



April 2014

# Governance Brief

## New Assessment for English Learner Students From the CELDT to the ELPAC

### Introduction

California adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in August 2010 and is currently working with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) on a CCSS-aligned state student assessment system. As part of this effort, the California Department of Education (CDE) is developing a new assessment of English language proficiency for English learner (EL) students. Once developed, the new English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) will replace the current test, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). This brief provides background on the new system and issues related to the new assessments that might be of interest to school board members.

### Background: English language development standards

The English Language Arts (ELA) Content Standards for California Public Schools (1998) and the Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools (1999) "defined what all students in California, including students learning English as a second language, are expected to know and be able to do."<sup>1</sup> The English language development (ELD) standards were first developed by a committee of experts in English language development and assessment and were approved by the State Board in 1999. The purpose of the ELD standards was to supplement the ELA standards with skills that English learners need in order to develop proficiency both in English and in the concepts and content included in the ELA standards. These original ELD standards were the foundation of the CELDT, the legislatively required test<sup>2</sup> of English language proficiency.

In 2012 new ELD standards, the California English Language Development (CA ELD) Standards, were adopted by the State Board. This change necessitated the development of a new test of English language proficiency based on the new standards. Until the new ELPAC test is developed, aligned with the ELD standards, and fully implemented in 2016, the state will continue to administer the CELDT for purposes of initial identification and federal accountability.

### The current EL assessment system

The CELDT is used for the initial identification of students as English learners. It is also used for determining students' English proficiency level in the areas of speaking, listening, reading, and writing and assessing their progress toward English language fluency.

For purposes of initial identification, the CELDT is administered to all students whose home language survey (HLS) indicates that they speak a language other than English at home. The test is administered during a window from July 1 through June 30. This initial assessment identifies students' speaking, listening, reading, writing, and overall proficiency levels. Students who do not meet a certain threshold of English proficiency according to the test are determined to be English learners and the results are used for decisions about instructional support and program placement. Under federal and state law, within 30 days of receiving a CELDT score indicating a student is an English learner, an LEA must notify a parent or guardian of this status and of the services the EL child will receive in an English learner instructional support program.

For determining the progress toward English fluency of students identified as English learners, the CELDT is administered during a testing window from July 1 through October 31. EL students continue to take the CELDT

annually until they reach a level of English language and academic proficiency that allows them to become reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) students. LEAs must establish reclassification policies and procedures based on four state criteria:

- » The language proficiency of the student based on an objective assessment instrument which includes, but is not limited to the CELDT
- » The instructor's evaluation of the student's command of the curriculum
- » The opinion and consultation of parents/guardians
- » The student's performance on the state assessment content skills in English language arts and math skills

## Overview of the proposed ELPAC system

The CDE is working with an existing panel of English language proficiency experts, known as the CELDT Technical Advisory Group, to develop the ELPAC. Their efforts are focused on several changes for the new system. First, they are developing a new initial identification assessment which will be separate from the annual summative assessment instrument. In addition, the summative test will be administered in the spring rather than during the current testing window of late summer through fall. This will allow the results from the summative assessments to be available for instructors before the beginning of the following school year. Finally, the test will eventually be computer-based, as will all CCSS assessments, although the paper and pencil option will continue to be available for a period of time.

The assessment process using the ELPAC system will be the following:

- » **Home Language Survey (HLS):** LEAs will continue to distribute the HLS as the first step in identifying students whose primary language is not English. The HLS indicates if a student speaks a language other than English at home some or all of the time.
- » **ELPAC Initial Identification Assessment:** The ELPAC Initial Identification Assessment (IIA) will be used to determine whether or not a student is an English learner. The ELPAC IIA will be shorter and more targeted than the CELDT. LEA's will score the IIA at the local level, which will result in a quicker turnaround of test results and facilitate timelier placement of students in the appropriate programs.
- » **ELPAC summative assessment:** All identified ELs will be given the ELPAC summative assessment

each spring. The results will be used to determine English learners' progress in reading, writing, listening, and speaking and for federal accountability purposes. In addition, because the summative test is administered in the spring, test results will be available to teachers by the beginning of the academic school year, providing information to guide their instructional planning. This information, along with results of the state's academic assessment tests, can also help LEAs determine the effectiveness of their targeted ELD instruction.

The CDE does not currently have the resources to develop any formative assessment tools for EL instruction. However, the department offers resources that can help guide LEAs to develop targeted instruction for ELs. These resources include the CDE's professional learning modules, new ELD supplemental instructional materials, and the Understanding Language Initiative at Stanford University. It is at the discretion of LEA's to develop or purchase their own instructional tools for EL programs.

## Schedule of ELPAC implementation

The CDE recommends that the transition from the CELDT to the ELPAC be completed by 2016-17. However, this date may be subject to change, due to budget considerations. According to the California Department of Education, the projected timeline for transition and implementation of the ELPAC is as follows:

- » **Spring 2014:** Technical Advisory Group convened to create ELPAC test blueprint guidelines.
- » **Summer 2014:** CDE to release the Request for Proposals for the ELPAC initial identification and annual summative assessments.
- » **Winter 2014–15:** CDE may award a contract to develop ELPAC initial identification and annual summative assessments.
- » **Spring 2015:** SBE may consider new ELPAC K-12 test blueprints based on 2012 ELD Standards for approval.
- » **Fall 2015:** SBE may consider ELPAC performance descriptors for approval.
- » **Fall 2015:** ELPAC initial identification assessment may be field tested by ELPAC contractor.
- » **Winter 2015–16:** SBE may consider approval of commencing the rulemaking process for the ELPAC regulations.

- » **Spring 2016:** ELPAC summative assessment may be field tested by ELPAC contractor.
- » **2016–17:** ELPAC contractor may administer the operational ELPAC initial identification assessment and annual summative assessment.
- » **2016–17:** SBE may consider ELPAC performance-level cut scores for approval.<sup>3</sup>

## The ELPAC and federal and state accountability

Currently the CELDT is used to determine whether LEAs have met two of the three federally established Annual Measureable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) under Title III. These include how many ELs have achieved English language proficiency and how many have advanced at least one proficiency level during the school year. Eventually the ELPAC will replace the CELDT for all of these purposes. Until the ELPAC system is finalized, local education agencies are required to continue to administer the CELDT as the measure of English language proficiency for purposes of federal accountability.

The ELPAC is likely to be part of the new state accountability system as well. As part of the recently approved Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) that will replace the present K-12 finance system, school districts are required to develop a three-year set of prioritized goals and a plan for achieving these by July 1, 2014. These Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) are submitted to county offices of education for approval. Detailed guidance regarding specific measures of accountability is forthcoming from the State Board of Education (SBE) in spring of 2014. However, the ELPAC will likely be included as a measure of local accountability for English learner progress toward English fluency.

## Questions and issues for schools boards

- » How many students in our district typically take the CELDT and what is our rate of reclassifying students as English proficient?
- » How many of our students are considered long-term English learners? What is their rate of reclassification?
- » If the ELPAC is not available soon, how will we use test results from the CELDT that are not consistent with the CCSS changes?

- » The ELPAC will eventually be part of the CCSS online assessment system, so it will be crucial for school boards to be informed about the readiness of their school districts for this change with regard to hardware, software, bandwidth, student ability to participate in testing through this medium and teacher ability to administer and assist them with this. How are we assessing our technology readiness?
- » Neither the CELDT nor the ELPAC include formative assessments to help guide ELD instruction. What is the district plan to acquire and use formative tests?
- » Under the prior education funding system, the state reimbursed LEAs \$5 for each student who took the CELDT. At present, the cost of administering the ELPAC is undetermined. Boards may want to consider saving some portion of LCFF supplemental funding to train teachers to administer the future ELPAC and to understand the data it provides.

## Additional resources

### CSBA

Governance Brief: Supporting Student Achievement, Issue 1 *Student Assessment System in Flux*  
<http://bit.ly/Qc64oQ>

### California Department of Education

California English Language Development Test: Transitioning to the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California  
<http://bit.ly/1pwAvAn>

SSPI's recommendations report for transitioning to a future assessment system  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sa/ab250.asp>

California English Language Development Test (CELDT) 2012 – 2013 CELDT Information Guide  
<http://bit.ly/1iZarxw>

California English Language Development Test – *CalEdFacts*  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/cefceldt.asp>

Status of the English Language Development Standards implementation plan for California  
<http://bit.ly/1eKyH4Z>

California English Language Development Standards Implementation Plan  
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/eldstandards.asp>

## *Other*

California Legislative Analyst's Office: An overview of the Local Control Funding Formula  
<http://lao.ca.gov/reports/2013/edu/lcff/lcff-072913.pdf>

## **Endnotes**

- 1 California English Language Development Standards, page 11; <http://bit.ly/1p0wr8>).
- 2 Assembly Bill 748. (1997). Now, California Education Code Sections 60810-60812.
- 3 Downloaded from California Department of Education on August 28, 2013 at <http://bit.ly/1h5ZUjF>