* The district’s 2009 strategic plan called for the expansion of communication to include more voices in district decision-making processes (AUHSD,
2009a). In this regard, however, the plan was limited to strategies for getting the district’s message to the sites. Specifically, it cited the need to rely upon formal memos to clarify policies and decisions. The plan also required documentation from principals showing that they have communicated to staff the key messages conveyed to them in district meetings. As described in earlier sections of this research, central administrators expressed concerns about a disconnect between the main office and the sites, including variations in messages to different stakeholder groups and an insufficient feedback loop. The assistant superintendent for education reported relying on central office curriculum specialists as his primary source of feedback. Although site-level staff valued the work and expertise of these specialists, their availability on sites was naturally limited by their small number. Interviews at all levels of the district revealed limited district-wide collaboration or deep, reflective strategic planning about the overall direction of the district. Some key initiatives, for a variety of reasons, including time and financial constraints, were developed without input from principals or teachers. The district’s LDS initiative was designed with little input from principals. According to the assistant superintendent for education,

We had a unique opportunity to use specialized money for this and save jobs so if we didn’t hire to put this program in place we would have had to displace another 19 teachers . . . the timing was just right so we kind of struck kind of quickly. We did not really get too much feedback from site principals. We more or less worked in-house in creating the structure and the framework.

District leaders reported that the district’s initiative planning process is still not having the desired impact on the daily activities at the school sites. Despite the fact that many school site plans make specific reference to district priorities, many schools have yet to truly “own” these initiatives in their daily functioning. Teachers at several sites related
their frustration with a district that they felt relied on data too much to interpret what was happening at the sites rather than visiting sites and talking directly with teachers. Site administrators and teachers also described quantifiable successes that they had experienced as a result of site-driven initiatives that they felt the district had ignored. Many said the district put forth limited effort to celebrate or share their successes. Interviews with district leaders revealed that, in many instances, the district was supportive of positive changes on certain campuses and was encouraging other sites to follow suit. Nevertheless, the perception of the district as unsupportive persisted. Observers attributed ineffective communication within the district to several reasons. Sometimes, because the district is responding to federal and state mandates, sites receive mixed messages. One principal elaborated upon the dilemma:

The target changes so fast that nobody can keep up. I’ll get a direction from the district today, and I will start trying to put it into motion and next week that directive changes, and I’m back down here trying to figure out how. After a while everybody says “not another damn thing from the district.”

In a few cases, ineffective communication within the district stemmed, in part, from the district’s top leaders, whose strong instructional leadership and business-like approach to management created personal distance in a district accustomed to a more familial way of operating. Several referred to a need for more regular dialogue among district central office staff, principals, and teacher leaders about the big picture and overall direction of the district so that there would be greater understanding and buy-in surrounding the reasons behind district actions. For example, teachers expressed frustration with district directives that they reduce failures in their classrooms in the absence of more dialogue
about why and how such a goal should be achieved or without greater effort on the part of
the district to understand what was happening at the site level.

*With parents and the community.* Although the district strategic plan also called
for continued monitoring and refining of its strategies for connecting with parents,
interviews with site administrators and teachers revealed that sites did not generally
experience a strong district role in this area. Teachers, frustrated by what they consider to
be a lack of support from parents in getting children to do homework, wanted the district
to play a larger role in reaching out to parents. The District’s assistant superintendent for
education shared his philosophy on the parent role:

> We value parents, and we want them to be as involved as possible, but we’re
> holding ourselves accountable first. We’re not looking to parents to be
> responsible for us teaching kids better. Yes, we want them to be a part of the
> school. Yes we want them to be involved on campus . . . . But when it comes to
> what we do in the classroom that’s all going to be under the control of the teacher
> and the school.

To date, district-wide efforts to connect with parents have included the implementation of
Teleparent, an automated telephone system in which messages are delivered in English
and other languages on a variety of topics, and a parent portal established through Zangle
that enables parents to access information about their children’s performance. English
learner parents also receive regular mandated reports informing them about their
children’s program placement, CST and CELDT performance, and reclassification
criteria. Parents also receive monitoring forms used by the district to track IFEP, RFEP,
and mainstream ELs, reclassification forms, and have access to the district’s Annual EL
Report. The district has also invested in equipping counselors with tools like Naviance, a
web-based course planning tool, and other strategies for reaching out to parents on topics
of course-taking and college preparation and financing. It hosted a well-attended district-wide college night for parents in the fall of 2009. The superintendent has also regularly hosted a parent advisory committee, which has, notably, not engaged EL parents to date.

District investments specifically related to ELs have included federally mandated efforts to involve EL parents in such governing and advisory committees as the District’s English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC) and site-based English Learner Advisory Committees (ELAC). At the district level, the EL program coordinator has involved the DELAC committee in the substantive work of rewriting the district’s Master Plan for ELs. In 2009, the district worked with its DELAC to survey 8,000 EL parents regarding their concerns and priorities. Using the 1,500 responses, DELAC leaders made their first presentation before the school board in June 2010, during which they shared with board members the strengths and weaknesses in the district’s EL program as identified by surveyed parents. Strengths included parents’ belief that they receive timely information about involvement opportunities and student progress. Overall, parents were pleased with the EL program and their schools. Among the weaknesses were ineffectively implemented ELACs and the fact that “schools have not systematically assisted students to catch up in English and other subjects” (DELAC, 2010, p. 11). Parents desired more training opportunities focused on “how to go to school in America,” high achievement, and college and career success. They also wanted more systemic tutoring opportunities such as Saturday programs for their children to work on ELD and other subjects. Finally, they asked for additional staff at the site level, such as more bilingual office staff and community liaisons, to facilitate authentic parent involvement.
Although DELAC leadership appeared to be finding its voice, district leaders struggled to make progress in involving parents in ELACs. One district administrator described efforts to hold principals more accountable by scheduling unannounced visits to ELAC meetings and making ELAC compliance a part of principal evaluations. There was also discussion of hiring a district-level community liaison to work with schools to foment parent involvement in ELACs. District leaders described reluctance on the part of some school leaders to take ownership of ELAC. For many, ELAC remained little more than a compliance requirement. According to one DELAC leader, too many programs for EL parents exist only on paper. There is no leadership or passion among the staff at certain schools to actively involve EL parents.

As in other areas, there exists considerable variation across the study schools with respect to parent involvement. All schools appear to have the usual Back-to-School and Parents’ Night activities. Some schools have chosen to use discretionary funds to support parent training activities, hire community liaisons, or run parent centers. Teachers often described parent centers as important vehicles for communicating with parents. The centers employ bilingual staff, who convey teacher concerns to non-English speaking parents by phone. Staff also make information available to parents on a wide variety of resources in the community. Some parent-center and community-liaison staff at individual schools have developed English or computer classes for parents. Other support programs, such as GEAR UP and AVID have built-in mechanisms for involving

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50The GEAR UP program is funded through state grants. Its goal is to ensure students are prepared to succeed in postsecondary education. It focuses on scholarship funding and early intervention initiatives.
parents, so certain groups of parents are better connected than others depending upon their children’s involvement in these programs.

Overall, efforts to foster genuine parent involvement appeared to be more a function of site leadership. The activist principal at this school has worked to involve parents in PTA activities and to get them to learn the school system. “When I first got here, 100% of my PTA board was Anglo. Now 100% of my PTA board is Latino.” He has put in place programs designed to help his parents learn to advocate for their children. As a result, he has observed that EL parents at his school are slowly “waking up” to their need to have a voice.

_The EL parent._ Interviews with nearly 30 EL parents yielded a number of important findings about the connection between these parents and their children’s learning. The majority of parents described themselves as satisfied with the quality of their children’s schools and with the school district overall. Although a few described some initial hesitation about sending their children to neighborhood schools based on negative rumors, they ultimately found these schools to be better than expected. They reported that their children were involved in after-school extra-curricular activities and generally liked going to school. Parents also felt welcomed at the schools and believed that most teachers cared about their children’s education. Parents reported being able to communicate with teachers about their concerns. These findings were corroborated by the district-wide survey of EL parents, who described themselves as generally satisfied with their children’s education.

Even in those instances where their children’s school experiences were not positive, parents still described their children’s schools as good. When their children or
other children were not successful, many EL parents—especially those with high school children—felt the fault lay primarily with the children, themselves. When parents learned that their children did not have sufficient credits to graduate or were performing poorly, they did not express frustration with the school or the district. The following quote typified the thinking of many of parents:

I think that it is a good school—there are children who take advantage and those who do not. For me, the school is not alone responsible for the learning of the students. Yes, it is, but it also depends upon whether or not the students want to put in the effort.

When asked about the parent role in supporting these children, many agreed that a portion of the responsibility lay with parents as well. Several parents expressed frustration with an American society that prohibited them from disciplining their children in more forceful ways. They believed that, as a result, they had little control over their children’s behavior. Teachers confirmed that many parents wanted to intervene in their children’s education but did not know how. Many of the parents repeatedly expressed their annoyance with “other” parents who did not raise their children well and who do not participate in district- or school-sponsored events or committees. All parents agreed that most school-sponsored parent events were poorly attended.

Most parents expected that their children would attend college. They were aware of programs offered by their schools to inform them about college options, although not all took advantage of these opportunities. Overall, parents believed that there was no lack of information for those who sought it. Along similar lines, most believed themselves to be well informed about their children’s performance in school, although several admitted to not understanding all of the materials they received. Parents relied on a variety of
methods for getting information, including soliciting their children’s feedback, progress reports, e-mail, face-to-face communication with the teachers, Teleparent, or the internet to find out about their children’s performance. The extent to which parents were familiar and comfortable with using the district’s Zangle program to access information varied. Some found it very useful, while others explained that they did not have computer access. A few parents were dependent upon their children to help them access the web-based system.

Interestingly, the same parents who felt well informed about their children’s performance shared misinformation that revealed they did not understand this information. For example, they claimed that “basic” performance on standardized tests was equivalent to grade-level performance. Many reported not knowing their children’s CELDT levels. Several offered as evidence of their children’s progress the fact that they were able to converse with English-speaking sales people. A number of parents were confused and frustrated because their children received good grades, yet performed poorly on standardized tests. A few described standardized tests as difficult for their children. Others mentioned that the children did not take these tests seriously. Overall, parents’ understanding of student performance did not reflect deep knowledge of their children’s course-taking patterns or preparedness for college. There appeared to be little connection in parents’ minds between students’ performance in school and their ability to attend college.

One of the most notable misconceptions shared by parents was their belief that children who were no longer taking classes in the district’s ELD program were no longer ELs. Along these same lines, these parents further believed they had no role in serving on
ELACs or DELACs unless their children were in ELD. District leaders confirmed that schools still struggle to get parents to participate in ELACs despite efforts to hold the meetings at convenient times and often in conjunction with other events. The few parents who did attend ELAC meetings found them to be interesting. One parent felt strongly that those who attended these meetings should actively share the information with others. “What is the purpose of all [of us] being here if all of the information stays in the room. If we come to the meetings, we need to say to the other parents why is it important to get involved in the school?” One EL parent leader believed that the meetings need to be more relevant, which requires really understanding the needs of the people in the room.

Overall, both DELAC and ELAC meetings appeared more frequently to be vehicles for information-sharing by the district than active questioning and direction from EL parents. According to the principal who has made empowering parents part of his daily work, the work is slow but there are signs of progress:

   The Latino parents in our community are the sleeping giant. . . . I don’t think that they are going to stay quiet too long. I think that they are going to start to put more pressure because they are starting to learn the system and to see how they can influence a school like ours.

   Negotiating the Change Process

   Changing the Organizational Culture

   Cultivating an Instructional Focus

   District leaders spoke frequently about their endeavor to change the way AUHSD operates by shifting its organizational culture. Thus far, this shift has encompassed many of the changes discussed above, including a more concerted focus on standards-based curriculum and instruction, increased reliance on formative assessments and assessment
data, greater collaboration among administrators within the central office and among teachers at the school sites, and a growing acceptance of the shared accountability for the achievement of ELs. All of these changes have affected and are likely to continue to affect the education of ELs directly. Each of these changes has been slow in coming, and few district leaders would argue that more work must be done in all of these areas.

Farley described a district that, upon his arrival, was not instructionally focused and whose teachers had, as a result, become accustomed to “being left alone with respect to instruction.” There was little standardization of curriculum or instruction and limited collaboration. One principal described the mindset of many teachers regarding district efforts to standardize in certain areas:

When we first got there, the concept of benchmarks was strange for people. The concept of formative assessments was strange for people. The concept of pacing guides—“Don’t tell me what to do. My contract says that I have the right to teach the way I want to teach.”

District leaders described a process of gradually instilling a common language that has focused teachers on effective instruction so that there is a universal understanding of what it means to have good formative assessment or to have cognitively demanding learning objectives that correspond to students’ learning levels. Language has also played an important part in the district’s efforts to sell the SIOP model, as is reflected in leaders’ deliberate attempt to refer to the model as “lesson design” instead of associating it more directly with SIOP and the education of EL students. According to one district leader, “there is still a tendency for some people to not consider it applicable to them at all if you paint it a certain way.” In this same vein, advocates for bilingual education have taken care to refer their efforts as promoting “bi-literacy,” thus avoiding the negative
connotation associated with the term “bilingual” in the wake of Proposition 227. Each of these language choices has been an intentional part of a strategy to move delicately stakeholders at various levels of the system toward change.

*Fostering Collaboration*

Among the most notable changes described by administrators and teachers alike has been a growing openness to collaboration. By encouraging collaboration around assessment, classroom walkthroughs, site-planning, critical friends groups, and LDS cohorts, the district has, in effect, pushed open classroom doors. One LDS described a walkthrough as “the first time many of our teachers had been in another teacher’s room.” A high school principal, in describing the increasingly collegial environment at his school reported, “The culture is becoming almost as though, if you don’t participate as you should, it is going to be difficult for you. . . . People are open. They are on the same track on what we should do for kids.”

*Increasing Reliance on Data*

Another change has involved greater openness on the part of administrators and teachers to collaborate in using data. By pushing for teacher-developed common assessments at the site-level, district leaders have caused schools to have conversations about data. Regular reports on EL performance prepared by the LAC have moved leaders to focus more directly on this subgroup. One LDS teacher spoke of the gradual acceptance of the importance of data:

The data that we have had available to us, we are now starting to realize its value and it has not been an overnight thing. It has been developmental, learning as you are growing. And we are now starting to really see the intricacies and the fluctuations in the data.
Data use has still not evolved to the point where most teachers are regularly taking the initiative to access or request subgroup-specific data. Many do not yet see the value in having this information. There is also some pushback from teachers who feel that the system has become overly focused on data. One teacher complained, “Unfortunately or fortunately, the dialogue is always around numbers, always around data. . . . I have to keep reminding myself that I teach kids. I don’t teach tests, and I don’t teach numbers.”

*Spreading the Accountability for Educating ELs*

There has been change as well in spreading accountability for working with ELs. Increasing numbers of mainstream teachers have reached the realization that they have ELs in their classrooms. Some of these teachers have actively embraced the importance of tailoring strategies to meet the needs of these children. Some are actively disaggregating data to do this most effectively. And although many teachers are aware of the appropriate strategies for meeting the needs of these students, growing numbers of them are realizing that they need help in making these strategies a part of their regular practice. Change in the classroom has not yet evolved to the point where teachers are regularly engaging all of their students. Lesson design does not yet reflect adequate attention to formative assessment or language objectives, but growing numbers of teachers have demonstrated a willingness to learn how to make this happen. According to one district administrator:

There has been a grudging realization . . . people are finally beginning to understand that the ELs are not just Juanito who just got here from Mexico. If I have 100 kids in a room, he’s only going to be one of about 20, but there are going to be 80 others who walk and talk like every other kid in your class but who need more sophisticated language support in order to get to those higher cognitive levels. . . . That has been a huge paradigm shift.
Despite this progress, district leaders, some principals, and teachers described the existence of persistent pockets of ignorance and resistance throughout the district. They cited specifically, content-area teachers who are critical of district efforts to focus on essential standards as “watering down” or “teaching to the test.” Others expressed concerns about the pressure to keep up with pacing guides when students required re-teaching. Teachers, concerned that students are not ready, expressed frustration with district efforts to push students into more rigorous, college-preparatory classes like algebra. District leaders described an ongoing battle to fight low expectations. When asked about teacher expectations for EL students specifically, the assistant superintendent for education was particularly blunt:

That doesn’t matter. We’re not so concerned about their beliefs, their attitudes. We’re just concerned about what they do. You can have a belief or an attitude. What we care about is how you deliver the instruction. You can be prejudiced, I don’t care. But when it comes to the teaching, as long as you’re effective, it really doesn’t matter.

District leaders insisted that still not enough teachers in disciplines outside of ELD and ELA appreciate the need to be both language and content-area teachers. One curriculum specialist described a struggle that goes beyond teachers, “It’s not just the teachers; we have support staff, we have also administrators and counselors who are a little resistant, ‘Well isn’t that the Language Assessment Center’s responsibility to make those materials accessible; and those ELD classes?’” In seeking to achieve sustainable culture change, many district leaders have accepted the realization that they have a long road to travel and that paramount in that journey is the ability to bring people along. The assistant superintendent for education explained:
It’s a journey together and you have to have some really difficult conversations along the way as you figure out where you’re going to go as a school site or a district . . . . But bottom line is you can’t lead without the people coming along . . . .

Balancing Autonomy and Control

Staff at all levels of the district expressed an awareness of the importance of fostering genuine ownership of the change process. According to one curriculum specialist, “We’re not in the business of telling. We’re in the business of collaborating.” Another district leader’s comments captured the delicate nature of the district role, “We’ve got to be gentle with them, but we have to bring them where we need them to go.” Although the district has not given schools the choice to opt out of such initiatives as the development of pacing guides, the LDS Program, EAP classes, special education inclusion, or ninth-grade academies, it has either allowed them to decide how quickly to opt in based on their school cultures or afforded them some latitude in designing initiatives. Whether permitting a high school to restructure the LDS model to suit its teacher leaders or allowing teachers to elect to participate in inclusion efforts or LDS cohorts, the district has demonstrated its willingness to be flexible, respect school cultures, and generate genuine buy-in. According to the El program coordinator, “We’re not being as directive as we may have been in the past. We’re trying to get people to understand that there are a lot of good reasons [for change] including personal ones.”

Principals at Program Improvement schools related stories of consulting firms hired using restructuring grants who had imposed change from above and met with stiff resistance from school staff. Site administrators have learned the hard way that changes imposed from above, no matter how sound, would be rejected. These leaders welcomed
the district’s grassroots approach to the LDS program. By initiating the LDS program with a small group of volunteering teachers, the district intended to build success with early adopters in the hopes that, upon seeing the pay-off for these teachers, others would willingly choose change. The assistant superintendent for education elaborated:

The more success we’re having, the more forcefully we get the message out. . . . Eventually, we hope to have a whole paradigm shift, and there will be a very small percentage of people who will not have to be walked over to that paradigm.

The district has already experienced some success with this approach as a result of its push for common assessments and pacing guides at Program Improvement junior high schools. According to one principal, upon witnessing success at these early adopter schools, other schools without pacing guides or assessments aligned to the district’s benchmarks woke up to say, “We’re going to be at a disadvantage if we don’t get on the ball.”

Teacher perceptions of district flexibility varied with some describing the district as flexible and respectful of them as professionals, and others relating a real pressure to conform to district-wide strategies. At one high school, teachers were particularly vocal about a push to eliminate grades of “D” and “F” and how this kind of a goal gets translated at the site level. Several teachers feared that, without more explicit guidance from the district on how to reach this goal, Ds and Fs would be eliminated but not as a result of improved teaching and learning. One teacher summarized her frustrations, “We have to slow down. We have to dialogue. We have to read research. [The district] has to provide the appropriate and necessary and most importantly relevant support for teachers.”
Social Justice Advocates

Although the barriers to change within AUHSD are many, the district does have a few leaders whose advocacy on behalf of ELs has pushed the agenda in their favor. These include district-level leaders whose jobs are focused on ELs: the EL program coordinator and the EL curriculum specialist. Both leaders have closely followed the research related to EL students and worked to educate others within the central office and at the school sites about the unique needs of these students. These leaders see the big picture. Although they regularly attended to compliance requirements, they appeared to be motivated not by mandate but rather by a genuine desire to improve academic outcomes for these students. They have taken risks to move new agendas such as the independent study program, SFSS, and the seal of bi-literacy. Site-level administrators and other staff reported valuing their guidance and commitment to these students. The district’s director of professional development was also actively engaged in launching its plans to improve instructional practices in ways that supported ELs more effectively. He was instrumental in bringing union leadership on board to support these plans and worked closely with principals and teachers to ensure that they were implemented faithfully. Despite their intentions, however, the latitude these leaders have had to effect change has been limited because they lack the platform or authority to make sweeping changes. Despite the fact that the clout of the EL office has grown with structural changes under Farley and its leader is involved in a range district decisions, the EL program coordinator is still not part of the superintendent’s cabinet, nor is she in a position to work closely with the school board. Moreover, resource limitations have increased and diversified the responsibilities of the district’s EL program coordinator. As mentioned earlier, although
this has had the advantage of placing her in many rooms when decisions are made, it has also carried the disadvantage of channeling her energy in multiple directions.

Although observers described the district’s superintendent and assistant superintendent as genuine believers in an equity agenda, the district’s top leaders were not perceived as advocates who had actively championed the cause of the EL. In many instances, their vision has been focused on system-wide improvements for all students, which some have argued needed to happen first and which, in many cases, has laid a foundation that has benefited EL students. Principals and teachers agreed that these leaders have been vocal about the need to bring up test scores for ELs and have spearheaded programs like the LDS initiative. These efforts, however, have been perceived as driven by compliance and financial pressures rather than a deep-seated commitment to change for ELs. It is also worthy of note that the district’s top leaders may have felt constrained by a school board and community characterized by a history of conservative positions regarding immigrant students. Indeed, other district leaders expressed their own concerns that top leaders should be cautious in their advocacy.

According to one,

[The superintendent and assistant superintendent] have to stay within the structure that they’re in. I don’t think that’s their role [to be social justice advocates]. It would be fantastic if it would be, but under this political regime that we’re under right now, I don’t think that’s too smart.

One district leader whose social advocacy on behalf of ELs was characterized by the level of commitment, vision, and risk-taking required to catalyze difficult change on behalf of ELs worked as the site-leader at one of the district’s junior high schools. Frequently referred to as an activist principal throughout this study, this leader
distinguished himself by his willingness to wage battle for the things he believed in. He related:

I was taking all the hits but I was O.K. . . . because I knew we were going to get through this and on the other side, people were going to get to a different place. . . . I had people behind me on our staff who said, “You’ve got to keep going. Don’t give up. Keep going . . . .” There were times where it was getting difficult and the staff was ready to do everything they could to kick me out.

This principal credited the superintendent specifically with providing him access to outside consultants who were knowledgeable about organizational change. He referred to “a lot of personal coaching that allowed me to survive that stage.” In the wake of calls for the principal’s ouster, the superintendent also attended a meeting with the principal and his staff, during which he asked the staff to air their complaints about their principal’s leadership. According to the principal, “[The superintendent] wasn’t just going to listen to all these stories. He was going to really understand what was going on.”

This principal advocate considered creating urgency for educating ELs more effectively to be part of his mission. He did this by talking with other principals about bi-literacy, working to establish a dual-immersion program on his campus, and focusing his teachers on data about ELs. Speaking about teachers in the district as a whole, he observed:

I believe that the teachers definitely have the skills. I believe that they definitely know how to scaffold or differentiate the curriculum. I just don’t know if they see the urgency that I see necessarily in terms of why that change needs to happen now and every day to get us to another level. It is happening very definitely in some classes, but I don’t know if it is happening across the board.

As a result of his persistence, this principal has made great strides in transforming the culture of his campus into a more collaborative community, in deepening his teachers’ understanding of EL needs and strategies for working with them, and in awakening EL
parents to their potential role in their children’s education. These developments coincided with gains in both EL API and AYP between 2006-2010. In 2010, his school experienced the highest increases in API and EL-API of all junior high schools in the district.
CHAPTER 5—ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In this chapter, I merge my theoretical framework for district reform (see Figure 1, p. 68) with the literature on EL best practices to produce a rubric for EL-oriented district reform. I then use the rubric, along with the theoretical framework for district action and the literature on change, as tools for understanding precisely what has and has not been happening within the case study district that might influence educational opportunities and outcomes for EL students. In particular, I explore whether systemic equity is being pursued such that ELs have “the greatest opportunity to learn enhanced by the resources and supports necessary to achieve competence, excellence, independence, responsibility, and self-sufficiency for school and life” (Scott, 2001, n.p.). As part of this process, I also examine the extent to which these tools remain useful in understanding the work of districts and in guiding future research. Research on the district role in the education of ELs is so young that the field has yet to discover many of the variables that influence district success in educating large numbers of adolescent ELs. My analysis will demonstrate that the story is rich and deep (far beyond easily quantifiable variables) and replete with lessons to be learned about the challenges districts face and the capacities they require in meeting more effectively the learning needs of EL students.

Applying the District Framework to English Learners

Using my theoretical framework for district reform, it is possible to examine the extent to which district activity, corresponding to each of the five roles depicted in the model, produces conditions that facilitate more equitable teaching and learning for
adolescent ELs. In applying the framework, it is important, however, to understand that the research on districts does not support causal links between the execution of specific district roles and improved student performance. Moreover, the current research on the education of ELs offers only limited guidance on the role of districts in supporting these students. The rubric, which combines the body of knowledge on ELs education with that on the five previously identified roles of successful districts, serves as a guide for analyzing the efforts of a single case-study district to meet the needs of its adolescent EL population. It may also be used to shed light on both the existing will and capacity of districts to lead and implement improvements in teaching and learning for these students.

Unlike many retrospective case studies, my study of AUHSD did not begin with a success story. Indeed, the district’s entry into Corrective Action in 2010, as required by NCLB, stands as one clear indication of the uphill journey ahead. To date, performance outcomes for ELs in AUHSD have been mixed. While there has been some growth in proficiency rates for ELs at the middle-school level, it has not been sufficient to meet federal accountability requirements. The narrowing of the gap between ELs and all students at the middle-school level has been promising. At the high-school level, however, proficiency rates for ELs in Grade 10 have dipped, and the gap between ELs and all students has grown. Preliminary numbers for 2010 regarding Title III accountability requirements are encouraging, with the district’s meeting both its annual measurable achievement objectives, AMAO 1 and AMAO 2, at all but two high
The fact that AUHSD met targets under the new AMAO targeting structure, which establishes higher targets for longer-term ELs, is an important accomplishment.

The district has also been enjoying a level of success with the largest subset of its linguistic minority population. In many instances, the district’s former ELs or reclassified fluent English proficient students (RFEPs) were outperforming native English-speaking students. Large percentages of these students were qualifying for gifted and talented programs and succeeding in advanced placement exams at rates that exceeded their representation in the overall student population. These students were also participating in primary-language classes and college-preparatory programs like AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) and Puente at much higher rates than ELs.

From an equity perspective, the participation of the district’s ELs in advanced courses and EL placement in gifted programs was lower than their representation in the overall AUHSD population. Moreover, over 50% of all AUHSD’s special education students were ELs in 2009-2010. This situation gives rise to specific concerns about the extent to which language development issues continue to be confounded with learning disabilities within AUHSD and its feeder districts.

By 2010, AUHSD was in many ways a different district from the one it had been prior to the arrival of Dr. Joe Farley in the summer of 2005. Along with new leadership have come changes that encompassed alterations in structural arrangements and operating

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51 As of 2010, the State Board of Education revised the target structure for AMAOs 1 and 2. According to the new structure, there are separate annual targets for students who have been in language-education instructional programs for 5 or more years and students who have been in such programs less than 5 years. The target for the latter group is substantially lower.

52 As mentioned in Chapter 4, most AUHSD ELs were identified as special education students while in elementary school. The fact that they have been in special education programs for so long may contribute to their slower achievement at the secondary level.
systems, modifications in instructional focus, and transformations in organizational culture. At the time of this writing, many of these changes were still in the early stages of implementation. In fact, some of the most potentially significant work on behalf of EL students had not been initiated until the fall of Dr. Farley’s last year leading the district. Although the arrival of the 5-year mark coincided with Dr. Farley’s decision to leave the district and seek professional challenges elsewhere, it hardly signaled that the work on behalf of AUHSD’s EL students was done. With a new superintendent in place and considerable fiscal challenges looming in 2010, it is uncertain which of the changes Dr. Farley’s leadership helped catalyze would continue. Perhaps, the only certainty was that NCLB Corrective Action and Program Improvement status would carry significant prescriptive mandates with which the education community has become increasingly familiar.

The Five Roles of Districts in Educational Reform

My earlier analysis of research on districts resulted in the identification of five key district roles in improving educational outcomes for students. These included (a) Mediating External Influences, (b) Developing a Shared Vision of Instructional Quality, (c) Aligning Structures, Processes, and Resources, (d) Ensuring Reciprocal Accountability, and (e) Monitoring Progress. Both the research on districts and that on organizational change suggest that these roles are not implemented in distinct, successive fashion but are instead interdependent and nonlinear in their execution (Rorrer et al., 2008; Styhre, 2002). The findings from AUHSD presented in Chapter 4 provide ample evidence that district leaders assumed each of these roles to varying degrees. There is also significant evidence that they often fulfilled several of these roles
simultaneously and that the execution of one role frequently influenced others. In the following sections, I analyze the degree to which district execution of each of these roles has corresponded with what the research shows to be promising district-level practice in supporting struggling students generally. I further examine the extent to which the district’s pursuit of each of these roles involved strategies and practices that the research shows are likely to result in better educational opportunities and outcomes for ELs, specifically. Although I have worked to avoid repetition in discussing discrete roles, some repetition is unavoidable given the overlapping nature of these roles.

_Mediating External Forces_

_Mediating Contextual Factors in Ways That Support ELs_

The district/EL rubric presented in Figure 14 suggests that a successful district is able to mediate contextual factors affecting its work in ways that support and reinforce its focus on ELs. The rubric identifies two primary areas of district action in this regard. Firstly, effective EL-oriented districts interpret federal, state, and local policies in ways that reinforce and support their priorities for ELs and, at the same time, satisfy the legal requirements of these policies (Fuhrman & Elmore, 1990; Horwitz et al., 2009; Spillane, 2000). Districts also creatively manipulated budgets to focus attention and resources on such key areas as curriculum. Specifically, these districts also worked to protect and secure resources necessary to meet EL priorities in the face of budget pressures. The research findings shared in Chapter 4 reveal a number of important external contextual factors affecting AUHSD’s ability to attend effectively to the needs of its EL population. These include a policy environment crowded with federal and state mandates, compliance requirements, and court orders. They also include a severe state-level budget crisis.
## MEDIATING EXTERNAL FORCES

**District leaders are able to mediate other contextual factors affecting change in ways that support their focus on ELs**

- Interpret and implement federal, state, and local policies in ways that reinforce and support the district’s vision for ELs and simultaneously satisfy legal requirements
- Manage fiscal pressures in ways that protect and secure resources for ELs

**District leaders build external constituencies for reform**

- Create visions of EL success (change deficit thinking to asset-based thinking)
- Reiterate their commitment to EL success
- Use data to create urgency for change and demonstrate the success of the programs they believe are effective for ELs
- Recruit community organizations, especially those focused on equity issues, as allies in helping to maintain their focus on ELs
- Tap resources of technical assistance entities, universities, and foundations to inform and support reform efforts on behalf of ELs

**District leaders manage key stakeholder relationships in ways that support and complement their strategy for EL reform**

- Engage school board members in committing to a shared vision and nonnegotiable goals for the education of ELs
- Work collaboratively with union leaders to support EL-focused reforms, especially in the area of professional development
- Build a strong working partnership with EL parents
- Develop vision and plans that are informed by, and responsive to, EL parent concerns and needs
- Foster EL parent leadership, including active district-level and school-level committees of EL parents that offer meaningful opportunities for soliciting input and feedback from EL parents
- Encourage and support efforts to build connections between ELs’ homes and students learning in schools
- Ensure that parents are informed about ways to support their students learning at home, the selection of high school coursework, and post-secondary planning
- Support resource centers that serve adult needs and provide meaningful support regarding children’s learning

*Figure 14.* Rubric showing district role in mediating external forces on behalf of ELs.
**Interpreting and implementing policies.** According to AUHSD district leaders, policy mandates have focused badly needed attention on the needs of the EL learner. In the case of Program Improvement schools, NCLB requirements have made reforms a requirement instead of a choice. District leaders have capitalized on their Program Improvement status to focus stakeholders throughout the district on the need for change on behalf of ELs. According to one teacher-leader, “Being in Program Improvement has allowed us to break down walls” and introduce such new approaches to teaching and learning as the district’s teacher coaching program. No Child Left Behind high-stakes accountability has pushed district leaders to focus more intently on what was being taught in classrooms, hone in on the essential standards, and use assessments as tools for guiding and pacing instruction. Centrally driven instructional guidance, often the result of strong federal and state policies (Spillane, 1996), materialized in the district-wide push for common assessments across tested subject areas. A mantra for rigor across the curriculum reverberated across the district. Although NCLB-inspired reforms targeted all students, the increased consistency in instruction and the greater rigor in all classes most likely benefited ELs disproportionately, since these students were the most likely to have been sitting in less advanced classes where rigor was a concern. Moreover, district leaders’ accounts of blanket statements by some teachers that ELs were not capable of performing in higher-level classes, further reinforced the value of district efforts to employ federal policies in the push for rigor district-wide.

One of the most dramatic policy-driven changes in AUHSD on behalf of ELs, spurred by NCLB and the *Williams v. California Settlement* (2004), has been the jump in the number of teachers certified to teach ELs. The requirement that all teachers of ELs
be appropriately certified has ensured that the vast majority of the district’s teachers complete coursework on second-language acquisition, instructional accommodations for ELs, and the role of culture in learning. The certification process has helped to make secondary level content-area teachers more aware of their collective responsibility for teaching ELs. Although AUHSD district leaders acknowledged that most teachers still require significantly more help in using EL-appropriate instructional strategies in the classroom, there is little question that teachers have a greater foundation for meeting EL needs than in previous times.

The effect of another policy mandate, Proposition 227, has also brought changes for ELs in AUHSD. In placing emphasis on English proficiency, Proposition 227, along with NCLB, have fueled district efforts to move greater numbers of EL students into mainstream classes. In 2010, only 13% of all ELs were not in mainstream classes, a number that has consistently dropped over the years. The impact of the focus on English proficiency has been mixed for ELs in AUHSD. Despite the well-documented benefits associated with greater integration of ELs into the mainstream student population, these benefits have often been outweighed by the reality that mainstream teachers were not adequately prepared to meet their unique learning needs. In a clear demonstration of the interdependent nature of district roles, the movement of ELs into the mainstream has prompted the district to focus more closely on its role in building teacher capacity. This role appears in the theoretical framework for district reform as “ensuring reciprocal accountability.” After many years of placing ELs in mainstream classes without strong supports, district leaders faced a formidable task in changing teacher practices in ways that genuinely support ELs.
Currently, few AUHSD parents request bilingual education for their children, although this is likely to change. Few children enter AUHSD having participated in bilingual programs at the elementary-school level, resulting in limited parental requests for bilingual programs at the secondary level. However, as the first graduates of a dual-language program at one of AUHSD’s feeder elementary schools enter the district in the near future, greater numbers of parents are expected to seek bilingual learning opportunities for their children. District leaders within the EL office have been proactive in preparing for this reality, participating in local task forces to develop a dual-language program at one of its middle schools. In light of research findings that support efforts to strengthen the primary language skills of ELs (August & Hakuta, 1997; August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006), these policy-related developments bode well for EL education in AUHSD.

Like other districts in California, AUHSD has responded to state requirements that students performing several levels below grade level on the ELA section of the CST take a double-block of intensive reading classes. Requirements of this nature have generally affected ELs disproportionately, since many do not perform well on standardized tests. Of critical importance in determining the effect of such mandates on ELs is the degree to which these support classes accelerate rather than decelerate EL learning. Callahan (2006) expressed concerns that reading-only programs do not provide ELs with the breadth of exposure they require to other areas of English development. Additionally, teachers who focus on isolated reading skills at the expense of skills that connect literacy to larger themes and content areas may ultimately do these students a disservice. According to Meltzer and Hamann (2005), ELs or other students who learn
skills in isolation and are then expected to transfer those skills to other academic areas on their own experience weak results.

Although AUHSD’s initial response to state mandates for extra reading instruction resulted in the placement of struggling ELs in reading classes, district-level evaluations of the impact of these programs on student performance prompted leaders to pursue a more balanced literacy-development approach. The district’s intensive literacy program, which is still quite young, currently relies on a newly-adopted curriculum at the middle-school level that was designed with ELs in mind. Anaheim Union High School District’s intensive literacy classes aim to develop balanced literacy capacities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. At the high school level, AUHSD still relies primarily on reading interventions, although the curriculum is supplemented by a 7-week writing program. District leaders acknowledged that they still have work to do in improving teachers’ abilities to focus equally on all areas of language competency in their daily instruction. In particular, oral language skills, which are not a focus of content-area standardized tests, typically receive less attention from teachers.

Other factors that will determine the value of intensive literacy classes for AUHSD’s ELs will include teachers’ abilities to differentiate appropriately between the needs of ELs and those of struggling native English speakers who are also in these classes. Several researchers shed light on the sometimes subtle differences between these two groups of students (Harper & de Jong, 2004; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). The district’s use of additional measures beyond CST scores when placing students is a promising development. Another factor likely to affect student success in these classes is teachers’ comfort in using frequent formative assessment to measure progress in deep and
authentic ways. Fortunately for ELs, many of these concerns are already the focus of AUHSD curriculum specialists’ efforts to support schools and teachers.

To an extent, the power that federally and state-mandated policies have to push districts to make changes focused on ELs can also be a weakness affecting long-lasting change. In AUHSD, the mandated, task-oriented, and often piecemeal nature of requirements has sometimes compromised efforts to help stakeholders see the larger picture. It has limited their engagement in a process of collaboratively developing a vision in which they can be deeply invested. In commenting on the compliance-oriented nature of their meetings with district leaders, EL administrators (assistant principals) described these gatherings as focused on a “to-do” list of compliance requirements rather than on building genuine ownership of a vision for improving the education of ELs. Principals appeared to echo this sentiment in their comments about the way in which constantly changing mandates “clouded the vision.” These findings resonate with researchers’ conclusions that the “noisy reform environment” has hampered districts’ efforts to implement reforms (Corcoran et al., 2001, p. 84).

More importantly, the compliance-driven approach to the education of ELs may cause leaders to equate “required” changes with “sufficient” changes. Some principals viewed fulfilling mandates for EL parent advisory committees and other EL-related requirements as doing the work that must be done for ELs. Instead of broadening their capacity to use mandates as platforms upon which to do even more on behalf of ELs, some have narrowed their focus to do primarily that which was mandated. Although some leaders questioned intellectually whether certain mandates would produce the kinds of improvements they were intended to produce, on some level, they became merely
implementers of someone else’s rules. Anaheim Union High School District teachers have clearly received the district’s message that they need to do better with ELs, yet when asked what this means, teachers have little to offer beyond NCLB mandated requirements that they “increase test scores.” The fact that teachers’ efforts on behalf of these students will ultimately be determined by a single test score has not only narrowed their beliefs about their capacity for action, but it has also fueled resistance to change. Once again, the importance of ensuring that district’s roles reinforce one another becomes apparent. Enforcing mandates without simultaneously creating opportunities for thoughtful buy-in into a broad vision of instructional quality that includes measurable goals for EL student success may diminish the power of districts to be meaningful drivers of change. Using federal and state policies as catalysts for change on behalf of ELs may be strategic on the part of districts; however, mandates alone are not sufficiently powerful to drive a vision for instructional change on behalf of ELs.

Mitigating fiscal pressures. The full impact of California’s fiscal crisis on education generally or ELs in particular may not be known for decades. In the short-term, the crisis has consumed hours of district leaders’ time in budget discussions and resulted in more crowded classrooms, the loss of counselors, and the cutting of after-school and summer school programs, among other things. One could speculate that many of these changes will result in less instructional time for ELs. However, without deep knowledge of the quality of many of the specific programs that were cut, it is difficult to know the precise impact on ELs.

In some respects, financial pressures have pushed the district to be more strategic in its use of available resources on behalf of ELs. Anaheim Union High School District
has creatively tapped into a number of funding sources beyond federal categorical funding to meet EL needs, including state categorical funds, general education funds, and federal Title I funds. The district’s Lesson Design Specialist (LDS) program to train teachers in incorporating EL-appropriate strategies into their lessons was funded using federal and state categorical funds, as well as new federal dollars aimed at supporting innovative in education. Using these resources, the district was able to make a 2-year commitment to this program, although budget uncertainties will continue to affect future planning.

Unfortunately, as funds get tighter, financial pressures often have more influence over district decision-making than do determinations about what is best for schools and students. District leaders reported that the strategic use of funding for the LDS program effort enabled them to save teacher positions. However, tapping into these funds quickly enough to save jobs did not allow district leaders the time to solicit input in planning the initiative from a broad array of stakeholders, including principals. A few principals noted specifically that they were not included in the planning for the LDS. It is not clear whether their lack of inclusion in the initial planning will ultimately affect their involvement in, or the effectiveness of, the program. Researchers have observed that fiscal pressures may force district leaders to make reactionary rather than proactive changes in their instructional programs (Callahan, 2006). Although AUHSD’s LDS program is clearly far more than a reactionary response to fiscal pressures, fiscal considerations appear to have driven the district’s timeline in ways that precluded widespread stakeholder involvement in co-developing the program.
Managing Stakeholder Relationships in Ways That Benefit ELs

The Board of Education and the Teachers’ Union. The research on districts portrayed successful districts as those that managed stakeholder relationships in ways that complemented their strategies for reform (Childress et al., 2006). A number of studies pointed specifically to the support of such key players as the board of education and the teachers’ union in facilitating reform efforts. For example, McLaughlin and Talbert (2003) found that board support was the single most important predictor of district reform success. Conversely, Hightower (2001) determined that a resistant school board can be a significant impediment to change.

Anaheim Union High School District’s school board policy regarding the education of ELs was last revised in 2004, before many of its schools had entered Program Improvement and prior to Farley’s assumption of leadership. Board agendas and minutes did not reveal a board that was actively engaged in working with district leaders to develop a vision for addressing the needs of these students. Reports of EL achievement were rarely the subject of board meetings. A single board presentation by leaders of the district-level EL-parent advisory committee about EL student needs, given at the end of the 2010 school year with the support of EL central office staff, stands out as one promising attempt to draw the board’s attention to the needs of EL students.

Anaheim Union High School District leaders have rarely attempted to educate school board members in ways that might create urgency for reform on behalf of ELs. District leaders’ decisions to move their reform agenda “under the radar of the school board” ensured that the district would avoid possible negative public backlash for its efforts on behalf of immigrant students in a community with a history of conservatism.
and anti-immigrant sentiments. It also spared leaders the effort of trying to educate board members who showed little proclivity for analyzing student data. Leaders were able to concentrate their energies on fostering the internal change they desired with little interference from the board. In fact, board-meeting minutes revealed a board that was largely supportive of district leaders’ plans and actions.

The costs of “working under the radar” included the forfeiting of powerful opportunities to champion publicly the cause of equity on behalf of these students, to cultivate “shared equity beliefs” similar to those generated in successful equity-focused districts elsewhere in the country (Skrla et al., 2000, p. 6), and to educate the broader community about the importance of meeting EL needs effectively. Without the power of the board behind him, the superintendent lacked a strong ally in the district’s pursuit of reform. Ultimately, without full board buy-in and strong support, change for ELs in AUHSD will likely take longer than it should.

Researchers have also pointed to the teachers’ unions as potential allies in reform efforts (Green & Etheridge, 2001). The teachers’ union in AUHSD was not mentioned frequently in interviews with district leaders as affecting significantly its work on behalf of ELs. District leaders did, however, take care to work closely with the union president in developing the LDS program. In fact, the voluntary nature of teacher participation in the program was a union-stipulated requirement. Union leaders were not only involved in the design of the program, but they also served on interview panels to help select the new coaches. The union president has spoken favorably about the program in board meetings.

Working with parents and community leaders. Successful districts build genuine partnerships with parents (Springboard Schools, 2006). Their plans are informed by, and
responsive to, EL parents’ concerns and needs. District leaders also support efforts to build connections between ELs’ home and school environments. They ensure that parents are informed about ways to support their students at home. At the middle- and high-school levels, they involve parents in decisions concerning children’s course-taking and post-secondary planning. Districts committed to genuine partnerships with EL parents also work to build the leadership capacity of these parents to advocate for the improved teaching and learning of their children (Olsen et al., 2010).

Within AUHSD, efforts to work with EL parents have included many of the same strategies used to reach all parents. These strategies have concentrated primarily on improving parents’ access to information, either through the district’s automated telephone system or its computerized Parent Portal. Both district staff and EL parents viewed these district-wide initiatives as useful means for connecting with families. However, reports by EL parents indicate that they did not always understand the significance of the messages they received, know how to act upon those messages, or feel comfortable accessing student information on the computer, which raises concerns about whether additional efforts are needed to support EL parents. English learner parents also mentioned that they received open invitations to district and school events to learn about student assessment, “a-g” requirements, and college planning, but did not attend them. They reported that they did not participate in ELAC meetings because their children were no longer in ELD classes. Moreover, EL parents generally did not expect the district to do more to support their children’s academic performance. They were satisfied with district efforts on behalf of their children, despite the fact that their children were performing below grade level or were rarely involved in gifted programs or advanced
classes. Even DELAC parents were more likely to blame other EL parents than district leaders for EL students’ poor performance. Overall, many of the EL parents interviewed for this research appeared to lack the background knowledge to enable them to respond to many of the district’s generic parent outreach measures in ways that would produce important changes for their children.

At the district level, there is evidence that EL office leaders worked to build a strong partnership with parents through the DELAC by engaging these parent leaders in the substantive work of rewriting the EL Master Plan and helping them to use survey data to present their concerns to the school board for the first time in June 2010. Despite these efforts, however, this engagement is still unbalanced. District leaders still share information more often than parents provide input.

The notable absence of EL parents on the superintendent’s Parent Advisory committee, which operates separately from District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC), prompts concerns about the commitment of top leaders to involve these parents at the highest levels of the district. At a minimum, when EL parents are not represented on district-level committees two critical things happen: non-EL parent-leaders are prevented from developing a deeper understanding of EL parents’ needs and concerns, and EL parents are denied exposure to role models of other parents who are more deeply familiar with the American educational system.

Teachers repeatedly described parent involvement as a barrier to EL student learning and were disappointed that the district did not play a more active role in placing greater expectations on parents, particularly with respect to issues like reading outside of school. “There is a level of expectancy that I think the district needs to put on parents.
It’s all teacher, teacher. . . . We do need the parents to know how much we need them to deal with their children.” According to one English teacher, despite the fact that it is an issue at every high school, the lack of parent involvement is “never a part of the conversation.” At the same time that teachers complained about insufficient parent involvement, their own outreach to EL parents was limited primarily to that which could be accomplished through parent centers.

Although the EL office plays an important role in making certain that schools meet compliance requirements for EL parent participation on English Learner Advisory Committees (ELACs), much of the AUHSD parent outreach is left to the discretion of school leaders and is, as a result, uneven across schools. Some school leaders have encouraged reading circles among teachers to help them acquire deeper knowledge of the families they serve. Others have used discretionary funds to hire community liaisons or establish parent centers. Not surprisingly, schools with parent liaisons appeared to be doing the best job of connecting with parents according to parents and teachers alike. Several schools also offered parenting classes through the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQUE) or English classes. One DELAC leader expressed disappointment regarding less-than-genuine attempts to involve parents at the school site level. She noted that, at many schools, efforts to involve EL parents existed mostly on paper:

They do not incite or promote enough to engage the families. You can advertise in paper, but it is not the same when you put one paper on the wall as it is when you tell the people what you have. Also, the enthusiasm that you are showing—that impacts the minds of people.

Overall, however, engaging parents at the AUHSD study schools, with the exception of one school, most often appeared to be more about forming the required
committees and getting information out to parents rather than about deep reflection upon
better ways to learn from parents about their needs and build their capacity to monitor and
support children’s learning. Despite research pointing to the value of school connections
around course-selection and postsecondary planning, generally the charge of school
counselors, neither EL parents nor district leaders mentioned counseling as a primary
vehicle for involving EL families. Anaheim Union High School District EL counselors
offered parent workshops on college preparation, but there was little evidence that
counselors systematically reached out to ensure that EL parents were “taught” about the
system in ways that built on their existing background knowledge, make certain that
information was genuinely comprehensible to parents, and make meetings truly
meaningful and engaging.

The findings suggest that EL parents, not unlike their children, may have needs
that are distinct from those of all parents. Systems and strategies that are effective
with all parents may not work as well with EL parents who are unfamiliar with the
American school system, have different expectations for the district and school role in
supporting their children, are unaware of the implications of not attending certain schools
events, assume that their children will be college-ready upon graduation, and are
understandably confused by what it means to be an EL who is in mainstream classes. All
of this points to the importance of the district’s role in educating EL parents to understand
and demand more of the system. Part of this process can and should involve exposing
them to role models of parents who regularly voice their own high expectations of
schools. Significantly, the work of the “social justice” principal identified earlier in my
research involved facilitating the efforts of non-EL, PTA leaders at his school to support
EL parents in assuming the leadership of the PTA. This principal mentioned that what he wanted for “his” EL parents most was advocacy training.

At the district level, aside from those within the EL office, the involvement of EL parents remained a peripheral part of the district’s strategy for improving educational opportunities and outcomes for EL students. Although AUHSD executive leaders have focused deliberately and primarily on classroom curriculum and instruction, the relative inattention to EL parents is likely to slow the forward motion of the theoretical wheel of reform on behalf of these students. The district has yet to “create a constituency for focus” (Springboard Schools, 2006, p. 7) on EL students among their own parents. Doing so would require that district leaders and site administrators connect with these parents in a manner similar to the approach they want teachers to use in engaging EL students: create opportunities to learn from others, connect to their interests, build on their existing knowledge and experiences, provide input that is genuinely comprehensible, and conduct activities that are conducive to interactive participation. As with students, parents exposed to these strategies are more likely to be genuinely engaged in schools—and with greater engagement will eventually come greater parental advocacy and leadership on behalf of their children.

Building External Constituencies for Reform

Another feature of the district’s role in mediating external influences involves its work in building external constituencies for reform (Ragland et al., 1999; Rorrer, 2006; Springboard Schools, 2006; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). This occurs through leaders’ efforts to bring attention to the EL issue through data, presentations, speeches, regular reiteration of commitment to EL success, formulations of visions of EL success, and
celebrations of EL programs that work. Anaheim Union High School District leaders at the highest levels have reported using data to create urgency for reform and eviscerate myths about the capacities of struggling students. One notable example mentioned earlier was the assistant superintendent’s use of data to demonstrate to teachers that placing students in more rigorous classes would not result in diminished performance. Nevertheless, mediating external forces requires that district leaders at the highest levels make this information broadly available and use their visibility within the community to regularly share their vision and expectations for EL students. Although my research did not involve extensive interviews with people outside the district, reviews of newspaper articles, board reports, and interviews with those within the district did not reveal a district whose leadership has championed the EL cause in these powerful ways to date.

Recruiting external entities. Successful districts also mediate external forces by recruiting external constituencies to support its reform efforts. These constituencies often include technical assistance organizations, universities, and community organizations, among others (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003; Reville, 2007). In this regard, AUHSD has entered into agreements with a variety of consultants to provide training in support of its reform efforts. It has also developed connections with UCLA’s School of Management, the UC Irvine Math Project, AVID, and the WRITE Institute, among others, to provide technical assistance in developing rigorous curricula, strong school-leadership teams, and teacher training programs. District leaders also recently entered into a guaranteed admissions pact with Cal State Fullerton for 12th graders meeting certain standards.

When asked about community organizations that might be likely advocates in support of district work with ELs, several leaders referred initially to Los Amigos of
Orange County, a community-based organization that played a critical role in the community’s drive to recall the anti-immigration school board appointee, Harold Martin, in 2007. Superintendent Farley specifically mentioned the efforts by this organization to encourage the district to recruit a more ethnically diverse staff. On its website, The Los Amigos Education Committee cites that it believes “education is the cornerstone of a strong, healthy and democratic society” (Los Amigos of Orange County, 2010, n.p.). District leaders have not, however, actively engaged this organization as an ally in its work on behalf of ELs. Without knowing more about the organization’s capacity, it is difficult to predict how beneficial such a partnership might prove for AUHSD’s ELs. At first glance, however, it appears that, with few vocal allies on the board of education, AUHSD leaders would be well served to explore the benefits of working with entities like Los Amigos to garner community support, foster greater understanding of its parent base, and publicize EL needs and successes more broadly.

*Developing a Shared Vision of Instructional Quality*

District efforts to develop a shared vision of instructional quality constitute the core of its work. This district role is illustrated in Figure 15. One could argue that no matter how well a district designs and implements each of the other four district roles, without a sound, shared vision of instructional quality, success will be elusive. Both the literature on successful districts and that on effective EL practices shed substantial light on this role. The rubric merging district roles and EL practices identifies eight key areas of focus within this role:

1. Establishing clear goals for increasing achievement and a sound plan for implementation;
DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

District vision for ELs incorporates clear goals for student success and expectations for instructional quality

- Attend to all aspects of schooling from school culture to curriculum to instruction in its vision for EL reform
- Communicate expectations that ELs are capable of meeting the same education standards as all students
- Understand and apply current research-based practices and materials in the education of ELs
- Clarify expectations about what quality instruction for ELs looks like
- Establish clear “opportunity” and “outcome” goals for ELs
- Consider such factors as the length of time in United States and English proficiency levels in determining EL outcomes

District leaders make EL students the focus and responsibility of the entire district and entire school staffs

- Consistently communicate urgency for change on behalf of ELs to stakeholders at all levels of the district
- Build commitment to reform on behalf of ELS through strategic planning that includes a broad range of internal stakeholders
- Incorporate vision for ELs into the district’s overall strategic plan and key district documents
- Rely on professional development to cultivate in all staff a shared vision of teaching and learning for ELs
- Foster collaboration on behalf of ELs among central-office, as well as, among school staff
- Establish system-wide mechanisms to respond to EL needs, including frequent interactions, two-way communication, and mutual problem-solving opportunities between district and school staff

District vision for ELs is based on a common curricular framework that reflects the district vision and is aligned with state standards and assessments

- Curricula for ELs are common across schools
- Curricula for ELs are rigorous, college-preparatory, standards-based, and relevant
- Curricula make meaningful connections across content areas
- Curricula incorporate an explicit focus on building academic literacy in all subject areas and strong, articulated language development supports
- Curricula include EL-appropriate (culturally relevant, engaging) grade-level materials in all subject areas
- Curriculum pacing guides are responsive to EL learning needs, allowing flexibility to adjust instruction
- Curricula reflect input by both content-area and language development staff in the areas of planning, development, implementation, scaffolding

Figure 15. Rubric showing district role in developing a shared vision of instructional quality for ELs (figure continues).
DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

The district’s vision of instructional quality includes supporting the use of common instructional approaches among teachers to meet the academic needs of ELs

- Teachers must employ comprehensive instructional frameworks to guide the planning and delivery of lessons that meet EL needs
- Teachers consistently communicate high expectations for EL students
- Teachers use deep knowledge about who their students are to differentiate instruction in teaching the standards
- Teachers make connections with EL students’ personal lives (background knowledge, interests, and experiences)
- Teachers deliver comprehensible input by relying on scaffolding techniques, modeling, visual aides, and technology
- Teachers employ techniques that involve students in problem-solving and higher-order thinking
- Teachers provide opportunities for student practice and application of concepts
- Teachers rely on interactive teaching, particularly structured-group activities, to engage students in learning
- Teachers check regularly for student comprehension and provide feedback to students through formal and informal assessment
- Teachers regularly integrate content and academic literacy into their instruction
- Teachers focus on the development of academic vocabulary specific to their content areas
- Teachers provide direct explicit instruction of academic vocabulary skills and knowledge, focusing closely on all four components of literacy (speaking, writing, reading, and listening skills) as they relate to the respective content areas

District vision includes coherent language development programs characterized by consistency of approach

- District clarifies the goals of its EL language programs: transition to English, bilingualism, maintenance of primary language
- Language development programs are rooted in sound theory and research-based practices
- Student participation in language development programs is consistent and sustained
- Language development programs are aligned with state standards and the mainstream literacy program and rely on appropriate grade-level curricula
- Language development programs address themes and develop skills that make connections with mainstream content areas
- Language development programs focus all language modalities (speaking, listening, reading, and writing)
- ELs are offered opportunities to build primary language skills and/or draw upon knowledge of their first language
- Students are placed in language development programs based on needs (including educational backgrounds, length of time in country, proficiency levels, primary language literacy)

Figure 15. Continued (figure continues).
### DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

**District vision for instructional quality includes the provision of interventions for struggling students**
- District offers balanced literacy and mathematics interventions to ELs during/beyond school day
- Support classes are focused on acceleration rather than remediation
- District offers opportunities for ELs to overcome gaps in their education, earn credits needed for graduation, and enter and exit support programs when needed

**The district’s vision instructional quality includes building inclusive, supportive environments for ELs**
- District supports schools and teachers in creating inclusive, supportive, safe spaces for learning
- Districts support teachers in cultivating “communities of difference” that value and respect all students, including their primary languages and cultures
- Districts support schools in developing comprehensive support systems for ELs, including counseling, tutoring, financial aid, college preparatory, and study skills programs
- Districts support schools in creating opportunities for ELs to build connections with teachers and other students
- Districts support efforts to encourage ELs to participate in extracurricular activities and leadership opportunities

**District remains focused on sustained implementation of its vision for ELs**
- Leadership makes long-term commitment to achieving its vision of teaching and learning for ELs
- Leadership eschews distractions from its vision
- District’s vision drives its programming and financial decisions

*Figure 15. Continued.*
2. Making EL students the focus and responsibility of the entire district and entire school staffs;
3. Developing a common standards-based, curricular framework;
4. Supporting the use of common instructional approaches;
5. Implementing consistent, coherent language development programs;
6. Making sustained implementation of its vision a priority;
7. Building inclusive, affirming environments for ELs; and
8. Providing interventions for struggling students.

**Establishes Clear Goals for Student Success and Expectations for Instructional Quality**

The rubric suggests that successful EL-oriented districts develop a vision of achievement for these students that encompasses all aspects of schooling, from culture to curriculum and instruction (Bottoms & Fry, 2009). Furthermore, this vision is guided by sound research (Cawelti & Prothero, 2001; Hightower, 2002), clarifies expectations as to what quality instruction for ELs looks like, and establishes clear opportunity and outcome goals and targets for these students based on how long they have been ELs and their English proficiency (Olsen, 2010). To date, AUHSD’s reforms have encompassed a range of aspects of schooling, including building more collaborative school climates, upgrading facilities, enhancing student support services, revamping special education and alternative schooling programs, restructuring departments, investing in technology and career academies, and improving curriculum and instruction, and so forth.

Understandably, movement on all fronts is not uniform, with initiatives in various stages of planning, implementation, or mastery. Nevertheless, AUHSD has genuinely
endeavored to make its reforms comprehensive in scope. Reforms affecting the district’s EL students have been pervasive, extending well beyond the district’s English-language development program.

Dr. Farley and his assistant superintendent for education have brought considerable knowledge of instructional reform and the change process to their work in AUHSD. Several staff members within the EL office described the pair as more supportive of EL-focused reform efforts than any previous administration. Leaders within the EL office have also brought a depth of understanding of EL needs and best-practice research to the reform process. In interviews with this researcher, EL office staff articulated a vision for EL students that encompassed much of what is known about effective EL practice. Reform initiatives across the district draw upon such research-based strategies as AVID, Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English, Response-to-Intervention, and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), among others.

Researchers studying districts that are succeeding with ELs have found that, in many of these districts, EL reform is often couched within larger reform efforts (Horwitz et al., 2009). In fact, some researchers have maintained that ELs benefit the most from reforms that advance learning for all students (Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000). Anaheim Union High School District’s reforms have not focused specifically on ELs, but rather on all students. Given the lack of coherence in instructional quality across the district at the time of Dr. Farley’s arrival, one could argue that AUHSD first needed broad-based reform efforts in order to establish the foundation upon which a more explicit instructional vision for ELs could be built.
Embedded within the larger reform efforts are many initiatives that are responsive to EL needs, including a focus on rigor, intensive literacy, and academic language. Indeed, many of the district’s efforts were implemented with ELs in mind. In describing the AUHSD’s focus on more effective lesson delivery, Dr. Farley mentioned specifically the EL student whose academic language skills are weak. According to Farley, “The development of language, no matter what the subject area of content language or other language, is an integral part of every lesson even if it isn’t an English class.” He described the district’s push for rigor in all classes, in part, as a response to EL students who had frequently been tracked into low-level classes. Other reform initiatives that have had a particularly powerful impact on ELs have included the restructuring of the alternative education program into which large numbers of ELs formerly flowed.

The AUHSD vision of instructional quality has concentrated primarily on “what will be taught”—the development of a rigorous curriculum. District leaders have worked to ensure that mainstream, sheltered content, and ELD classes are aligned with standards and taught at rigorous levels. The district has created special classes focused on academic language geared primarily, although not solely, to long-term ELs. The district’s professional development initiative has been designed to focus on ensuring that content, context, and language be taught across the curriculum. One area of concern reported by teachers regarding what is taught centers on the district’s emphasis on teaching the essential standards. This decision has resulted in the creation of classes that are designed to focus solely on the essential standards, while other classes go beyond these key standards. Teachers shared that, although students taking classes addressing essential standards are better prepared for tests, this focus fails to provide them with a solid enough
foundation for the future. District leaders meanwhile insist that focusing on the essential standards enables teachers to ensure greater depth of learning instead of covering many topics poorly. Considering that the majority of students taking “essential standards” only classes in AUHSD are ELs, this discussion requires greater attention.

A vision for the “how” of teaching and learning has only more recently become a focus of district efforts. Significantly, district leaders’ vision for instructional practice within the classroom has been centered around the lesson delivery model based on SIOP, an instructional framework designed with EL needs in mind. According to district leaders, this facet of the vision will evolve primarily through its Lesson Design Specialist (LDS) initiative. Recent steps by the central office to establish clear operational assumptions regarding what constitutes accepted practice in the classroom is a positive sign that the “how” component of the vision is indeed materializing. District leaders were intentional in their efforts to focus on the “what content would be taught” before concentrating on “how content would be taught.” Nevertheless, the fact that the emphasis on instructional practice in the classroom has been slow in coming may account for the perception by many that a district vision was lacking.

Regarding district expectations for what quality teaching and learning for ELs looks like, leaders within the EL office have long had clear expectations and high standards for quality instruction within the ELD program. However, the majority of the district’s ELs take mainstream courses, so to maximize impact, the district’s vision of what quality EL instruction must be communicated to general education class teachers. Although leaders within the EL office appear to have a profound understanding of what this should look like, the vision is not conveyed across the district as a vision for ELs
specifically. Indeed, rather than articulate a vision of quality instruction specifically for ELs in the mainstream, district leaders at the highest levels are intent upon transforming instruction for all mainstream students in ways that they believe will simultaneously benefit ELs and other struggling students. This strategy appears to coincide with their conviction that both of these student groups suffer from similar deficiencies in academic language. It may also represent a more palatable way to introduce change to mainstream, content-area teachers who continue to resist the notion that they must also be language and literacy teachers. Moreover, the approach enables the district’s work with ELs to remain under the radar of its conservative board of education.

Thus, when one inquires as to the district’s vision of quality instruction for ELs, there are usually two responses from within the central office: the response from those within the EL office who offer a deep understanding of EL needs and focus solely on the EL student and the response from top district leaders outside the EL office who are pushing a vision of quality instruction for all students. The fact that the vision has never been conveyed solely as a vision for ELs may explain in part why many site-level leaders and teachers could not readily articulate such a vision. Although many could identify the challenges facing EL students, most were unable to describe a district-wide vision of quality instruction for these students. To a great extent, many of those interviewed at the school sites believed that the needs of these students were not different from those of other struggling students.

The research on successful districts establishes the value of having a strong vision of student success and instructional quality to catalyze change, sharpen focus, and guide practice (Supovitz, 2006). In AUHSD, central office leaders are deeply knowledgeable
and thoughtful concerning the content of this vision of success. Nevertheless, it is not evident that their ideas have been articulated in ways that are truly comprehensible and meaningful to those at the site level. It is also not apparent that site-leaders and teacher leaders have been deeply engaged in the collaborative brainwork behind the vision such that they see the big picture. When this does not occur, leaders risk having the vision reduced to its barest bones—to a target or two—to increasing a test score or meeting AYP.

The research on the education of ELs is replete with discussion of points of differentiation between children who are learning in a second language and those who are not. Although there are areas of considerable overlap in quality teaching and learning for these two groups of students, the challenges facing ELs are distinct (Harper & de Jong, 2004; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Even within the EL subgroup, the challenges facing long-term ELs differ from those confronting newly arrived ELs (Olsen, 2010). These differences merit differentiated attention. Indeed, the final definition of success for all students may be similar, but the process of getting there is sufficiently different to necessitate unique, albeit interconnected, visions for each group. A powerful vision of instructional quality for ELs creates opportunities for deep reflection about these students’ needs and subsequent refinement of practice. It stimulates laser-like focus and discussion about varying needs within the EL population (e.g., long-term, mainstreamed ELs). Meanwhile, school systems without a clear vision for ELs run the risk of reinforcing old notions that ELs are only those students served in the structured ELD classes. Similarly, educators who do not distinguish between the needs of ELs and other struggling students understandably see little value in collecting and studying
disaggregated data on performance. Anaheim Union High School District’s top leaders appear to have trod cautiously with respect to ELs, meticulously planting seeds of change in the name of all students under the radar of the school board. Their strategy of championing a vision for all students that did not address ELs specifically, effectively limited their opportunities to keep a broad range of stakeholders perpetually mindful of the urgent needs of these students and to support the efforts of those within the EL office to build greater understanding on the part of teachers about EL students and their needs. A powerful vision for ELs might also have served the purpose of generating support within the broader change-resistant political climate.

Successful EL-oriented districts incorporate clear opportunity and outcome goals into their vision for EL students. Researchers Gándara and Rumberger (2006) described proficiency in English and academic content as minimum goals for ELs. Promise Initiative designers offered a much broader vision for ELs that combined both outcome goals, “bilingualism, biliteracy, and multiculturalism,” and process goals, education that “systemically uses ELs’ languages, cultures, experiences, and skills as foundation for their learning and success” (Olsen et al., 2010, p. 1). Although goals of this nature are far more ambitious than those currently pursued by most districts elsewhere in the country, they are firmly rooted in the research on best practices for ELs.

Anaheim Union High School District’s goals are focused primarily on outcomes and, in this era of accountability, the bottom line has increasingly become the standardized test. More specifically, AUHSD is focused on academic mastery and English proficiency. Indeed, many teachers equated the district vision for ELs with higher scores on assessments. In addition to a focus on test scores, teachers also reported
pressure to achieve such goals as “no more Fs.” According to one frustrated teacher, “How you get there is not being explained to us.” The focus on outcome goals thus appears not only to have narrowed the vision in the eyes of these stakeholders but also to have raised their concerns about their role in, and capacity for, change. For some, this narrow goal did not genuinely reflect student progress or teacher efforts on behalf of these students. Moreover, in the absence of a more complete picture of how such a goal might be achieved, many of those at the classroom level were conducting business as usual.

Sims and Sims (2004) suggested that leaders who focus on one source of outcome measure ignore a number of other developments that need to occur and should be measured along the way. Much of the work being pursued within AUHSD will involve deep changes in the way teachers teach and students engage in learning, yet district documents and conversations with stakeholders at all levels do not reveal much focus on interim measures of success. For example, despite expressed desires by the leadership to see greater engagement and motivation on the part of EL students, these types of outcomes were not widely mentioned or monitored. EL attendance was not tracked specifically. There was little evidence of a focus on such quantifiable opportunity goals as targets for EL participation in AVID, Puente, gifted programs, career academies, primary language programs, or advanced math classes. Surprisingly, school leaders did not monitor the extent to which ELs were on track to graduate or complete the “a-g” classes that would make them eligible for admission to California’s public university systems. Many of AUHSD’s RFEPs, who are enjoying academic success, are already participating in these types of programs in numbers roughly corresponding to their
proportions in the school population. Setting comparable goals for ELs may be one way to ensure these students move toward success as well.

Making ELs a Shared Responsibility

According to the rubric, EL-oriented districts cultivate a shared sense of responsibility for the education of ELs by consistently communicating urgency for reform on behalf of ELs and high expectations for their achievement to stakeholders at all levels of the organization (Horwitz et al., 2009; Parrish et al., 2006; Springboard Schools, 2006; T. Williams et al., 2007). They also involve a broad range of stakeholders in vision-setting and planning on behalf of ELs through the exercise of inclusive management styles. English learner-oriented districts broaden responsibility for ELs by fostering collaboration on behalf of these students both within the central office, across school sites, and within schools. They use professional development to advance a shared vision of teaching and learning for these students. Finally, they ensure that the EL vision is reflected in key district documents and establish system-wide communication mechanisms for communicating about and responding to EL needs.

In AUHSD, district leaders have cultivated a shared sense of responsibility for the education of ELs in several of these key ways. District leaders have communicated high expectations for ELs by pushing for rigor across the curriculum in all classrooms for all students. District leaders have worked assiduously to eliminate the nonstandards-based classes in which many ELs often lingered. District leaders have also capitalized on the district’s Program Improvement status to convey the urgent need for all schools to focus on the performance of EL students. In their regular meetings with EL administrators and EL coordinators, EL office leaders have regularly shared data on the performance of these
students. At the school level, all teachers have received the message that ELs are not doing well and that things must improve.

The constant collaborative work among key curriculum specialists and directors within AUHSD’s central office has also expanded responsibility for ELs beyond the EL office. The district team of EL, ELA, literacy, and special education curriculum specialists has worked continuously to ensure that EL needs are considered in planning in each of these areas. According to one specialist, “We try to model [collaboration], not only in our discussions with sites, but in the presentations that we give . . . . We’re there as one.” Much of this collaborative spirit at the central office has, in turn, trickled down to the site level, where ELA, literacy, and special-education teachers are becoming more cognizant of the needs of their EL students. District curriculum specialists have begun to work directly with ELA department leaders to educate them about their role in incorporating language development instruction into mainstream classrooms.

The collaborative structure within the central office does not yet regularly include specialists in such other core subject areas as math, science, or history. As a result, district leaders have noticed that fewer teachers in these disciplines fully appreciate their own role in teaching literacy to ELs. In fact, one specialist shared that now both ELD and ELA teachers have become the targets of comments from teachers in other departments who insist, “It’s your department. You’re supposed to make sure that these kids are up to speed to read my history book or my science book.” The more central office leaders across disciplines engage in the collaborative mind work of reform, the more the teachers they support will share the responsibility for educating ELs.
District leaders have been working separately with ELD teachers to deepen their understanding of ELA standards, as well as with ELA teachers to incorporate language development into their classes. There has, however, been limited regular collaboration between mainstream content-area teachers and ELD teachers, making it more difficult for district leaders to change long-held paradigms that EL students are the sole responsibility of ELD teachers. To date, most of the school-level collaborative work has occurred within departmental teams, which do not generally include ELD teachers. Limited collaboration between ELD and content-area teachers has contributed to situations in which students arrive in ELA classes unprepared for the rigors of the mainstream. Moreover, the lack of collaboration has not created regular opportunities for ELD teachers to weave content vocabulary into their teaching of language or for ELD teachers to serve as resources for content-area teachers in understanding more about how ELs learn language. There is, nonetheless, evidence that district leaders understand the importance of fostering this type of collaboration. According to the EL Program Coordinator, future plans include developing a writing assessment that both ELA and ELD teachers would evaluate together to share thoughts regarding the conventions of language from an ELA point of view and the linguistic pieces from an ELD perspective. The district’s LDS initiative will also create opportunities for ELD and content-area teachers to celebrate through school-based teacher cohorts.

District efforts to engage school leadership teams in developing site plans and school-level departments in developing common assessments have contributed to the cultivation of a more collaborative culture throughout the district. Teachers at all six case-study schools described increasingly collaborative work environments. According
to one curriculum specialist, staff at the school sites are beginning to hear the message from the superintendent on down that they need to work together and share the responsibility for the education of ELs. As collaboration becomes standard practice among teachers, the likelihood that they will share data and strategies concerning their work with ELs students increases. To date, the extent to which this collaboration has focused specifically on ELs has varied across schools. Teachers did not report that they study EL-specific data or focus directly on meeting EL learner needs in their collaborative work. District leaders are hopeful that the work of the LDS coaches will be instrumental in generating conversations within their cohorts about how well the SIOP model is working to enable teachers to reach EL learners. Several LDS coaches have also taken the initiative to use EL-focused data in presentations to all staff. In certain cases, principals have taken the lead by using data to focus teacher teams on EL-specific conversations.

In a clear manifestation of the overlapping nature of district roles, district leaders have also expanded responsibility for the education of EL students beyond ELD teachers through professional development programs. Anaheim Union High School District’s LDS teacher-coaching model involves creating school-level cohorts of mostly mainstream teachers from various disciplines to learn new lesson delivery strategies. Although the district has not defined the LDS initiative as an EL-only initiative, teachers participating in each cohort will focus on implementing instructional practices originally designed to meet the needs of EL students in content-area classes. They are expected to learn and dialogue with one another about appropriate strategies for making input comprehensible and incorporating language objectives into every lesson, among other
practices. Regular collaboration among LDS coaches themselves, many of whom are also mainstream teachers, is a feature of the initiative that expands responsibility for ELs across the district.

Expansion of the responsibility for the education of ELs has also occurred as a result of district efforts to decentralize planning and train principals to monitor the work of their LDS specialists. Charging principals with the development of school-site plans that attend to the needs of all students, including EL needs, has helped to make them part of the visioning on behalf of ELs and, according to district leaders, made them integrally responsible for implementing and monitoring interventions on behalf of these students. Additionally, district leaders have recognized the importance of building principal capacity to recognize quality instruction in the classroom and to look for evidence of proper implementation of the SIOP model in particular.

Unfortunately for ELs, AUHSD leaders have done little to involve stakeholders in developing a shared vision of EL student success and within that broad vision a more specific vision of instructional quality for these students. One teacher-leader summarized the situation succinctly as follows, “In terms of whether we are walking the walk and talking the talk because there is an explicit vision that is being communicated and reinforced, we’re not there.” One central office leader suggested that the vision may be evolving in different meetings with different groups of decision-makers. She remarked, however, that it is not “until you get out there and really start talking to people” that you discover the message has changed by the time it reaches the classroom.

According to the rubric, shared responsibility for ELs can also be promoted by capturing the vision for these students in key district documents that formally establish
the work on behalf of ELs as a district-wide priority (Olsen et al., 2010). Anaheim Union High School District leaders are, in fact, beginning to assemble a variety of district documents that embody aspects of their vision of instructional quality for all students and for EL students, specifically. These include, among others, the overall strategic plan, documents associated with the LDS program identifying the components of strong lesson delivery, the Title III Year 2 Local Educational Agency Improvement Plan, the EL Masterplan, and individual school-site plans. No single document, however, embodies a complete vision of student success and instructional quality. Moreover, it was not readily apparent that the documents are widely disseminated. Although district leaders reported that they “vision and re-vision” often, the existence of a strategic plan was seldom referenced by central office or school site personnel as guiding their work with students generally or ELs in particular. Moreover, several key district leaders did not have current copies of the strategic plan. The updating of the EL Masterplan to reflect changes in policy had just begun only in the summer of 2010. It was not entirely clear, in all cases, whether these documents served as living documents that genuinely guided decision-making and practice or instead constituted more shallow exercises designed to satisfy requirements rather than to inform work.

Successful districts have relied upon established mechanisms for supporting and monitoring the implementation of district goals to ensure that responsibility for ELs was widely shared. These districts relied upon frequent interactions, two-way communication, and mutual problem-solving to foster greater program coherence on behalf of ELs across schools. Anaheim Union High School District leaders have created a number of regular opportunities for school and district personnel to discuss their
implementation of district goals, including regular meetings between central-office
directors and principals, meetings between these directors and EL administrators and
coordinators, and meetings between curriculum specialists and department chairs.
District leaders described most meetings as generally collaborative except where
compliance issues were concerned. In addition to these regular meetings at the district
level, curriculum specialists also spend time conveying their messages at school sites.
Teachers who had the opportunity to work directly with these leaders regularly described
them as helpful and capable, although many remarked that their contact with these leaders
was limited.

Despite these communication mechanisms, a central office leader observed, “I
don’t see a connectedness with everybody knowing where they are in the plan and with
feedback going back to the decision-makers.” District leaders and program managers
are each profoundly engrossed in their slice of the work. Site leaders and teachers are
similarly engaged. All are challenged to understand how their part of the work fits into
the whole. These findings not only reinforce the importance of more regular, stronger
communication loops among stakeholders throughout the district, but they also point to
the need for a more powerful vision. Such a vision would enable leaders to understand
and convey precisely where they are heading and thereby illuminate the path of their
followers.

*Developing a Common Standards-Based, Curricular Framework*

*Common curricular framework.* Effective EL districts ensure that EL students are
afforded the same access to a coherent, rigorous, standards-based curriculum across all
classrooms and grades as other students. Anaheim Union High School District’s vision
of quality instruction for all students has clearly involved ensuring equal access for all students to a common core curriculum aligned with state standards. Middle-school teachers have also become increasingly accustomed to teaching the essential standards. District leaders have shared their belief that focusing on the essential standards will enable teachers the flexibility to differentiate instruction for struggling students like ELs on key standards without feeling compelled to teach all standards.

The establishment of common assessments and pacing guides in core subject areas at the middle-school level represents a key district effort to ensure greater instructional coherence across the system. Teachers have, however, expressed concerns that pacing guides do not afford them the flexibility they need to re-teach concepts to students like ELs who may need extra review. Clearly, AUHSD has more work to do in making certain that pacing guides grant teachers the latitude to adjust instruction to meet EL needs. In their effort to ensure that content is addressed, district leaders must also make certain that learning is occurring. The utility of pacing guides will become increasingly important as teachers begin to implement the various components of SIOP, several of which may initially slow the pace of instruction.

Curricular reform has also involved the adoption of new textbooks that are tailored to EL needs at the middle-school level for its intensive literacy classes. The district has also adopted this same balanced literacy curriculum for its middle-school ELD program. Textbook changes at the high-school level have been slower in coming. Although the district has purchased EL-appropriate supplementary materials for use within the content areas, district leaders describe teacher use of these materials as inconsistent. Given how critical appropriate materials are to making input
comprehensible, it is anticipated that training in this area will be a strong focus of the
district’s LDS initiative.

Efforts by district leaders to build academic literacy across the curriculum are still
in the early stages. District curriculum specialists have begun to work directly with
ELA teachers to educate them about their role in incorporating language development
instruction into mainstream classrooms and particularly in analyzing student writing from
a language development perspective. With respect to other subject areas, district leaders
are looking to the LDS initiative as a primary vehicle for conveying to teachers in all
content areas the importance of academic literacy. A key component of the SIOP model
is the integration of both content and language objectives into every lesson. Other efforts
to integrate literacy into all content areas have been school-initiated, with some schools
building writing assignments to their instructional programs in each of the core subject
areas.

In addition to increasing access to rigorous standards-based classes and academic
literacy skill-building, the district has also taken steps to increase access to such college-
skill-building programs as AVID through increased numbers of AVID classes and
through AVID training for content-area teachers. English learner participation in AVID
has grown over the years, although at 14%, it still falls short of what would constitute
genuinely equitable exposure to this program. The district has also continued its
involvement with the Puente program, yet only 4% of ELs participate in this program.
English learner participation in advanced and specifically in AP classes remains quite
low. Although RFEP and IFEP students take and succeed on advanced placement course
examinations in percentages that exceed their representation in the student population,
ELs are still severely underrepresented in these classes. Given the intense language demands of AP classes, increasing EL participation in AP Spanish classes may be a good place to start.

Perhaps the most significant steps the district can take with respect to the preparation of ELs for college involve tracking more closely the completion of “a-g” classes and establishing systematic ways of reaching EL parents about course selection and postsecondary planning. Other efforts to inculcate a college-going culture among EL students might include offering them opportunities to experience college by taking classes at local community colleges.

**Common instructional approaches.** Anaheim Union High School District’s vision includes the use of common instructional approaches across schools to meet the needs of ELs. This “how” component of the instructional vision is still relatively new. In relying upon the SIOP model of lesson delivery, AUHSD’s LDS initiative is designed to provide all teachers with a comprehensive instructional framework that incorporates many of the features of research-based quality instruction for ELs. Building of background knowledge, delivering comprehensible input, interactive teaching, cognitive skill development, and regular checking for understanding using formative assessments are all components of the model. During the study period for my research, many teachers in the district were not yet aware of the program’s existence.

**Consistent, coherent language development programs.** Successful EL-oriented districts operate coherent language development programs that are characterized by consistency of approach across schools (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006). Their programs have clear goals and are rooted in sound theory and research-based practices.
They are aligned with standards and the mainstream literacy program and rely on grade-level curricula. Strong language development programs focus on developing skills in all four language modalities (Callahan, 2006). They help students make connections with mainstream content areas. Effective EL-districts ensure that student placement in these programs is based upon a deep understanding of their needs. Research indicates that effective districts should consider offering ELs the opportunities to build primary language skills and to draw upon their first language in all areas of learning (Genesee et al., 2006; Goldenberg, 2008).

Anaheim Union High School District’s ELD program satisfies many of these criteria. It is a standards-based sheltered English-instruction model that is designed to provide students with balanced English instruction in all four language modalities. It relies upon a strong middle-school curriculum, although the primary curriculum being used at the high-school level has been described by researchers as both pedagogically and conceptually weak (Walqui et al., 2010). District leaders supplement this curriculum with the well-regarded San Diego County Office of Education’s WRITE Institute’s writing program.

The weakest link in the district’s ELD program occurs when ELs transition into mainstream classes, where the continuing language development instruction to which they are legally entitled does not always occur. Changing this requires training mainstream English teachers. Although budget cuts have made training opportunities less frequent, district leaders have been persistent in their efforts to help ELA teachers become more aware of their need to teach ELD standards. As mentioned earlier, greater linkage between ELD and ELA teachers is an important area to address. Most district efforts
have concentrated on expanding the skill set of ELA teachers to encompass better ELD instruction and understand the CELDT. The research, however, indicates that helping ELD teachers address themes and develop skills that make connections with mainstream content is an important area of investment as well (Walqui, 2000b). According to district leaders, this is occurring more often at the middle-school level, where the curriculum incorporates connections to subject areas, than at the high school level. Leaders also shared a concern that too much focus on ELD instruction might reinforce old notions of ELD teachers as the primary teachers of ELs.

Within the district’s structured English model, the program also offers students strategic native-language support in the form of bi-lingual aides. Despite the strong research on the relationship between primary language development and the acquisition of a second language (August & Hakuta, 1997; August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006), district leaders at the highest levels have not, however, incorporated multi-lingualism into their vision of EL student success. Nevertheless, there have been substantial developments with respect to primary-language development emanating from the EL office. The district’s plans to offer a dual-immersion program at one of its middle schools and the introduction of a seal of bi-literacy to be placed on the diplomas of graduates who have passed tests demonstrating proficiency in more than one language are notable steps in this regard. English learner office leaders have also designed a sequence of primary-language classes, such as Spanish for Spanish Speakers, that can potentially lead to advanced placement classes in Spanish. Unfortunately, the program is offered on a limited basis. Most classes are concentrated in a single middle school. One principal described the native language requirements of these classes as being too demanding for
many ELs to take advantage of the program. As a result, her school offers only a single section. To date, the program has served mostly former English learners. Despite the need for more systematic implementation of these primary-language-related efforts, each one signals progress for ELs. Together, they promise to improve the overall language and literacy development for linguistic minority students, affirm their languages and cultures, and recognize the value of bi-literacy.

In an effort to ensure ELs’ access to classes that will best meet their learning needs, district leaders have also honed their ability to place students appropriately in these classes using a variety of key measures, including, among others, proficiency levels, years as an EL, CST scores, and so forth. There are clear indicators for when students are prepared to move into higher-level ELD classes or the mainstream. Students generally progress through the series of ELD classes in about 3 or 4 years, depending upon the literacy skills they bring to the program initially. District leaders have pushed for students to be assessed each semester to determine their readiness to move to higher-level classes; however, the inflexibility in the master schedule often inhibits student movement.

*Building inclusive, supportive environments.* Inclusive, supportive environments offer EL students safe spaces for learning that accept and value their cultural and linguistic differences, create opportunities for them to connect with teachers and peers, and make comprehensive supports available to them, such as counseling, college planning, and skill-building (Gold, 2006). For designers of the Promise Initiative, building such environments is a critical facet of their vision for quality education for ELs (Olsen et al., 2010).
Limited evidence existed that AUHSD schools and classrooms consistently offered inclusive, supportive environments for ELs. To a great extent, the presence of these attributes appears to be more a function of the individual personalities of principals, teachers, and school staff than the result of a systematic effort by district or school leaders to make such environments a priority. Both classroom observations and remarks by district leaders, principals, and teachers revealed that low-levels of student engagement in the classroom were pervasive. Even as most teachers shared that they cared deeply about, and connected well with students, a few remarked that teachers generally understood little about the communities and homes to which their students returned at the end of the school day. At the same time as one teacher emphasized the importance of teachers’ abilities to understand more deeply the backgrounds of their students, she also admitted that the current demands on teachers’ time probably precluded their doing so.

One principal’s comments touched on the “cultural disconnect”:

I think what keeps some of our staff from going to that next level of really looking at the instruction of ELS—I think a lot of times there is a cultural disconnect where many of us come from neighborhoods where that is not an issue and so we make the assumption that if my kids can learn a certain way, why can’t these kids learn that same way?

Building inclusive, supportive environments was never mentioned as an explicit part of the district strategy for working with ELs. Nevertheless, AUHSD’s efforts to center upon the quality of instruction in the classroom through the LDS initiative are expected to help teachers make better connections to students’ lives by building instruction upon students’ backgrounds and interests. Lesson Design Specialist training also emphasizes interactive learning, scaffolding the unfamiliar by linking new concepts
to student experiences, and the creation of opportunities for soliciting and honoring student input. Each of these components offers room for teachers to center instruction on students’ cultural, family, and community realities.

Anaheim Union High School District’s capacity to build genuinely supportive and inclusive environments will likely depend upon the district’s ability to train, support, and require principals and teachers to create environments that value diversity and foster “communities of difference” that welcome even the most linguistically challenged ELs. In the end, however, teachers must not only have the knowledge and skills to make this happen, but they must also see the value of such an approach. In this regard, the more AUHSD leaders can create opportunities for teachers to understand and empathize with these students, the more teachers may come to appreciate the need for change. Promise Initiative schools worked to deepen faculty understanding by using student videos to expose teachers to student voice and humanize the EL experience for them.

Stronger connections with teachers are integral to the creation of accepting supportive environments for students, generally, and ELs, especially. The literature suggests that connections between ELs and teachers may be particularly important as these students transition from the relatively small, safe learning communities of the ELD program into mainstream classes (Meltzer & Hamann, 2004). Most ELD teachers interviewed for this study reported that they lost all contact with their former EL students once they moved into the mainstream. Not only did this sudden break deny these students a valuable adult connection that may have helped ease the transition, but ELD teachers did not have an opportunity to understand more deeply the challenges these students faced in the mainstream. Creating inclusive, supportive, safe environments for ELs may
require that leaders think more deeply about building into the system such social supports for these students as ongoing connections with ELD teachers.

The district has invested in introducing new counseling models and focusing on special education inclusion efforts, both of which are likely to affect ELs. Anaheim Union High School District leaders have focused on making sure that EL counselors are equipped to place and monitor EL performance, but findings revealed little in terms of system-wide efforts to connect counselors more closely to EL students and their families. Some schools have established advisory periods that allow for more personal contact between teachers and students. One school, working with its LDS, used its EL data to identify students needing teacher mentors. Again, systemic strategies were limited.

Strong connections among ELs, their peers, and the broader school community are critical to an accepting, affirming environment. Given that most of the district’s ELs are in mainstream classes and quite socially adept in English, parents and teachers generally reported that their children were connected to their schools and peers through extracurricular activities in which they appeared to participate at rates similar to those of their English-only peers. Depending upon which school they attend, however, beginning-level ELs are more isolated. At schools with large EL populations (all of the case-study schools), ELs in the ELD program, especially those at the very beginning levels, still spend most of their days classes with other EL learners. Schools with smaller beginning ELD populations often place these students in mainstream classes with bilingual aide support. Although the research indicates that EL students should be as integrated as possible into the mainstream student population (Frattura et al., 2007; Gold, 2006; Parrish et al., 2006; Walqui et al., 2010), until teachers in the mainstream in AUHSD are
equipped to provide beginning ELs with the kind of language-development support they need, this is not a realistic option. Indeed, even beginning ELs who are placed in mainstream classes with aide support feel detached in other ways. One EL parent shared that the placement of her daughter in mainstream classes with aide support entailed its own isolating effects. For the short-term, most beginning ELs may find the transition into the American high school to be initially difficult regardless of their placement.

*Interventions for struggling students.* Successful districts offer opportunities for struggling ELs to overcome gaps in their education and earn credits needed for graduation (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Most importantly, strong intervention programs for EL students are focused on accelerating, not decelerating, their learning (Walqui et al., 2010). For example, as master schedules are reworked to include more rigorous courses, academic supports that enable students to succeed in these environments become increasingly important (Olsen, 2010; Walqui et al., 2010). In this regard, mechanisms like special tutoring for ELs or Saturday programs may be helpful.

Anaheim Union High School District offers struggling students a variety of supports. Although not limited solely to ELs, the district’s programs generally serve large percentages of ELs who are screened based on multiple indicators before placement in these programs. Anaheim Union High School District’s Response-to-Intervention program offers EL students math support and intensive literacy classes. In addition, the district’s English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program was designed to support EL students in the mainstream who are struggling with ELA. Although many district-provided Saturday and summer programs have been discontinued due to budget cuts, schools offer their own homework clubs. At some schools, ELs in the ELD program are
required to attend these clubs. However, this rule does not apply to those in mainstream
classes. The district also offers a ninth-grade academy for students entering the ninth
grade substantially below grade level and will begin piloting its independent study center,
which is focused on students who have left high school early in 2010. The availability of
AVID classes, offered throughout the district, varied by site. Growing numbers of ELs
are participating in these classes, but their numbers are still low.

Interviews with site-level personnel revealed that, despite the fact that many of
these initiatives were mandated by the district, the quality of these programs varies
considerably across school sites. Intensive literacy classes, which receive regular support
and scrutiny by a district curriculum specialist who works closely with teachers, appear to
be more uniform in quality. At the same time, teachers at some schools felt “on their
own” with respect to the EAP program, with no explicit goals, targets, or curriculum in
place to support them. In other instances, as with the ninth-grade academy at one high
school, teacher leaders welcomed the flexibility they were given to design the type of
program they felt would work best at their schools. Overall, these findings point to the
importance of district-wide efforts to ensure that lines of communication with schools
remain open and that regular monitoring of both implementation and outcomes associated
with student interventions occur. In this same vein, sharing lessons learned and successes
across school sites may constitute one clear form of support the district could offer.

*Sustained implementation of the vision.* Successful districts consistently eschew
distractions from their visions and goals. They are willing to make the long-term
commitments necessary to see their visions actualized (Hernandez, 2003; Marzano &
Waters, 2009; Reville, 2007). It is difficult to determine the overall level of commitment
of AUHSD leaders to their reform generally and to ELs specifically. Although there is little question that those within the EL office are passionate and committed to the education of these students, the superintendent has moved on to new challenges, and the school board has yet to make a demonstrable commitment to ELs specifically. Individually committed principals and teachers exist throughout the district, but their capacity to sustain reform on their own is limited. District leaders have placed much of their confidence in the ability of the LDS program to generate substantial changes in teaching and learning across the district, yet they report that budget constraints prevent them from making more than a 2- or 3-year commitment to that effort. The district’s movement on so many fronts, all of which hold some promise for improving the education of ELs, precludes a more surgically deliberative focus on those few areas that are likely to have the greatest impact. In the absence of more powerful allies both outside and within the district galvanized around a clear vision for ELs, the long-term sustainability remains in doubt. There is little question that the district has made many positive strides in the effort to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for ELs. There is even less question that the journey is long and will require many more such strides over time.

Aligning Structures, Processes, and Resources

This particular role refers to the manner in which districts organize, assign, and integrate the work associated with reform. Figure 16 shows that portion of the rubric referring to this district role. Successful districts align structures, processes, and resources in ways that enable them to actualize their reform goals (Rorrer et al., 2008). The research on successful districts and EL practices suggests that there are several
ALIGNING STRUCTURES, PROCESSES, AND RESOURCES

District balances control with school-level autonomy in meeting the needs of their EL populations
- Complements centrally defined bottom line with school-level decision-making in key areas
- Places ultimate responsibility for EL program decisions and compliance issues with the school principal, not ELD teachers
- Ensures that school-wide plans reflect its vision for EL education
- Links vision to school and classroom practices to the district vision through consistent messages, ongoing support from district staff, and clear feedback loops between schools and districts
- Uses clear measures of EL success to evaluate progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial, human, time, material, and social resources are secured and allocated in ways that support district goals of equity of opportunity and outcomes for ELs</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Creatively taps into multiple funding sources to meet EL needs</td>
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<td>• Focuses resources on both former EL and ELs</td>
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<td>• Invests in high-quality professional development and learning opportunities for a broad range of persons who work with ELs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Secures EL-appropriate curricula (language development programs, high-quality, standards-aligned textbooks, etc.), supplementary materials designed for second-language learners, and appropriate assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Funds student support systems (counseling, study skills, intervention classes, parental outreach) to fulfill its vision for ELs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Allocates time and resources for central office staff to support the implementation of its vision</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Deploys resources to increase instructional time for ELs (additional teachers or extended day opportunities)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provides bilingual support personnel and translation services needed to communicate with EL parents and provide primary language training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Channels resources toward building the social capital or relational trust necessary for reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Invests in updating recruitment, facilities, data management systems as needed to fulfill its vision for EL success</td>
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District takes leadership in restructuring/redefining roles of various staff in implementing its plan for ELs
- Entrusts EL office with the decision-making power, oversight authority, and resources to effect meaningful change
- Allocates staff and defines roles in ways that support its vision for ELs

District has clear, streamlined processes for assigning ELs to schools, registering ELs for services, and determining when ELs are ready to exit programs
- Establishes clear criteria for exiting EL programs that ensure that they are able to function with the same full English proficiency as their English-only counterparts
- Establishes flexible pathways for ELs to move into and out of programs based on their learning needs

Figure 16. Rubric showing district role in aligning structures, processes, and resources on behalf of ELs.
specific components to this role: balancing control and autonomy; restructuring and redefining roles; channeling resources; and streamlining processes for serving ELs.

*Balancing control and autonomy.* Successful districts rely upon a delicately balanced combination of both central control and school-level autonomy in meeting the needs of their EL population (Horwitz et al., 2009; Springboard Schools, 2006). As discussed in the Chapter 4 findings, AUHSD leaders at both the central-office and school levels have experienced the backlash and lack of commitment that result when changes are imposed centrally without input from schools. The alternately dotted and solid spokes depicted in the district framework for action (see Figure 1, p. 68) represent the alternating tight and loose coupling in relationships between the key district- and school-level actors in enacting system-wide change. Many AUHSD district strategies reflect a deliberate attempt to combine instructional management with site-based empowerment and flexibility for teachers. Anaheim Union High School District leaders, guided by accountability goals, have clearly increased centralized management of curriculum and instruction. District initiatives, many designed with ELs in mind, guide the development of school-site plans in each of these areas. At the same time, the district has been investing resources in empowering school teams to become more actively engaged in developing their school-site plans such that these initiatives are actualized in ways that make sense for individual schools. This arrangement resembles the “defined autonomy” coined by Marzano and Waters (2009), in which principals are expected to lead within boundaries that are defined by nonnegotiable district goals for achievement and instruction. It is also similar to the “mosaic of loose and tight control” that Massell and Goertz (1999, p. 13) found in many of their study districts. Anaheim Union High School
District leaders reported that, as a result of decentralized planning, principals have assumed greater responsibility for meeting the needs of their ELs.

In light of the vastly different challenges facing distinct schools, Dr. Farley emphasized the need for the vision to vary from school to school. He also balanced his desire for principals to move forward with deliberate speed with the need to respect and work within the existing school cultures. The district push to establish common assessments has involved teachers in developing these tools, a process that simultaneously builds ownership and creates opportunities for teachers to reflect collaboratively on what they teach. Several key district initiatives have granted schools the flexibility to allow teachers to opt in over time. Most notable among these is the LDS initiative.

According to the rubric, balanced autonomy works best when the district has strong information feedback loops, sends clear and consistent messages about its overall expectations for changes, provides ongoing support in implementing changes, and uses clear measures of success to evaluate progress. In each of these areas, AUHSD has more work to do. The arrows in the wheel diagram signify the continuous flow of information and ideas from district to school to classroom and vice-versa that must occur for deep, pervasive change to occur. Interview participants at all levels of AUHSD referred to weak feedback loops. Teachers expressed frustration about a lack of guidance in how to attain desired goals. Teacher-leaders wanted more opportunities to engage with the district in planning. Although district support in implementing initiatives was forthcoming through the LDS initiative and central office curriculum specialists, these investments have yet to touch large numbers of teachers. Despite the existence of long-
term measures of success in district and school-site plans, there appear to be limited interim targets and evaluations of the impact of various initiatives, leaving the district with little valuable feedback in those areas where it has granted the most autonomy. Clearly, AUHSD’s challenge involves building more systematic opportunities for feedback, message-sharing, and support. Fostering these types of connections will also go a long way toward building the relational trust among stakeholders needed for reform. Researchers have noted that districts rich in human and social capital were the most successful at implementing reform (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Spillane & Thompson, 1997). Additional investments in building relational trust among the adults charged with implementing reform are likely to be needed in AUHSD as well. In this regard, Dr. Farley’s administration has had to work to overcome the disadvantage of being an outsider to the Anaheim family, a tight-knit community that frequently associated longevity in the district with credibility. He and his top leaders’ persistent focus on changing “old” ways of doing things have not always been met with equanimity.

_Restructuring and redefining roles._ A second feature of the district’s role in aligning structures, processes, and resources relates to its leadership in restructuring and redefining roles in ways that support the implementation of its reforms on behalf of ELs. Specifically, districts enjoying a degree of success with EL students have entrusted the EL office with the decision-making power, oversight authority, and resources to effect meaningful change (Horwitz et al., 2009). Anaheim Union High School District’s physical relocation of the EL office into the heart of the education division has been helpful in keeping ELs in the forefront. The EL program coordinator is a respected and integral player in the decision-making apparatus within the central office and is
frequently on the front lines in working with principals. She has control over substantial
categorical resources, which are allocated in ways that support a broad, long-term vision
of improvement for all ELs. The EL curriculum specialist, intent on keeping decision-
makers mindful of EL needs, is deeply collaborative with central office curriculum
specialists in ELA, literacy, and special education.

The influence of the EL Office is limited, however, in that these leaders do not
make the ultimate decisions about district direction, nor do they command the same
attention outside and within the district as do its top leaders. The visions of those within
the EL office are powerful, but they compete with other district priorities over which
they have little authority. As mentioned previously, the fact that, as a result of budget
tightening, the EL program coordinator has come to wear many hats is a mixed blessing.
Her multiple responsibilities have enabled her to keep EL needs in the forefront in a
number of key areas. On the other hand, she has limited time to oversee the kind of
comprehensive change she believes is needed for EL students in the district. Finally, not
unlike other EL coordinators, she must constantly balance her often-competing roles as
a compliance monitor for the EL categorical programs, collaborative team player, and
social-justice change agent.

Anaheim Union High School District’s recent decision to create a new
instructional analyst position stands as an important example of district efforts to assign
and allocate staff in ways that support reform work. This new position is critical to
AUHSD’s efforts to ensure that the increasingly high-quality data it is producing are
understood and applied at the classroom level. It comes at an important juncture in the
work of the LDS coaches who are working with teachers to change instructional
practices. As teachers are urged to design more differentiated, interactive lessons, they will need to know how to use data to group students appropriately within the classroom. They will also increasingly rely upon data in their formative assessment of students. The district is also in need of personnel who are capable of regularly evaluating the impact of its various initiatives on ELs and other subgroups. These data will not only help change perceptions about EL capacities but may prompt more teachers to pursue change as well.

Channeling resources. According to the rubric, another critical aspect of the district role in aligning structures, processes, and resources entails securing and channeling a range of human, financial, time, material, and social resources in ways that support district goals of equity in opportunities and outcomes for ELs (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Anaheim Union High School District’s investments have been spread broadly over a range of areas that ultimately impact ELs. These include investments in data management systems, facilities upgrades, curricula, professional development, career academies, and instructional and social supports for struggling students.

In their conceptual framework, Gándara and Rumberger (2006) demonstrated that resource needs vary depending upon the learning goals established for EL students. Goals that encompass bi-literacy and a variety of noncognitive outcomes, in addition to academic and English acquisition outcomes, will likely require a different set of resources than goals focused solely on English acquisition and academic proficiency. These researchers also recommended that the needs of RFEP students be considered in districts’ allocations of resources for ELs, since many of these students continue to face considerable barriers to their educational progress. Additionally, other researchers have suggested that adequately meeting the needs of long-term English learners will likely
require different types and quantities of resources than meeting those of beginning ELs (Olsen, 2010).

Overall, AUHSD investments appear to support basic outcome goals associated with supporting ELs to obtain English fluency and academic proficiency. These investments have been spread over a range of areas, including new curricula, professional development, support interventions, additional instructional time, and data management, among others. In AUHSD, as in other California districts, financial cutbacks have limited the extent and time available for professional development, forcing district leaders to be creative in tapping and stretching resources. Anaheim Union High School District has invested in professional development designed to deepen the skills of both principals and teachers in working with ELs. Significantly, its primary EL-related investment, the LDS, will address time constraints by providing teachers with in-service, site-based support in the form of a part-time teacher coach.

Anaheim Union High School District investments in additional instructional time have benefited ELs disproportionately. The capped enrollment in EAP, ELD, intensive literacy, and math support classes effectively provides ELs with more instructional support from teachers. Ninth-grade academies, which effectively provide students with an extra instructional year, have also been established at high schools with high concentrations of ELs. Schools with large concentrations of ELs also receive extra instructional support in the form of bi-lingual aides. Other investments that are likely to have a relatively strong impact on ELs include the development of the district’s Career Technical Education Program, offered at high schools throughout the district in part to
increase student engagement in learning, and the independent study center pilot, which will be located at the district high school with the highest concentration of EL students.

*Streamlined processes.* English learner-oriented districts establish streamlined processes for identifying ELs for services, placing them in classes, and moving them through the program (Horwitz et al., 2009; Walqui et al., 2010). Creating streamlined processes that ensure that EL students be placed into the most rigorous classrooms in which they can be successful has been an important aspect of reform work in AUHSD. Specifically, the LAC has continually reexamined and strengthened the criteria used to determine appropriate placements. The EL office has centralized the initial identification process; regularly considers multiple measures in placing students in ELD classes; and monitors students regularly to determine whether they are prepared to move to higher-level ELD classes or into the mainstream. Students generally spend 1 year at each level of the program, depending upon their primary language skills. Students are assessed every quarter and at semester intervals using benchmark assessments in ELA and math. Twice yearly, teachers, counselors, and administrators review students’ “Movement through Program” forms to recommend placement. These forms include data on multiple measures. English Language Development and ELA teacher recommendations are considered as well. Students are permitted to transition into new ELD levels at any point during the school year based on multiple criteria, including teacher recommendations. Unfortunately, ELs ready for higher levels are sometimes unable to move into these classes because of master schedule limitations. In this regard, the district might consider supporting schools in developing more flexible scheduling approaches that facilitate students’ movement through the program as they progress. Additionally, through
growing RTI strategies, district leaders have supported sites in quickly identifying student learning needs based upon multiple measures and accordingly providing students with appropriate supports. Demonstrating a growing appreciation for the distinct needs of the long-term EL, district leaders also consider years as an EL in placing and monitoring students in specific interventions.

A final aspect of district efforts to place students in the appropriate programs and classes involves the district responsibility for ensuring that schools have access to data showing whether supports are having the desired impact. This provides yet another example of the interdependent nature of district roles. The role of the district in monitoring progress and supporting schools in using data to inform the change process on behalf of ELs is addressed in a subsequent section. Although AUHSD has made considerable progress in this area, there are still concerns about how systematically data on the impact of interventions on ELs specifically are produced, disseminated, and used.

**Ensuring Reciprocal Accountability**

Reciprocal accountability refers to districts’ responsibilities for equipping people with the tools they need to actualize the district-wide vision and goals. Figure 17 shows that portion of the rubric pertaining to the district’s role in ensuring accountability. Districts intent upon holding schools and teachers accountable for improving EL achievement must provide them with guidance, support, and resources required to do this important work. In the case of EL-oriented districts, reciprocal accountability encompasses districts’ investments in the training, recruitment, and incentives designed to build a professional culture focused on EL teaching and learning.
### Ensuring Reciprocal Accountability

**District has a coherent, comprehensive, ongoing professional development program focused on cultivating the skills, understanding, and strategies needed to translate the district’s vision for ELs into practice**

- Programs are grounded in research and make access to EL-related research a priority
- Programs target staff at all levels (principals, vice principals, teachers, counselors, etc.)
- Programs rely on an ongoing, coaching model and job-embedded practice tailored to address individual instructional needs
- Programs include opportunities for systematic professional collaboration to reflect on practice regarding ELs, as well as opportunities to participate in decision-making about the quality and direction of professional development
- Programs are monitored to ensure that they are effectively implemented and support reform goals for student achievement

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**District-supported professional development for administrators that is focused on supporting them in:**

- Becoming more knowledgeable about the research on effective practices for educating ELs
- Increasing their ability to access, interpret, and use data to inform the instructions of ELs
- Making informed choices about the best programs and pedagogical practices for meeting various EL needs
- Practicing distributed leadership on behalf of ELs
- Honing their abilities to identify and support effective instructional practice
- Demonstrating the political will and capacity to identify and address challenges to accomplishing their visions for ELs

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**District-supported professional development for ELD teachers that is focused on supporting them in:**

- Acquiring a deep understanding of the language development model they are teaching and the relevant research-based practices
- Using both qualitative and quantitative data about their EL students to design and deliver differentiated, engaging, and challenging instruction
- Teaching a rigorous curriculum that is aligned to both the state ELD and ELA standards
- Checking regularly for student comprehension using a variety of formative assessments, both formal and informal
- Adopting and using content (textbooks and supplemental materials) that accelerate EL learning
- Addressing themes and making connections with mainstream content areas
- Developing students’ skills in all language modalities (speaking, listening, reading, and writing)
- Creating opportunities for students to build primary-language skills and/or draw upon the knowledge of their first language
- Collaborating with content-area teachers
- Leading others in pursuing change on behalf of ELs

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*Figure 17. Rubric showing district role in ensuring reciprocal accountability in its efforts on behalf of ELs (figure continues).*
### ENSURING RECIPROCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

District-supported professional development for content teachers that is focused on supporting them in:

- Obtaining appropriate certification to teach ELs
- Employing comprehensive instructional frameworks to guide the planning and delivery of lessons that meet EL needs
- Communicating high expectations for EL students
- Using both qualitative and quantitative data about their EL students to design and deliver differentiated, engaging, and challenging instruction
- Developing a deep understanding of the language-acquisition process, including the role of language in instruction, the interplay of first- and second-language acquisition, and the signs of normal second-language development
- Consistently embedding academic literacy into their content-specific instruction
- Making connections with EL students’ personal lives (background knowledge, interests, and experiences)
- Delivering comprehensible input by relying on scaffolding techniques, modeling, visual aides, and technology
- Employing techniques that involve students in problem-solving and higher-order thinking
- Providing ample opportunities for student practice and application of concepts
- Practicing interactive teaching, particularly structured group activities, to engage students in learning
- Checking regularly for student comprehension using a variety of formative assessments, both formal and informal, and modifying instruction accordingly and understanding the implications of language proficiency on assessment results and classroom performance
- Adapting and using content (textbooks and supplemental materials) in ways that increase EL students’ access and still ensure that they are able to meet rigorous academic standards
- Using strategies to build relationships with families in ways that connect them to students’ learning
- Creating inclusive classrooms that value and respect the cultural and linguistic diversity of students and create equitable opportunities for their engagement in the learning process
- Collaborating with ELD teachers
- Leading others in pursuing change on behalf of ELs

*Figure 17. Continued.*
Coherent, comprehensive professional development. According to the rubric, effective districts rely upon coherent, comprehensive, ongoing professional development programs focused on cultivating the skills, understanding, and strategies needed to translate the district’s vision for ELs into practice (Walqui et al., 2010). Their programs are grounded in solid research and target staff at all levels, including administrators and teachers alike (Bottoms & Fry, 2009). They rely on on-going job-embedded practice, which is particularly critical for teachers whose levels of understanding and needs regarding the instruction of ELs may vary widely (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010c). Highly contextualized professional development also provides teachers with opportunities for hands-on experiences in engaging and instructing EL students in their specific content areas (Walqui et al., 2010). Strong professional development programs provide opportunities for teacher collaboration about best practices in EL teaching and feedback on their own professional development (Olsen, 2010). Finally, effective districts monitor their professional development investments to ensure that practices are implemented faithfully and reform goals for student achievement are achieved (Desimoine et al., 2002; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Horwitz et al., 2009; Supovitz, 2006).

As mentioned in a previous section, financial tightening has curtailed the district’s professional development investments over the past few years. The superintendent lamented the reduction in professional development for administrators, while curriculum specialists remarked that limited resources have forced them to squeeze training into early start days. Both district leaders and site administrators are well aware of how critical professional development is to building the teacher capacity required to meet the needs of
their EL students. These leaders also value professional development as an important tool for transforming district culture.

Anaheim Union High School District’s most prominent professional development initiative is the LDS program, which is a recent undertaking whose development was precipitated largely as a result of the district’s Program Improvement status. In many respects, the LDS program encompasses features of high-quality professional development recommended in both the literature on districts as well as in that on effective EL practices. Lesson Design Specialist coaches will be able to offer ongoing job-embedded professional development tailored to the individual needs of their cohorts. Significantly, LDS coaches have observed that their ability to be responsive to individual teacher needs has been essential to maintaining teacher interest in the initiative. The initiative also offers the opportunity to foster the kind of collaborative professional development among cohort members that builds shared ownership and strengthens practice. Already, LDS coaches themselves have engaged in powerful district-wide discussions about changes in teacher practice. Given that the initiative is largely teacher-driven, there are ample opportunities for teacher input into its development and evolution—an important aspect of securing buy-in to the change process. The initiative also focuses on changing practice as a precursor to changing beliefs. By targeting those teachers who are eager and open to change, district leaders are anticipating that early implementers will change their beliefs about teaching and entice others to experiment with change as well. Finally, as a broad framework for instruction that encompasses eight key elements and 30 features, the LDS offers teachers fairly comprehensive professional development. In those areas where the model is more limited, oral language
development, understanding language acquisition, and data use, for example, district leaders must compensate.

Successful districts implement mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of their professional development investments (McLaughlin & Tabert, 2003). Discussions with AUHSD central office administrators revealed that they intend to monitor both changes in teacher practice as well as changes in student achievement that have occurred as a result of the LDS program. District leaders did not indicate whether these data will be disaggregated to determine specific impact on ELs. Generating and disseminating data that show success with these students, in particular, is likely to be highly instructive as leaders seek to refine and expand their efforts. District leaders have, however, remained vague in their discussions of monitoring efforts, causing some concern among LDS coaches. Most anticipate that achievement outcome measures will consist of standardized test scores, but, in the early months, many were not certain about interim goals or targets for which they would be held accountable. Given the well-documented imprecision of standardized tests in measuring EL performance, a district decision to rely upon them as a sole indicator of progress may underestimate the impact and value of the teaching practices it hopes to promote. In the interim, continual refinement of the LDS strategy will require that formative findings regarding that which is working in certain schools and classrooms be cycled back regularly to decision-makers.

Professional development for administrators. Genuine systemic reform involves the development of leadership at multiple levels of the organization. The research on effective districts specifically stresses the vital importance to district reform efforts of investments in training school-site administrators (Bottoms & Fry, 2009; Childress et al.,
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2006; Elmore & Burney, 1997; Hightower, 2002; Reville, 2007; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). The research on best practices for ELs, in turn, suggests several areas of focus for this training. School administrators who are knowledgeable about the research on effective practices for ELs are better equipped to make informed choices about EL curriculum and instruction at their sites (Walqui et al., 2010). They are capable of identifying and supporting effective EL instruction in the classroom. Districts intent upon enacting pervasive reform on behalf of ELs cultivate school leaders who are comfortable practicing distributive leadership, thereby ensuring that innovations do not become solely dependent upon their direction (Dell-Olio, 2010; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). Effective EL-oriented principals are comfortable engaging stakeholders at their sites in reflection about that which is working and needed at their sites with respect to the education of ELs (Parrish et al., 2006; Springboard Schools, 2006; T. Williams et al., 2007). They are able to access, interpret, and use data in ways that inform the instruction of these students (Horwitz et al., 2010; T. Williams et al., 2007). Finally, districts committed to reform on behalf of ELs help instill in their school leaders the political will and capacity to identify and accomplish their vision on behalf of ELs (Cloud et al., 2000; Horwitz et al., 2009). They further encourage and support the risk-taking often associated with constructive change (Frattura & Capper, 2007; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003).

Throughout Farley’s administration the district has invested resources to help AUHSD’s principals become genuine instructional leaders. As a result of top district leaders’ focus on instruction, principals’ meetings have increasingly concentrated on instructional matters and less on administrative concerns. The district has also funded
efforts to develop school leadership teams, an opportunity principals viewed as critical to building shared ownership of change efforts.

With respect to ELs, principals have participated in SIOP trainings associated with the LDS initiative. They have been included in walk-throughs with outside consultants designed to monitor effective SIOP-like instruction. Interviews with principals conducted during the first months of the SIOP initiative revealed uncertainty on the part of some principals about their understanding of, and role in, the LDS program. The LDS coaches interviewed all described their principals as supportive of their work, although some were more active supporters of the initiative than others. One principal readily used his discretionary funding to purchase books for his school’s entire cohort. Another principal was particularly proactive in sharing EL-related data with his staff and making recommendations regarding the strongest teacher team to participate in the LDS cohort. This principal, once an EL himself, understood profoundly EL needs and was intimately familiar with EL communities. Intent upon making ELs the responsibility of the entire school, he was comfortable serving as a proactive force on his campus for such change. He worked strategically to increase accountability for the progress of ELs by investing in primary language classes, advocating for dual immersion programs, focusing collaborative work on EL data, and building the leadership skills of EL parents. In fact, no other principal interviewed for this research appeared to assume the responsibility for moving the change process on behalf of ELs with the same level of commitment.

Perhaps the weakest links in AUHSD’s strategy for building principal leadership are its limited efforts to build political will for change on behalf of ELs. The knowledge base and sense of urgency surrounding EL needs was not uniformly present in all site
leaders. In fact, it was not clear that all site leaders equally appreciated the magnitude of the change required to transform long-held beliefs by teachers regarding their expectations for ELs and their openness to new practices. A few principals suggested that EL needs were similar to those of other struggling students and equated appropriate instruction for ELs as “good teaching” generally. Given the district’s focus on all students and its own messages that the needs of ELs and struggling native English speakers could be addressed in similar ways, these perceptions were not surprising.

Although district leaders claimed to have been planting the seeds of change in instructional practice for a long time, it was not clear that principals had the kind of deep buy-in that often results from having had a role in the visioning of change for students at the district level. Principals regularly tailored their school plans to conform to the larger district plan, yet most shared that they had not participated in strategic planning at the district level to co-develop the core ideas. Moreover, in the eyes of a number of principals, the vision for change on behalf of ELs emanated more from the EL office than from the district’s top leaders, and may therefore have carried less weight. There is little question that all the principals understand the need to improve EL achievement and are aware of many of the challenges in making this happen on their campus. However, without deep ownership of an explicit vision and strategy for achieving EL success, regular reinforcement of an EL-specific agenda by top leaders, and many other “urgent” causes on their daily plates; these leaders’ willingness and capacity to use their leadership positions to motivate and manage “second order” change (see Marzano & Waters, 2009) on behalf of ELs is likely to be more a function of personal desire than systematic district-led efforts to engage them in this work. In this regard, it would behoove AUHSD leaders
to study and cultivate the qualities demonstrated by advocacy-oriented principals associated with the Promise Initiative. These qualities, mentioned in a previous chapter, include demonstrating values and beliefs that inspire work on behalf of ELs; emphasizing the needs of ELs as a learning community; providing EL-related professional development to all staff; practicing leadership grounded in research-based principles for EL instruction and biliteracy; advocating for ELs with data and research; actively garnering resources to support the EL program; ensuring that the school is engaged in an ongoing cycle of inquiry; and developing collaborative structures to engage EL parents and community (Dell’Olio, 2010). Although clearly an ambitious list, it is one worth contemplating as AUHSD refines its professional development programs for principals.

*Professional development for ELD and content-area teachers.* A thorough review of literature on EL educational practices informed the development of this component of my rubric, which refers to the skills districts need to develop in teachers of ELs. To a great extent, many of the qualities required of both ELD and mainstream teachers are similar to those expected of any good teacher, regardless of the language competencies of their students. Additionally, many of the skills districts need to develop in ELD teachers do not differ significantly from the skills needed by content-area teachers in working with ELs.

All teachers need to hold high expectations for EL students and teach a rigorous curriculum that is aligned to standards (August & Hakuta, 1997; Finkelstein et al., 2009; Koelsch, 2006; Parrish et al., 2006). They must all be comfortable using both qualitative and quantitative data about their EL students to design and differentiate instruction appropriately (Gold, 2006; Meltzer & Hamann, 2004; Short & Echevarria, 2005; Short &
Fitzsimmons, 2007). They must all be competent in their respective areas of expertise, whether it is a specific language development model for ELD teachers or a specific discipline in the case of content-area teachers (Menken & Antunez, 2001). They must all be able to select, adapt, and use teaching materials that accelerate EL learning (Walqui et al., 2010). For content-area teachers, there is the additional responsibility of selecting and adapting materials in ways that ensure ELs have meaningful access to content. All teachers must be able to build on students’ background knowledge by making connections with students’ personal lives, interests, and experiences (Meltzer & Hamann, 2005; Olsen, 2010; Wong Fillmore, 1982). In a related vein, teachers should create opportunities to build connections between families and their children’s learning (Ballantyne et al., 2008). All teachers must deliver comprehensible input through such techniques as scaffolding, modeling, visual aides, and technology use (Gold, 2006; Lewis-Moreno, 2007; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Walqui et al., 2010). They must involve students in critical thinking and problem-solving activities (Goldenberg, 2008). They must be able to run engaging, interactive classrooms that engross students in structured-group activities (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006). Finally, all teachers must provide ample opportunities for student to practice and check regularly for comprehension using a variety of formative assessments (Echevarria & Goldenberg, 1999; Gándara et al., 2005; Gutierrez, 2005). In each of these areas, it is fair to say that considerable overlap exists between good teaching for all students and good teaching for EL students.

Good teaching for ELs, however, requires additional district investments in developing teacher skills. Given that ELs are expected to progress from ELD classes into
mainstream classrooms, stronger connections between these two worlds would likely facilitate smoother transitions. Strong professional development programs provide opportunities for teacher collaboration (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010c; Corcoran & Lawrence, 2004; Hernandez, 2003). In the endeavor to educate ELs effectively, district efforts to facilitate stronger collaboration between ELD and content-area teachers is paramount. Not only is such collaboration likely to result in better personal support for students, but it is also likely to ensure greater academic articulation, such that students have the skills required to thrive in the mainstream. In the classroom, making such connections means different things for each set of teachers. English Language Development teachers must be prepared to provide language instruction that addresses themes and makes connections with mainstream content area-vocabulary (Meltzer & Hamann, 2005). For content-area teachers, the challenge is to embed academic literacy into their content instruction. English learner-oriented, content-area teachers regularly build academic vocabulary specific to their content areas into their instruction. This vocabulary instruction is explicit and, as with ELD teachers, encompasses all four language modalities, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Meltzer & Hamann, 2005; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). For content-area teachers, being able to do this effectively requires an understanding of the language acquisition process. More specifically, they must be knowledgeable about the role of language in instruction, the interplay of first and second languages, and the signs of normal language development (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Genesee et al., 2006; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Content-area teachers must also appreciate the implications of language proficiency on assessment results and student performance (Meltzer & Hamann, 2004; Spinelli, 2008). Finally,
content-area teachers, who tend to teach more heterogeneous groups of students, must also learn ways to create genuinely inclusive classrooms that create equitable opportunities for EL engagement in the learning process. Equipping teachers with these skills is no small undertaking. In many cases, it requires changing paradigms developed over a lifetime of practice about what constitutes appropriate instruction.

A final and critical aspect of quality professional development for teachers involves the grooming of teacher leaders to assume responsibility for transforming their schools into more EL-responsive environments (Olsen et al., 2010). There is considerable overlap between this area and training for principals in distributive leadership and advocacy. Both district leaders and principals should encourage teacher leaders to experiment with innovative and bold approaches to meeting EL needs. Significantly, leadership in the Promise Initiative schools included both administrators and teachers. In fact, researchers found that the schools with the strongest leadership teams were often able to move forward in implementing Promise Initiative principles even in those instances in which administrator support was waning (Olsen et al., 2010).

For a long time, AUHSD’s EL-focused professional development for content-area teachers has centered primarily on ensuring that teachers were properly certified to teach these students. This has proven to be a formidable task at the secondary level, where large numbers of content-area teachers with ELs in their classrooms did not have the appropriate credentials. Additionally, some teachers were quite resistant to the requirement. Although this investment was necessary (and required by the state of

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53This is not to say that professional development in AUHSD focused exclusively on this. Teachers were also being trained in new curriculum adoptions and standards-based teaching practices, among other areas.
California), it did not yield the kind of deep change in practice required to meet EL needs effectively. Indeed, being knowledgeable about appropriate practices did not translate into regular use of these practices in the classroom. There are many possible reasons for this, including the fact that many mainstream teachers were not aware of the limited academic English skills of their students. For many content-area teachers, acknowledging that they have ELs in their classrooms is a necessary but not sufficient step for change. While some do not know what to do with this information, others do not believe that their responsibility encompasses teaching academic literacy to ELs. Many teachers employ some SDAIE strategies and believe that they are differentiating sufficiently for these students. Other teachers are not convinced that making changes in practice will result in significant changes. On the positive side, a substantial number of teachers—over 200—within AUHSD, many frustrated with the lack of achievement among their students, appreciate the need for change and have volunteered to participate in the district’s most potentially powerful EL-related professional development initiative, the LDS program.

The LDS initiative stands out as the primary vehicle through which district leaders intend to inspire instructional change in the classroom. Given the district’s initial goal of improving curriculum, the LDS instructional piece has only recently been introduced district-wide. The program’s reliance on the SIOP, a comprehensive instructional framework, ensures that teachers will be exposed to many of the research-based instructional practices mentioned above. In this regard, it is a strong tool for both ELD and content-area teachers. Indeed, without an explicit model for delivering instructional strategies, there is little assurance that those strategies will be implemented evenly across districts and schools (Echevarria et al., 2006). The SIOP model can also be a useful tool
for ensuring that content-area teachers make the instruction of academic vocabulary explicit in each lesson they teach. Researchers have cautioned, however, that the SIOP model, in its focus on making content comprehensible, does not necessarily help students develop expressive language skills (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2009). I would argue that within the element of interactive instruction, the model provides opportunities for students to develop speaking skills. Similarly, within the element of practice/application, the model offers occasions to develop writing skills. In light of researchers’ insistence that ELs be offered repeated opportunities for oral and written practice (Lavadenz & Armas, 2010), it is essential that these opportunities not be overlooked.

The learning needs of AUHSD teachers are vast and diverse. Knowing the importance of including each of the SIOP elements in their lessons does not always translate into an ability to do so. Teachers who post language objectives on the board may have no notion as to how to incorporate them into their lessons. Some teachers need support in integrating the four language domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking into their lessons. Others, unfamiliar with the language demands of the content they are teaching, struggle to set realistic expectations for their EL students in these areas. Although most teachers may be aware of the need to build on students’ backgrounds, not all have a deep familiarity with their backgrounds or know how to bridge connections for students. Many lack the knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately. In these instances, teachers may benefit from strategies that help them create common classroom experiences as the basis for instruction. Some teachers are uncomfortable relying upon EL-oriented supplemental materials. Others struggle with the move from teacher-centered to student-driven instruction. Lesson Design Specialist
training must address all of these vulnerabilities if teachers are to genuinely meet
EL-learner needs.

Although I have not collected extensive data on the depth or quality of LDS
training, it appears that district leaders are committed to investing in many of these areas.
In so doing, they will rely not only on outside consultants but increasingly upon their LDS
coaches as trainers of teachers and on their principals as both coaches and monitors of
accepted practices in the classroom. Systematic opportunities for LDS coaches, cohort
members, and other teachers to collaborate around EL learning issues will also constitute
powerful opportunities that district and school leaders must reinforce and value.
Anaheim Union High School District’s investment in both school leadership teams and
LDS coaches is testament to its commitment to building teacher leaders. The fact that
LDS coaches on many campuses are already teacher leaders only strengthens their
capacity for impact. Efforts by some principals to ensure that these coaches serve on their
school leadership teams further expand their influence. Teacher leaders’ reports of a
district that rarely acknowledged their accomplishments or honored their work revealed
a clear need for better communication with these stakeholders. Overall, there is little
question that the work is deep and broad and will require comprehensive and sustained
professional development. Expecting much from the LDS, AUHSD leaders may have to
be prepared to invest resources over a longer period of time and consider engaging LDS
coaches in this work on a full-time basis in order to effect the kind of change they desire.

Teacher professional development needs that do not fall neatly under the LDS
umbrella include skills in using data. In this area, district training is available to teachers
on the use of district databases. Skills in accessing data, however, are distinct from those
required to interpret and use data in meaningful ways. Teachers in AUHSD have access to an increasing array of data on ELs, but this has yet to translate into clear changes in classroom practice. In this regard, AUHSD’s recent hiring of an instructional analyst to work directly with schools and their LDS coaches in using EL-related data to group students and tailor instruction is particularly promising. Given that most of AUHSD’s teacher professional development opportunities are voluntary; for example, the LDS and training in the use of data systems, leaders at both the district and site levels must motivate teachers to take advantage of this training.

Monitoring Progress

The district role of monitoring progress refers to the dynamic and interactive process by which districts perpetually collect data to observe and measure the teaching and learning that is occurring within their schools and classrooms and regularly use that information to inform their priorities and adjust their practices. Monitoring constitutes a continuous call to analysis and action. In those instances in which district leaders use data to fuel urgency for change—they are, in effect, engaging in monitoring in its most emphatic form. Figure 18 captures that portion of the rubric related to the district’s role in monitoring progress.

Clear Expectations for Data Use in Decision-Making

The rubric states that effective districts set clear expectations for the use of data in guiding decision-making at all levels of the organization. These districts rely upon solid data to set priorities, ensure the implementation of their reform strategies, measure student opportunities and outcomes, hold educators accountable, catalyze action, inform instructional practice, and facilitate organizational learning (Supovitz, 2006). Districts
**MONITORING PROGRESS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District leaders practice data-driven priority-setting and set clear expectations for the use of data in guiding decision-making at all levels of the organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Use data to monitor the implementation of their reform strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use data to track student opportunities and outcomes and hold educators accountable</td>
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<td>• Use data to improve instruction and facilitate organizational learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use data to develop intake and placement systems designed to meet the needs of EL students</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Require school improvement plans to include district-wide and school-specific EL performance targets</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Create mechanisms for end users to reflect collaboratively and provide feedback on data needs and uses</td>
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<tr>
<th>District collects, analyzes, and disseminates data that reflects the district vision and goals for equity</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Uses deep knowledge about ELs to ensure that they be placed in classes that provide both rigor and supports</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collects data that reveal the extent to which ELs have equal access to district course offerings, programs, and activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Triangulates data by collecting a range of performance data over time, including standardized test scores, district benchmarks, grades, high school credits, attendance, discipline, participation in advanced courses, completion of “a-g” courses, effectiveness of specific ELD programs, graduation, college plans, parental involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tracks the progress of long-term ELs, former ELs, or those who have opted out of ELD services</td>
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<th>District makes data accessible in a timely fashion to stakeholders through user-friendly systems and training</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Acquires technology to ensure timely, effective use of data to inform instruction and encourage reflection among educators</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Integrates EL data into the district’s general database to ensure maximum access and encourage its regular use by district, schools, and other stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Produces/makes available regular reports on EL backgrounds and performance data to instructional directors, language directors, school leaders, teachers, counselors, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Makes training available to support stakeholders in accessing and using data</td>
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<th>District employs a variety of valid and reliable summative and formative assessments for ELs</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Relies on standardized assessments that are normed for the EL population, linguistically accessible, free of cultural bias, administered with appropriate accommodations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assesses knowledge and language separately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supports the use of assessment that is ongoing, both formal and informal, interactive, geared toward improving teaching and learning (multimodal assessments, including portfolios of student work that show growth over time)</td>
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<tr>
<th>District evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of programs and policies in helping ELs to attain district goals</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Establishes clear indicators of effectiveness and regular schedule for evaluating initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ensures that results be shared widely to inform organizational learning and improve practice</td>
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*Figure 18.* Rubric showing district role in monitoring progress on behalf of ELs.
intent on improving outcomes for EL students should also use data to develop intake and placement systems for these students that facilitate their timely movement into the most appropriate classes (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Successful and improving districts also establish system-wide mechanisms for data use (Bottoms & Fry, 2009; Datnow et al., 2007; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003; Snipes et al., 2002; Supovitz, 2006). Such mechanisms include incorporating indicators of progress into district- and school-improvement plans and establishing regular opportunities for end users to reflect collaboratively on their data needs and uses (Murnane, City, & Singleton, 2007; Supovitz, 2006).

Using data to set priorities. An increasingly data-driven district, AUHSD leaders at both the district and school levels reported that they use data to guide their planning priorities. Federal requirements that districts and schools disaggregate data by subgroups have helped to focus the attention of AUHSD leaders at all levels on the needs of ELs. Concerns about EL performance have catalyzed district initiatives to increase rigor and emphasize academic literacy across the curriculum. Both district- and school-level plans rely heavily upon performance on benchmark tests, common assessments, CSTs, and the CAHSEE in defining priorities. Average yearly progress targets appear to drive much of the focus in this regard. While districts in Program Improvement have little choice but to design reforms in ways that satisfy these targets, AUHSD plans reveal a dearth of other measures of student success. Here again is an example of the overlapping nature of district roles—data may serve as valuable tools in establishing priorities within the context of a larger district vision of student success. They should not, however, be construed as the vision itself.
Using data to hold educators accountable for meeting district goals. Evidence of progress cited within AUHSD district and school plans often includes AYP targets, an indication that the performance of subgroups, like ELs, will be monitored. Interestingly, however, there is limited mention in either the district or school-site plans of CELDT scores or reclassification rates as evidence of progress toward goals. Reclassification rates are mentioned once in the AUHSD’s district-level plan as indicators of the effective implementation of SDAIE strategies with all teachers. Evidence of ELs’ movement through the ELD program also appears in the district’s plan as a measure of its work with ELD teachers. There is no mention within the five case-study school plans of EL English proficiency as a goal; nor do these plans rely upon the CELDT or reclassification rates as measures of progress. Given the district’s commitment to ensuring that ELs become proficient in both English and content areas and its intention to spread responsibility for these students beyond ELD teachers, the scarcity of English proficiency goals and targets in district and school-site plans is confounding. Unfortunately for ELs, many educators will not be motivated to change practices in ways that better serve ELs without clear targets to hold them accountable. Indeed, if educators throughout the district are to see themselves as teachers of academic literacy, it is paramount that they be held just as accountable as ELD teachers for attaining English proficiency targets for these students.

Using data to ensure the implementation of reform strategies. In addition to using data to inform district priorities, the development and use of data, including formative benchmark and common assessments, is an AUHSD reform priority in itself. According to the district plan, “student learning will improve through the use of frequent formative
assessments and collaboration.” Much of this collaboration, built into school plans, has been driven by the analysis of data by school-level and departmental-level teams within schools. Anaheim Union High School District has supported schools in developing and interpreting the results of common assessments.

Principals are generally held accountable for pursuing school-level strategies identified in their school plans. Anaheim Union High School District leaders are preparing principals to monitor the implementation of district-identified “accepted” instructional practices in classrooms. However, according to the assistant superintendent, “I’m not sitting in principal evaluations and saying, ‘I want all your teachers to run to the LDS every time there is a blip in their lessons.’ I’m not saying that.” In AUHSD, the monitoring piece is still an evolving process. District leaders must first ensure that principals have a deep understanding of district expectations for what constitutes strong practice and how effective classroom practice will be measured. They must then clarify the ways in which site leaders will be expected to demonstrate evidence of these practices. Principal walk-throughs with district leaders and other consultants have served as powerful opportunities for beginning to establish such clarity.

Using data to inform instructional practice. Many teachers acknowledged the importance of data in their work, although not all were convinced of the need to look at EL-data as distinct from data on all students. Teachers also expressed concerns about not always knowing how to act upon the increased quantity of data available to them. Site administrators were equally cognizant of the need for better support in helping educators to translate data into instructional changes in the classroom. District leaders, in turn, highlighted the need to work more closely with principals to help them understand the
link between data, such as CELDT scores, and instruction. In this regard, AUHSD is looking to its new instructional analyst to support principals, school leadership teams, LDS coaches and their cohorts, and individual teachers in using disaggregated data as a tool for driving conversations and planning around instruction.

*Using data to catalyze action.* There is limited evidence that the district’s top leaders have used data on ELs to affect decision-making by board of education members regarding EL students. A single presentation by DELAC parents, with the support of the EL Office, to the board in the spring 2010 is a rare exception. Neither have district leaders used data to engage a broad array of community stakeholders in supporting reform on behalf of ELs. One district leader shared how he used data to “eviscerate myths” among teachers about expectations for ELs and other struggling students. Certain school leaders have used EL-data to motivate teachers to focus more intently on the needs of their ELs. Others appear to have left this job to their respective LDS coaches, several of whom have made presentations to staff using EL data. English learner office staff have attempted to direct school leaders’ attention to EL needs by producing school-specific EL-data reports and meeting with groups of school leaders at each site to review these data. Generally, however, interview participants at the site level did not mention district leaders’ widespread use of EL data as a means for mobilizing change on behalf of these students.

*Focusing on Data That Reflect Vision of Equity*

Districts committed to genuine equity for their EL students collect data that reveal the depth of these students’ equitable access to rigorous course offerings, gifted and college-preparatory programs, and opportunities for building social connections within
the school community (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Horwitz et al., 2009; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Equity goals are generally monitored by ensuring that EL participation in these opportunities occurs at rates comparable to their proportion of the school population. Pursuing such goals implies that districts collect deep data on ELs’ academic and demographic backgrounds to guide appropriate student placement. Regular monitoring of these data helps facilitate timely movement of ELs through ELD and other academic support programs toward English and academic proficiency. Most accountability systems require that districts monitor ELs’ movement through language development programs and their academic proficiency. They do not yet require the collection of data on EL participation in rigorous, college-preparatory, “a-g,” or advanced classes, gifted programs, and so forth. Districts that value these goals do not depend upon accountability systems to define the scope of their data collection efforts, rather they take it upon themselves to track progress in areas they see as essential to EL success.

Anaheim Union High School District’s use of data to identify, track, and place EL and other students has become increasingly sophisticated. The LAC collects a variety of data on EL backgrounds, including years in U.S. schools and primary language skills. These data are combined with performance data to inform student placement. Regular monitoring of EL students throughout the school year facilitates their timely movement into the most appropriate ELD, EAP, or ELA classes. The LAC also produces reports required by NCLB, annual EL reports to the district, school-level EL-focused reports, and monitoring reports on RFEPs and long-term ELs. The district’s Office of Research and Evaluation also uses multiple indicators to determine the placement of ELs and other struggling students in intervention classes. Once initial placement recommendations are
made, sites also use their own diagnostic tools and teacher input to ensure appropriate placements. Movement into and out of interventions are site decisions based on multiple criteria.

With respect to equity-focused data on EL participation in various classes and programs, these data can be found in some form in one of the district’s databases. Their compilation, however, sometimes requires initial collection in one database, followed by matching against a second database to screen students by language proficiency status. Unfortunately, much of this information, which is not required by accountability systems, is not regularly collected or analyzed. In this regard, districts like AUHSD miss important opportunities to monitor EL engagement and progress before these students reach their senior year.

In addition to equity data, researchers have proposed that districts analyze academic performance data in ways that effectively illuminate EL students’ instructional needs. They recommend that schools analyze EL students’ academic progress and achievement as a function of both their language proficiency levels and time in U.S. schools (Olsen, 2010). This type of analysis, although not always a part of accountability reporting requirements, is meaningful to educators seeking to make the most effective placement decisions. Finally, collection and analysis of data on the district’s fully reclassified former ELs, who are doing well relative to other language proficiency groups, may help elucidate reasons for this success and expose possibilities for accelerating the progress of ELs.
Making Data Accessible in a Timely and User-Friendly Fashion

Technology and training. According to the rubric, improving districts also encourage systemic data-use by making data accessible in a timely fashion to stakeholders at all levels of the organization. Districts accomplish this by operating user-friendly systems and providing training in data acquisition and use. Anaheim Union High School District has upgraded its computerized data systems, made regular training available to teachers in using these systems, and facilitated the frequent and timely production of data reports. The most timely data reports are generated at the site level by high-speed assessment scanners. Offices like the LAC also produce regular reports and respond to requests for specific reports. With permission, users can also access the LAC database directly. English learner office leaders have invested considerable time in developing pivot tables that enable users to access critical background information on individual students.

Integrated databases. With respect to district databases, researchers have recommended that districts integrate their EL data into their primary database in order to ensure maximum access and use by a wide variety of stakeholders (Horwitz et al., 2009). Within AUHSD, there are multiple databases. Anaheim Union High School District’s Evaluation and Research Department tracks data on CSTs, CAHSEEs, and student grade distributions. These data are disaggregated by subgroup according to federal accountability requirements. The district’s Information Systems Department maintains the student database, which contains test scores, demographic data, parent contact, information, and so forth. Another office collects Student Attendance Review Board data, suspensions, expulsions, truancies, and so forth. Counselors monitor “a-g”
completion data. Finally, the LAC collects data related to EL English proficiency. Individual program directors and specialists track participation in their respective programs; for example, participation in Puente, Spanish for Spanish speakers programs, intensive literacy classes, and CTE programs. Not all database managers have the capacity to disaggregate data by fluency group, nor do they define the EL subgroup in the same way. These varied database systems make it difficult to capture a full picture of EL backgrounds, needs, educational opportunities, and outcomes.

Administrators intent upon understanding whether an EL student is not on track to graduate because he is absent more frequently than other students, because he is not taking the appropriate classes, has low English proficiency, is regularly failing classes, or is not enrolled in the appropriate services must engage in the time-consuming process of inquiring with several handlers of data to form a complete picture of the student. Similarly, constructing a profile of AUHSD’s EL subgroup as a whole requires consultation with managers of multiple data-bases. The district’s operation of several independent and loosely connected databases may impede its abilities to track easily the many variables affecting EL progress or the interim indicators necessary to ensure the kind of outcomes it desires.

Using a variety of valid and reliable assessment tools. The rubric recommends that districts employ a variety of valid and reliable summative and formative assessments in monitoring the academic performance of ELs (Gándara et al., 2005; Gutierrez, 2005). With respect to standardized assessments, research further suggests that these tests be normalized for the EL population, linguistically accessible, free of cultural bias, and administered with appropriate accommodations (Fairbairn & Fox, 2009). Unfortunately,
districts often have limited flexibility with respect to the administration of state
standardized tests. They do, however, have latitude to push for greater and more effective
use of formative assessments, which generally do a better job of distinguishing between
ELs’ language capacity and their content knowledge and provide teachers with important
knowledge for improving instruction (P. Black & Williams, 1998; Spinelli, 2008). In
AUHSD, there has been a push to increase teacher comfort and capacity in using
formative assessments. Teachers have worked collaboratively to develop these
assessments, which according to some has been a powerful exercise in itself. Anaheim
Union High School District’s reliance on formative assessment spans the gamut from the
use of more formal benchmark testing to frequent informal checking for understanding in
the classroom. The latter is a planned focus of professional development initiatives and
an important element in the district’s SIOP-focused LDS model.

*Establishing schedules and processes for evaluating programs and policies.*

Without strong external mandates requiring evaluations on all initiatives, it is up to
districts to monitor themselves in a number of key areas. Successful districts have
regular schedules for evaluating both the implementation and impact of their various
programs and policies, regardless of external mandates. There is ongoing, quality
feedback to the central office concerning the implementation process and challenges at
sites (Elmore, 2005; Horwitz et al., 2009; Marzano & Waters, 2009; Petrides & Nodine,
2005). Principals understand that the central office is paying close attention to progress
in pursuing district goals at their sites. For EL-focused districts, these program and
policy evaluations concentrate specifically on the impact initiatives are having on these
students.
Over the 5 years of Dr. Farley’s administration, AUHSD has initiated a number of new initiatives, including the LDS program, EAP classes, ninth-grade academies, Spanish for Spanish speakers, intensive literacy, and math interventions, among others. Although individual sites and classrooms are doing some of their own regular monitoring of these efforts, district monitoring of these initiatives appears to be uneven. In some cases, expectations for implementation and outcomes are vague. For many of these initiatives, district-wide data showing impact on students in general, or ELs specifically, do not exist or are not highly systemic or scientific. In the district’s defense, many of these initiatives may be too young to have produced gains. Additionally, thorough evaluation consumes resources that economically stretched districts can ill afford. Once again, AUHSD’s investment in an instructional analyst position provides hope. Regular evaluations of programs, along with concerted efforts to share data on successes, can be powerful tools in the district’s pursuit of reform. Not only will these evaluations help leaders to scrutinize and modify ineffective programs with respect to both design and implementation fidelity, but, as mentioned previously, data on successes have the potential to spawn profound cultural shifts with respect to expectations for ELs and teacher practices. Anaheim Union High School District is well advised not to overlook the value of these opportunities.

Understanding Anaheim Union High School District’s Reform in the Context of Change Theories

Research findings demonstrate that the case-study district has pursued change through multiple strategies and practices that correspond closely to the five key district roles identified in the research on effective districts. The findings further show that these
five roles are closely interrelated, such that changes in one role have often influenced others and vice versa. Moreover, changes resulting from district action in one area have sometimes catalyzed change elsewhere, yielding substantial cumulative effects. For example, AUHSD’s response to policy pressures to integrate EL students into mainstream English classes fueled changes in curricula and instructional practices, which, in turn, necessitated new investments in teacher training and eventually drove demands for better data to inform instruction. Additionally, the relationship among these roles is often circular and multi-directional; for example, demands for better data have, in turn, necessitated more training. Finally, the district has often intentionally complemented rapid movement on one front with slower movement on others. For example, AUHSD has moved quickly to upgrade curricula but has intentionally moved more slowly in changing instructional practices.

The case study district also regularly exerts varying levels of control over the change process by tightening its influence over the system in its execution of certain roles and relaxing control through others. In this regard, AUHSD has balanced centralized instructional management with site-based empowerment and flexibility for teachers. Although no school has been allowed to opt out of the LDS initiative, teachers have been permitted to opt in voluntarily. Additionally, district leaders have made a deliberate decision to relax their monitoring of the LDS program initially to give teacher coaches and their cohorts time “to learn their craft” and work within their respective school cultures. As a result, interview participants have alternately described the initiative as both “top down” and “bottom up.” These findings reinforce conclusions made by other researchers studying the district role in moving change on behalf of ELs: it involves a
complex interaction of organizational, structural, and instructional issues (Horwitz et al., 2009).

Researchers suggest that it is precisely the abilities of districts to act and react on multiple fronts simultaneously and to oscillate between tight and loose control that position them so well to lead complex systemic change (Rorrer et al., 2008). Over the past 5 years, AUHSD has been fully engaged in the process of leading such change. These same researchers also theorize that districts, by virtue of their status as institutional actors, have the authority and influence to exercise their key roles in ways that advance equity. More specifically, districts have the capacity to “extend their roles and function beyond implementation to expansion and escalation of reforms tethered to a value commitment, such as equity” (Rorrer et al., p. 42). Ultimately, it is this value commitment that drives change, permeating the organizational culture, such that all work is done with an eye toward eroding inequity. Equity thus becomes both a means and an end to change.

As my earlier analysis demonstrates, AUHSD has executed each of the five key district roles in ways that show promise for improving the educational achievement and opportunities for ELs. Through improved instructional coherence and alignment, thoughtful professional development, improved data management, and more equitable resource allocation, Dr. Farley’s leadership has moved the agenda on behalf of ELs farther than that of any of his predecessors. There is no question that many of these changes have already affected and will continue to influence ELs in positive ways. Whether these initiatives are sufficient to drive the kind of deep, pervasive change
required to ensure genuine equity for ELs, is, however, a different matter that will depend largely upon how district leaders manage the change process as they move forward.

According to Lewin’s (1951) change theory, the change process begins when some driving force or incentive for change, which frequently involves some level of dissatisfaction with the status quo, forces an “unfreezing” of the existing equilibrium in the system (Schein, 1996; Sims & Sims, 2004). Studies of districts that have pursued change resulting in a substantial narrowing of achievement gaps among student groups have used the need for equity as such a driving force for change. These leaders placed equity at the center of their reform agendas by actively drawing attention to the existing inequities within their systems and assuming moral responsibility for the existence of inequity (Rorrer et al., 2008). In their moral commitment to interrogate and critique existing institutional policies and practices with an eye toward equity, they effectively moved beyond the mere pursuit of organizational goals to practice genuine social justice leadership (Bogotch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Foster, 1989). Not unlike the social justice leaders described by Shields (2004), these leaders developed shared understandings about the education of diverse students rooted in such values as justice, caring, democracy, and optimism. The work of leaders in high-performing districts in Texas to develop and promote “a set of shared-equity beliefs” (Skrla et al., 2000, p. 6) stands out as one prominent example of such leadership.

Many leaders within AUHSD care deeply about achieving equity for ELs. Several may even perceive it to be their moral responsibility. My intent is not to question people’s deepest motivations, but rather to explain the widespread perceptions of their actions and relate these to the change process and ultimately to the educational prospects
of the district’s ELs. In their most public work to transform education in AUHSD, district leaders have not actively championed the cause of achieving equity for ELs as a driving force for change. They have not yet cultivated deeply shared equity beliefs about what these students are capable of accomplishing. Instead, they have relied heavily on federal and state accountability systems as catalysts for advancing reform on behalf of ELs. Indeed, other successful districts have relied on these systems as well. The difference appears to be that, while using these accountability systems to advance equity, these districts also attended to the need to develop deep visions of student success beyond test scores. This is not to imply that leaders within AUHSD do not have such visions, but rather that they have not pursued broad collaborative dialogue and reflection around their visions. They have not engaged stakeholders at all levels in a dialogue that could lead to important interrogations about the status quo and EL achievement: What does it really mean to prepare an EL for college and postsecondary opportunities in the global economy? How does this differ from the preparation we currently provide these students? What does this imply for the ways we need to work with their parents and the kind of precollege experiences we should create for them?

Many of those interviewed for this research in AUHSD perceived district reform efforts as doing that which is required to exit Program Improvement status rather than as the moral pursuit of equity designed to change beliefs about traditionally underserved groups within the system. Indeed, one of the district’s top leaders was quite open that he was less concerned about changing teacher beliefs and attitudes than about ultimately changing practice in the classroom.
As noted in previous chapters, there is some basis for this approach in the literature. Sims and Sims (2004) advised districts pursuing systems change to focus on changing behavior and not changing values, noting that the latter are considerably more resistant to change. Additionally, researchers studying schools that educate large numbers of ELs have found that changes in teacher beliefs did not always precede their implementation of new practices (Goldenberg, 2008; McDougall et al., 2007; Saunders et al., as cited in Coleman & Goldenberg, 2010c). In fact, for some teachers, it was seeing the results these practices yielded that changed their expectations for EL student achievement. In a similar fashion, AUHSD leaders are relying upon the successes of their LDS cohort teachers to inspire changes in practice among a much wider swath of district teachers. For some of the district’s most resistant teachers, this approach may be the only way to effect change.

The overwhelming experience of study-districts that have attained demonstrable success in educating traditionally underperforming student groups has, nevertheless, involved a concerted focus on equity (Cawelti, 2001; Hernandez, 2003; Rorrer, 2001; Springboard Schools, 2006; Togneri & Anderson, 2003). A vision and plan for system-wide change focused on equity have the potential to alter educators’ deficit-thinking regarding EL students; instead of describing these students as unmotivated to learn, educators might begin to reflect upon how systemic inequities fuel and perpetuate such disengagement. Similarly, educators might begin to look upon systems that regularly assign large numbers of ELs to special education programs as contributors to, rather than solutions to, the overall underperformance of these students. Therefore, although a desire to exit Program Improvement status may serve as an instigator for change, it is not a
sufficiently solid foundation upon which to sustain the change required to undo deeply rooted inequities in the system.

Truly leading for social justice requires transforming fully traditional beliefs and customs about schooling and leadership, as well as transforming the structure of the schools, teacher capacity, and the way in which resources are acquired and allocated (Frattura & Capper, 2007). In this respect, it satisfies many of the conditions for “second-order” change identified by Marzano and Waters (2009). Many leaders within the district understand that achieving deep change in AUHSD will require the transformation of existing paradigms, departure from prevailing norms, acquisition of new knowledge and skills, and, inevitably, the arousal of resistance among educators described by these researchers. The question is whether district leaders are adequately prepared to manage change of this magnitude. Researchers suggest that districts pursuing second-order change must anticipate how this change will affect stakeholders and be prepared to address potential problems; remain united in espousing the benefits of the initiative; focus stakeholders continuously on the core beliefs and ideas underlying the initiative; create an atmosphere in which radical ideas are most likely to be adopted; use “sticky messages” that people are unlikely to forget to communicate goals; and attend to the personal struggles associated with major change (Marzano & Waters).

Interviews with educators throughout the AUHSD indicate that district leaders have made some progress but clearly have more work to do in this regard. Without a strong equity-focused vision of EL success, it has been difficult for leaders to articulate core beliefs or adhere to united approach to espousing benefits. Moreover, one administrator shared that leaders at the highest levels often misinterpret people’s fears
about change as “resistance” to change, revealing a need for greater understanding on the part of leaders about stakeholders’ personal struggles with changes. On the other hand, district efforts to adopt mantras for the accepted practices they expect to see in the classrooms constitute a promising step toward creating powerful “sticky messages.”

The unfreezing stage of Lewin’s theory of change involves not only accepting the deficiencies (or inequities) in the status quo but beginning the process of overcoming the resisting forces that cause people to ignore or dismiss these deficiencies. Schein (1996) suggested that, because these forces often include survival anxieties or fears, leaders must address these concerns by defining change in ways that do not provoke defensive behavior. Anaheim Union High School District leaders’ efforts to describe changes in instruction using the EL-focused SIOP method as “good teaching” reflect their sensitivity in this regard. Additionally, district efforts to provide teachers with access to peers who actively model the desired change behaviors in the form of LDS coaches constitute an important strategy for building confidence in teachers’ capacity for change and for ensuring that, once “unfrozen,” they will engage in the appropriate changes.

In a similar vein, Rorrer’s (2006) research on two equity-focused districts also sheds light on the importance of district efforts to overcome the resistance to change and thus “unfreeze” key actors. Of particular relevance to AUHSD is Rorrer’s discussion of the politically contentious nature of this work. Drawing upon the work of Charters (as cited in Rorrer, 2006), she described district leaders’ struggle to straddle “the margin of tolerance,” delicately maneuvering between the type of deep changes they know must occur and the type of change they believe the vocal components within the community will tolerate. Districts that overstep these margins risk losing their legitimacy in the eyes
of the public. Rorrer concluded that districts pursuing equity agendas must work assiduously to alter interpretive schema and build normative understandings both externally and internally. Leaders in the districts she studied accomplished this by focusing not on whether equity would be achieved but rather upon how it would happen. They used their influential positions to communicate their visions of equity throughout the community.

Leaders in AUHSD operate in a community that has historically not been open to broad notions of equity. One could argue that many of the local stakeholders still associate equitable resources for ELs with equal resources. In seeking to avoid controversy, district leaders have refrained from engaging the broader community in their reform efforts or distinguishing their work with ELs from the work that must occur for all students. Although this may be an effective initial strategy, it avoids the inevitable reality that sustaining reforms that meet EL student needs in a meaningful and timely fashion likely requires more active engagement on the part of board of education members, union leaders, parents, and community organizations. Additionally, blurring the line between ELs and other students does not encourage the understanding of EL needs required for deep changes in teaching and learning.

The need for genuine social justice leadership once again becomes apparent. Unfortunately, this type of leadership is rare because it necessarily entails the difficult job of challenging the assumptions and expectations of others. Social justice leadership is made all the more complicated by the high stakes accountability systems and fiscal pressures that limit leaders’ latitude for action (Lugg & Sholo, 2006). Not surprisingly, given this reality, true social justice leaders must often be prepared to assume personal
and professional risks along the way (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Lopez et al., 2006). Indeed, those who wish to lead effectively in districts in which large numbers of ELs are consistently failing to perform at grade level may be left with no other viable option.

The change process is complete when new behaviors, values, and attitudes have become routine and the system is “re-frozen” at its new equilibrium (Lewin, 1951; Schein, 1996). District leaders, faced with the new challenge of preventing the wheel of change from moving backward, must continually exert pressure to keep the force field at the new equilibrium. In AUHSD, this may necessitate several key actions, including tightening control over the monitoring of its LDS initiative, aligning personnel evaluative systems with priorities, and, most importantly of all, finding the resources to sustain the work of its teacher coaches.

Implications and Conclusions

Overview

Without a powerful record of EL success upon which to draw, it is difficult to conclude at this point that the reform initiatives currently being pursued in AUHSD are worthy of replication elsewhere. Moreover, given the unique combination of external and internal forces operating in AUHSD, it is not possible to generalize that successful reforms in AUHSD would work equally well in other districts. However, the purpose of this endeavor was never to establish causal links between certain district actions and specific outcomes. It was rather to marry the research on the roles of the districts in reform with that on effective practices for ELs to offer a guiding framework that identifies variables districts should consider as they approach the specific challenge of educating ELs more effectively.
Given its exploratory nature, my research constitutes a beginning effort to develop tools to facilitate this important work. Clearly, with the experience of only a single district by which to demonstrate their value, these tools are still quite rudimentary at best. I do, however, believe that this endeavor accomplishes several important objectives. In addition to identifying many of the variables worthy of consideration as districts engage in this vital work, the AUHSD case study also illuminates some key challenges and valuable lessons learned about the process. In this regard, it has implications for district leadership more broadly and provides some guidance concerning district capacity to undertake this work.

Finally, this research both expands and deepens the general knowledge base concerning the role of school districts in leading change. Additionally, by centering my research on the sorely understudied adolescent EL, I believe it has brought greater attention and insight to the specific struggles these learners face and the nature of the work required on the part of district and school leaders to adequately address their needs. Finally, by provoking even deeper questions and concerns, this study offers fertile ground upon which to pursue future research.

Key Challenges and Lessons Learned

The AUHSD case study reveals much about the areas of greatest challenge facing district leaders in meeting EL needs. Although no two districts face precisely the same constellation of challenges, the nature of the work is similar enough to suggest that district leaders headed in the same direction may benefit from an overview of some of the key challenges facing AUHSD leaders. This following list is a compilation of some of the most salient lessons learned about these challenges through this study:
• Compliance requirements and accountability systems should support the vision but cannot become the vision. Compliance-driven change is not sufficient to create the kind of deep pervasive change required to ensure genuine equity for ELs. It does not lead to powerful visions of EL success and risks narrowing the focus of stakeholders to doing only that which is mandated. District leaders must build a collective vision rooted in a deep understanding of EL needs and best-practice research and then use compliance requirements as tools for supporting the emerging vision. Those who have not been a part of the visioning process are prone to reduce the work to tasks, impositions, meddling, or “more unrelated district initiatives.”

• District leaders must have the conviction to champion the cause of equity for ELs as a driving force for change. Without a strong equity-focused vision of EL success, it is difficult for leaders to move the second-order change process forward in ways recommended by researchers; e.g., by remaining united in espousing the benefits of the initiative and focusing stakeholders continuously on the core beliefs and ideas underlying the initiative.

• The compliance mentality and pressure to perform leave little room to create new space for the kind of innovative work that must occur. These pressures promote a more managerial approach to education and conspire against leaders’ assuming roles as political actors in the change process. Without an advocacy-oriented approach toward the underachievement of ELs, it is difficult to move leaders to take the risks necessary to make deep change occur. Both district leaders and site principals would benefit from a deeper understanding of the characteristics of advocacy-oriented leadership. Additionally, under the existing accountability mindset, schools experiencing the biggest leaps in test scores continue to generate the greatest attention and accolades, while those focused on making gradual but sustainable change do not. District leaders must notice, celebrate, and share the deep successes on their campuses.

• Districts need powerful allies in their endeavors to create second-order change for EL students. Without powerful external allies who can support district reform efforts, change may take longer, there is less certainty that momentum on behalf of ELs will continue as administrations change, and there are fewer stakeholders prepared to hold the board of education accountable for continuing the work on behalf of ELs. Given the potential of supportive boards of education to move deep change, working “under the radar” of the board of education may yield more shallow reform efforts. District leaders need strategies for building constituencies in traditionally unsupportive communities.

• District and school leaders must increasingly view EL parent committees as genuine advisory groups rather than compliance requirements and opportunities for downloading information. District outreach efforts that work for all
families may be less effective for EL families. Strong district work with EL parents may not be all that different from powerful teacher work with EL students. Both require building upon existing background knowledge, providing comprehensible input, and creating meaningful opportunities for participation and interaction.

- Districts must address the inherent tension between the pressures for teachers to pace instruction appropriately in order to cover standards and the need for teachers to re-teach and employ the more time-consuming interactive learning strategies that EL students need.

- District leaders must attend to the full spectrum of forces resisting second-order change. Without taking the time to understand the personal struggles of those whose behavior they want to change, leaders risk misinterpreting stakeholders’ confusion and fear regarding the change process as resistance to change.

- Balancing school-level autonomy and district-level control is a delicate process. In order to ensure the necessary time for buy-in without compromising greatly the pace of reform, districts must both exert tight and loose control simultaneously. A powerful shared vision and theory of action for change can be important sources of tight control.

- Without sufficient feedback loops and communication, stakeholders may lose sight of the big picture, receive mixed messages, and veer off track. Weak feedback mechanisms limit opportunities for the type of collaborative problem-solving needed to build ownership and sustain momentum for change.

- As district leaders work to increase collaboration among teachers within disciplines and across disciplines, they must not overlook the importance of greater collaboration between mainstream and ELD teachers as a key strategy for improving EL education.

- Blurring the lines between good teaching for ELs and that for other struggling students in promoting reforms risks minimizing the role of the language acquisition process in EL performance issues. The absence of a vision of instructional quality for ELs may also reinforce old notions that EL needs are not distinct from those of other struggling students and that ELs are only found in structured language-development classes.

- Districts need more systematic strategies for creating inclusive, supportive environments for ELs. Specifically, they need strategies for helping teachers develop deeper understandings of the lived experiences of their EL students and families and for creating “communities of difference” within their classrooms.
• Crosscultural Language and Development certification has not resulted in the types of changes in teacher practice that EL students need. District leaders must prepare to make long-term investments in the kind of job-embedded, teacher-driven professional development that is designed to change deeply held paradigms about the education of ELs.

• Reform requires trust. Change is likely to be best received when investments are made in developing strong personal connections with stakeholders. Building relational trust is an important but often overlooked area of investment in reform efforts. District leaders must not only look at the data on schools. They must also spend time with the people working in those schools.

• Using limited outcomes measures of success to drive reform narrows the vision in the eyes of stakeholders; generates concerns among stakeholders about their roles in, and capacity for, change; and ignores important interim measures of success such as changes in the quality of teaching or increases in educational opportunities for ELs.

• In their concerted focus on achievement goals, district leaders must not neglect the pursuit and monitoring along the way of the many equity goals that are inextricably linked to outcomes. Districts that are serious about preparing ELs for strong post-secondary opportunities must collect data continuously that demonstrates that these students have access to the kinds of courses and programs that will prepare them for college and careers.

• Without regular monitoring of the quality and impact of interventions, as well as the sharing of successes, districts may lose powerful opportunities to change negative mindsets about the educability of ELs and to give stakeholders concrete information about what they need to do to have immediate impact on the success of these students.

• District leaders need support to build their capacity in using data more effectively to monitor and adjust their progress toward reform goals, track multiple measures of EL progress, improve the quality of their professional development investments, and determine the impact of specific interventions on EL students.

Contributions to the Existing Research

Tools to Guide Practice

Perhaps the most significant contribution the AUHSD case study makes to the existing research is its identification of some of the important variables associated with
district efforts to improve educational outcomes and opportunities for secondary ELs. Both the framework for district action and the rubric merging district roles with EL-best practices constitute complementary instruments for understanding the complex nature of district reform that is focused explicitly on ELs. Both tools attempt to capture the highly integrated nature of this work. While the framework provides a lens through which to understand the complex change process for reform-oriented districts generally, the rubric illuminates many of the variables specific to reform for ELs. Aside from the fact that both tools could benefit from further refinement through additional study, they represent a thoughtful attempt to guide districts along a long and difficult but incredibly important journey.

Addressing Gaps in the Literature

My research attempts to address two primary gaps in the literature. The first of these, noted by such researchers as Leithwood et al. (2004) and Rorrer et al. (2008), is the dearth of attention paid to studies that address the interdependence and interrelatedness of districts’ roles in reform. Although my study does not fully test the model of districts as institutional actors proposed by Rorrer et al., it does draw heavily upon their work in its examination of the district’s execution of multiple roles, the nonlinearity of reform efforts, and the variable coupling used by districts to alternately tighten and loosen control over the reform process. My work deviates from these researchers’ approach in that it treats the pursuit of equity not as a separate role but rather as commitment achieved through the execution of multiple roles. Notably, however, in their yet-untested theory, Rorrer et al. also emphasize the unique capacity of the district to infuse all of its roles with the equity value, thereby catalyzing change designed to serve disadvantaged
students. I credit these researchers for providing a foundation for my study on the
district’s pursuit of equity on behalf of EL students specifically.

A second area in which my work addresses gaps in the literature is in its
application of social justice leadership concepts to the district role in supporting ELs.
Indeed, district capacity for reform is only one part of the picture. To a large degree, the
willingness of leaders at the district levels to make it their moral responsibility to take the
risks necessary to transform long-ingrained systems and cultures of inequity on behalf of
ELs will shape future prospects for these students. The experience of some district and
school leaders in AUHSD does not differ significantly from that of leaders described by
Lugg and Sholo (2006), who strapped by high stakes accountability systems, fiscal
pressures, and polarized environments, found it difficult to assume the roles of political
actors. They were more akin to educators who engaged in apprenticeship practice instead
of laboratory practice (Bogotch, 2002) or as Foster (1989) described, administrators who
were more concerned with the technical aspects of their work than in transforming
educational institutions to serve greater moral purposes.

Expansion of the Existing Knowledge-Base

This case study expands upon existing research in a number of areas. In its
specific elucidation of district efforts to mediate external policies, re-align systems and
structures, build principal and teacher capacity, foster instructional coherence, and use
data, it contributes to, and confirms the mounting evidence on the multiple roles districts
play in reform. Indeed, both the research literature and my analysis support the notion
that district latitude for action is considerable and represents a significant opportunity to
lead change on behalf of ELs. The AUHSD case study also adds to a small but growing
knowledge base on the predicament and needs of long-term ELs. These students, who comprise the vast majority of ELs at the secondary level in California, present districts and schools with a set of challenges distinct from those of their more recently immigrated peers. This study sheds additional light on the needs and perspectives of the parents of secondary ELs—a widely underutilized resource in district and school efforts to improve teaching and learning for EL students. Once again, my research confirms other research by demonstrating that involving these parents more integrally in the education of their children is likely to require a set of strategies separate from those used to reach all parents.

Directions for Future Research

One clear purpose of exploratory research is precisely to discover new variables of potential interest. This research, not unlike other research in this area, exposes the need for deeper investigation into the intersection between reform specific to ELs and that directed toward all students. How critical is it that districts, and, ultimately, school leaders and teachers, make a clear distinction between the two? Other important areas for further exploration that are not new, but nevertheless still underexplored, focus on the district’s role in negotiating key internal and external forces: How do districts balance autonomy and control in ways that do not significantly slow the pace of change for EL students who, in actuality, need reform yesterday? How do districts negotiate external pressures for change? More specific questions in this regard include: How do districts build external constituencies for EL-oriented change in traditionally unsupportive communities? How do districts effectively balance accountability demands and compliance mandates with vision-building and doing what is right for ELs? Do these
policy and legal pressures allow districts the necessary room to undertake work (like the LDS initiative) that may slow progress initially but produce sustainable gains in the long-term? Do district efforts to focus on the essential standards in the teaching of such struggling students as ELs build a sufficiently strong educational foundation for these students?

There exists a pressing need for greater understanding of the most appropriate and meaningful ways for districts to support EL parent engagement. Indeed, parent involvement is still too often an addendum to the work done in schools when, in fact, it offers the potential to be one of the most effective tools for improving student achievement. Finally, given the many demands on their plates and opportunities for action, how do district leaders prioritize their work in ways that will lead most powerfully to change?

Finally, the research community hears the student voice too infrequently. These voices, especially at the secondary level, are likely to bring a powerful perspective on EL needs and concerns. Students know intimately the nature of parental support they receive at home, the rapport they feel with teachers, and the reasons behind their own disengagement from learning. Their contributions to the knowledge-base regarding their greatest challenges, highest aspirations, and need for supports should not be overlooked. Their voices are especially important for understanding the appropriate roles for students in advancing their own achievement. Clearly, areas for further research abound. Indeed, at this point in time, one can never overstate the need for more research on adolescent ELs regarding all facets of their education.
Conclusions

Ever a nation of immigrants, America has not experienced a single moment of success that has not been deeply rooted in its ability to cultivate and tap the potential of those new to the homeland. Logic, therefore, would dictate that as the demands of the global economy and the needs of the nation’s immigrant children evolve over time, improving the very educational systems that ensure the capacity of continued generations of immigrant children to make productive contributions to society would constitute a sound social strategy. Nevertheless, for a multitude of reasons, ranging from xenophobic, anti-immigrant tendencies to deeply institutionalized acceptance of inequity, to ignorance, America’s public schools have not met the challenge. Indeed, opportunities to learn for successive generations of immigrant students have long remained limited by policies, curriculum choices, funding decisions, access to quality teachers and appropriate learning materials, organizational structures, and expectations. Not surprisingly, growing numbers of these children are not succeeding in attaining English proficiency or mastering academic standards despite years in U.S. public schools. In fact, by the time they reach secondary school, most ELs in California were either born in the United States or have attended U.S. public schools since kindergarten. Lamentably, the potential of growing segments of our nation’s first- and second-generation immigrant student populations to make positive contributions to society remains uncultivated and untapped.

Although the predicament of these children has increasingly become the focus of accountability systems and a plethora of reforms over the past decade, the forces resisting change have been amassing for considerably longer. Ineffective paradigms for educating EL children have become deeply embedded in the minds and practices of a multitude of
stakeholders. Few educational entities possess the breadth of influence or wield the array of instruments for combating such resistance and greasing the wheels of change over a large number of schools that school districts do. Indeed, although federal and state policies may compel profound change through policy mandates and resources, districts ultimately retain considerable power in the manner in which they implement these policies.

My research demonstrates that not only do districts have considerable latitude for action in improving schools for ELs, but there is also a substantial body of literature to guide their work in this regard. My primary contribution lies in my synthesis of the research on the district’s capacity for action and that on best practices for ELs in order to produce a rubric to guide district leadership in this area. The application of this rubric to my analysis of work in AUHSD reveals that district leaders are, in fact, pursuing promising change on a number of fronts that coincide with recommendations in the rubric. In most cases, these initiatives are still in relatively nascent stages of implementation and have not yet produced strong results. Most district efforts to date have concentrated on its many Program Improvement middle schools. Although it is not possible to prove causality, this approach has coincided with an overall increase in EL academic proficiency rates and a closing of the EL-all student gap on middle schools since 2004-2005. The same cannot be said for district high schools. Overall, in the words of one middle-school program coordinator, “The ball is rolling. It’s just matter of reaching critical mass. We’re not at the point where we are all on board doing the exact things or 100% in agreement, but the ball is rolling and we’re making progress.”
The AUHSD study also demonstrates that there exist a number of areas where additional attention is still needed if the forces resisting change on behalf of ELs are to be permanently vanquished. Some of this additional work may require that deeply committed leaders be willing to challenge the established order occasionally. As several researchers suggest, risk-taking skills must be part of the social justice leader’s repertoire. Indeed, building the American dream has always required that people take substantial risks in the name of democracy, justice, and progress.

A final note: as we increasingly look to districts to assume this important work, we must also be realistic about their limitations and our willingness to invest in their capacity to undertake this work. Doing the job right often requires doing more on the job—although district leaders have the latitude to act on many fronts, they are not possessed of the infinitely elastic time, skills, and resources the effort ostensibly demands. Mounting fiscal pressures on state and local governments often prompt calls that resource cuts occur as far away as possible from the classroom, placing investments made at the district level first on the chopping block. Communities are too often unaware of the value-added districts bring to the education equation and particularly the critical capacity of districts to pursue the dual goals of increasing in student achievement and equity of opportunity across schools. In some cases, district leaders may not be doing a good job of making this capacity apparent. In others, districts may not be actualizing their potential. In most cases, it is likely a combination of the two. If we believe that districts are potentially powerful actors on behalf of ELs we must invest in their capacity to do so.
Ultimately, the job of ensuring that ELs receive quality education falls to all of society. Quite simply, it is only through the provision of excellent and equitable education for each and every one of these children that many future moments of American success can be assured. As district leaders, school board members, teachers, parents, students, and others who inhabit this land of abundant opportunity—we all benefit when EL children are educated well.
REFERENCES


District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC). (2010). *DELAC Executive Committee Report to the AUHSD Board of Trustees, June 3*. (Internal district document).


## Programs for English Learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD)</td>
<td>Specified periods of instruction focused on development of English language skills (grammar, vocabulary, communication).</td>
<td>Development of English language skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content-based ESL</td>
<td>Specified periods of ESL instruction focused on development of academic content.</td>
<td>Development of English skills in academic content areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sheltered instruction(^*)</td>
<td>Specified periods of ESL instruction focused on development of academic content.</td>
<td>Development of academic content knowledge in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured immersion(^*)</td>
<td>Subject matter instruction in English that is modified to be comprehensible. All students in class are ELs but do not all have similar language backgrounds.</td>
<td>Development of academic content knowledge in English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transitional bilingual</td>
<td>Some subject matter instruction in native language with gradual shift toward using mostly English as proficiency of students’ increases. Most students are ELs.</td>
<td>Development of academic content knowledge and rapid transition to English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance bilingual</td>
<td>Significant amounts of subject matter instruction in native language. Native language instruction does not diminish as proficiency in English increases. All students are ELs from same language background.</td>
<td>Development of academic proficiency in both English and the native language</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two-way bilingual or dual immersion</td>
<td>Classes include a portion of students who are native English speakers and a portion who are native speakers of another non-English language.</td>
<td>Development of proficiency in both languages for both groups of students.</td>
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\(^*\)In California, ELs who lack reasonable fluency in English, which is typically defined by school districts according to students’ performance on the CELDT test, are placed in Structured English Immersion (SEI) classes. Structured English Immersion, according the State’s Education Code, is as an English language acquisition process in which nearly all classroom instruction is in English, but the curriculum and presentation are designed for children who are learning the language. Structured English Immersion typically includes English language development (ELD) appropriate to each student’s level of English proficiency and content instruction that relies upon specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) as needed to help students access the core curriculum. It may also include some primary language support (CDE, 2006).