Reclassifying English Learner Students

July 25, 2024

Presenters and Panelists

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TITLE III OF THE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT (ESEA), AS AMENDED BY THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA)

(20) **ENGLISH LEARNER**.—The term ‘‘English learner’’, when used with respect to an individual, means an individual—

(A) who is aged 3 through 21;

(B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;

(C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;

(ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and

(II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; or

(iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and

(D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual—

(i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards;

(ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or

(iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.

SEC. 3101. ø20 U.S.C. 6811¿ SHORT TITLE.
This part may be cited as the ‘‘English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act’’.

SEC. 3102. ø20 U.S.C. 6812¿ PURPOSES.
The purposes of this part are—
(1) to help ensure that English learners, including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic achievement in English;

(2) to assist all English learners, including immigrant children and youth, to achieve at high levels in academic subjects so that all English learners can meet the same challenging State academic standards that all children are expected to meet;

(3) to assist teachers (including preschool teachers), principals and other school leaders, State educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools in establishing, implementing, and sustaining effective language instruction educational programs designed to assist in teaching English learners, including immigrant children and youth;

(4) to assist teachers (including preschool teachers), principals and other school leaders, State educational agencies, and local educational agencies to develop and enhance their capacity to provide effective instructional programs designed to prepare English learners, including immigrant children and youth, to enter all-English instructional settings; and

(5) to promote parental, family, and community participation in language instruction educational programs for the parents, families, and communities of English learners.

Requirements for an SEA to Establish Standardized Procedures for Classifying and Reclassifying ELs Under the ESEA

- Under Section 3113(b)(2) of the ESEA, as amended by the ESSA, each SEA receiving a Title III, Part A State formula grant must establish and implement standardized statewide entrance and exit procedures for ELs and conduct timely and meaningful consultation with local educational agencies (LEAs) representing the geographic diversity of the State.
- The requirement that the procedures be "statewide" means they must be consistently applied across the State.

Presenters and Panelists

Molly Faulkner-Bond
Research Director,
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Ilana Umansky
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College of Education,
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Julie Lara
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Patricia Sandoval-Taylor
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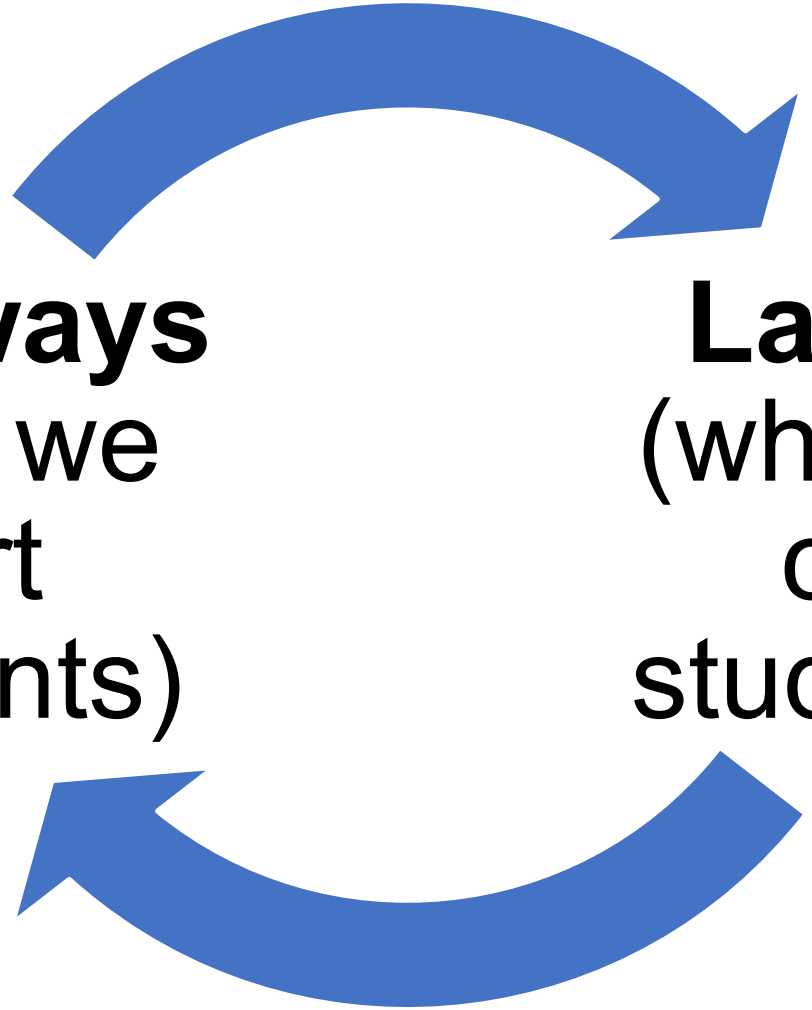
Tucson Unified School District

Framing: Reclassification as the Intersection of Labels and Pathways

Molly Faulkner-Bond
Research Director, WestEd

What's the Connection?



Pathways (how we sort students)

Labels (what we call students)

Examples of Labels Used by the Field

- English learner
- Heritage language learner
- Newcomer student
- Dual language learner
- Initially fluent English proficient
- Long-term English learner
- Former English learner
- Reclassified fluent English proficient
- Emergent bilingual
- Multilingual learner
- Indigenous English learner
- Recently arrived English learner
- Students with limited or interrupted formal education

Labels associated with **program eligibility or participation**

Labels associated with **placement on a predetermined pathway**

Labels associated with **student backgrounds or characteristics**

Examples of Different Pathways

Student	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	**R**						
B	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	**R**	
C									EL	EL	EL	EL	EL
D				EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL
E	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	--			
F	EL	EL	EL	**R**									
G			EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	**R**				
H	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL

Examples of Different Pathways (2)

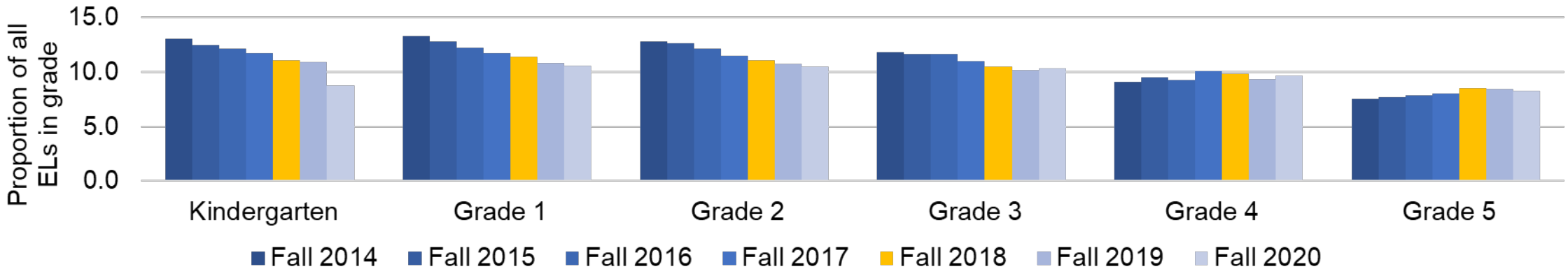
Student	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	**R**						
B	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	**R**	
C									EL	EL	EL	EL	EL
D				EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL
E	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	--			
F	EL	EL	EL	**R**									
G			EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	**R**				
H	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL	EL

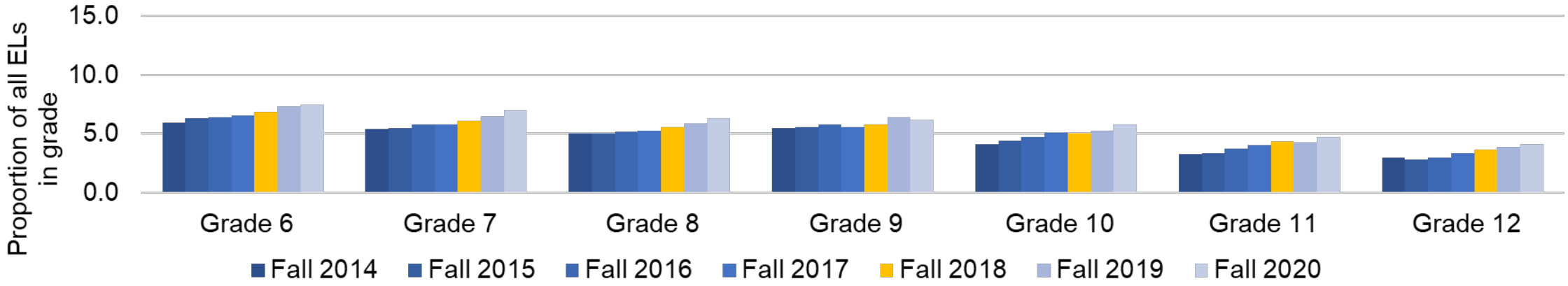
An Example:
Long-Term English Learners

What Does it Mean to be an Long-term English Learner?

- No federal definition.
- States must set maximum timelines to proficiency.
  - These range from 5 to 8 years across states.
- States must report the number of EL students who are not proficient in English after receiving 5 or more years of service.

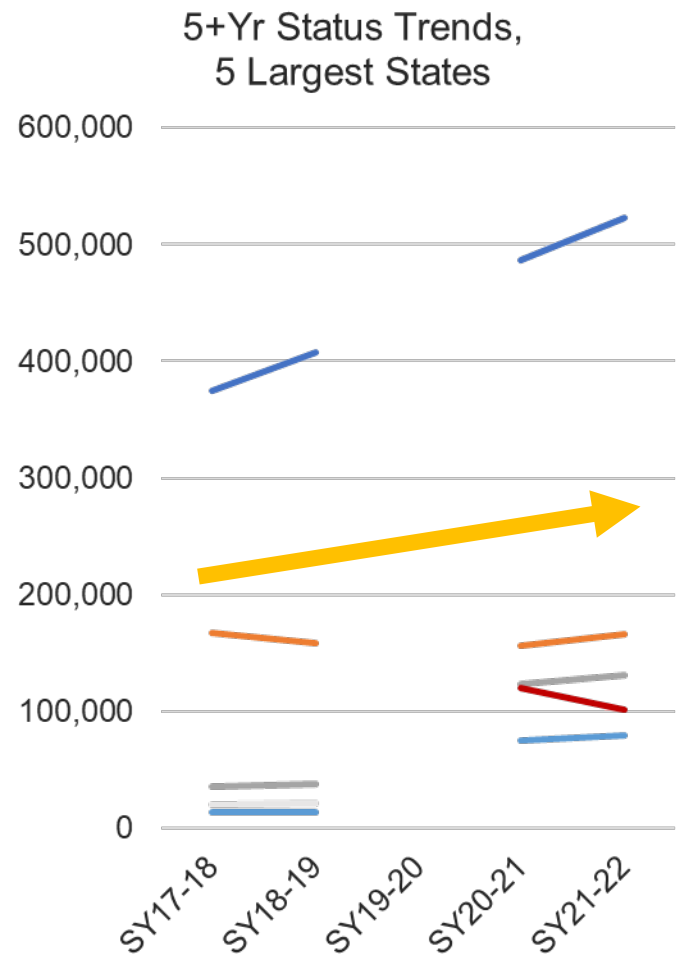
Distribution of EL Students Across Grades (Fall 2014–Fall 2020)

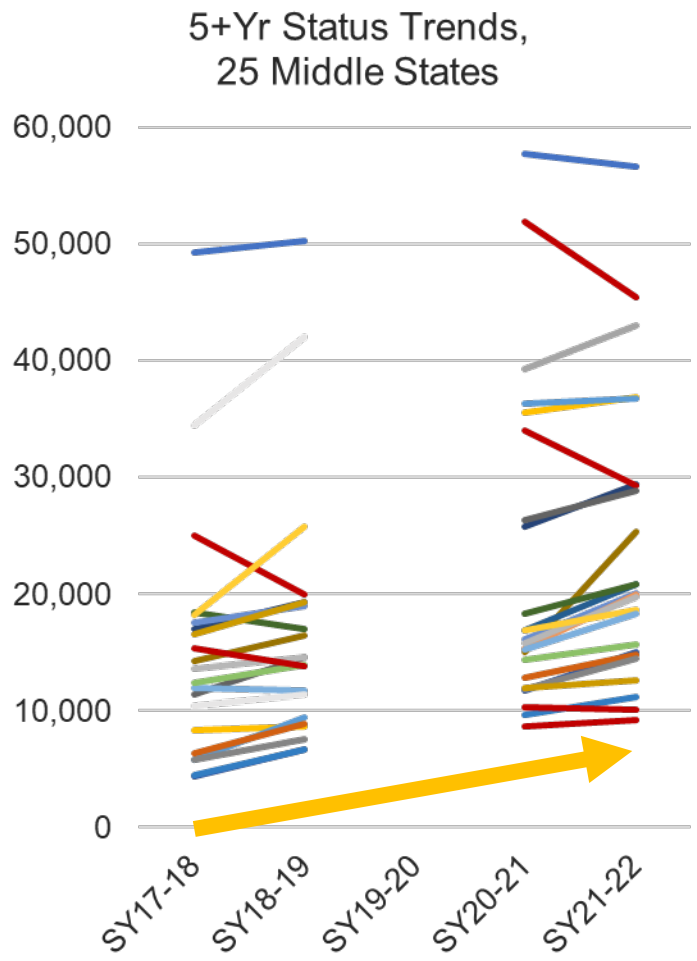


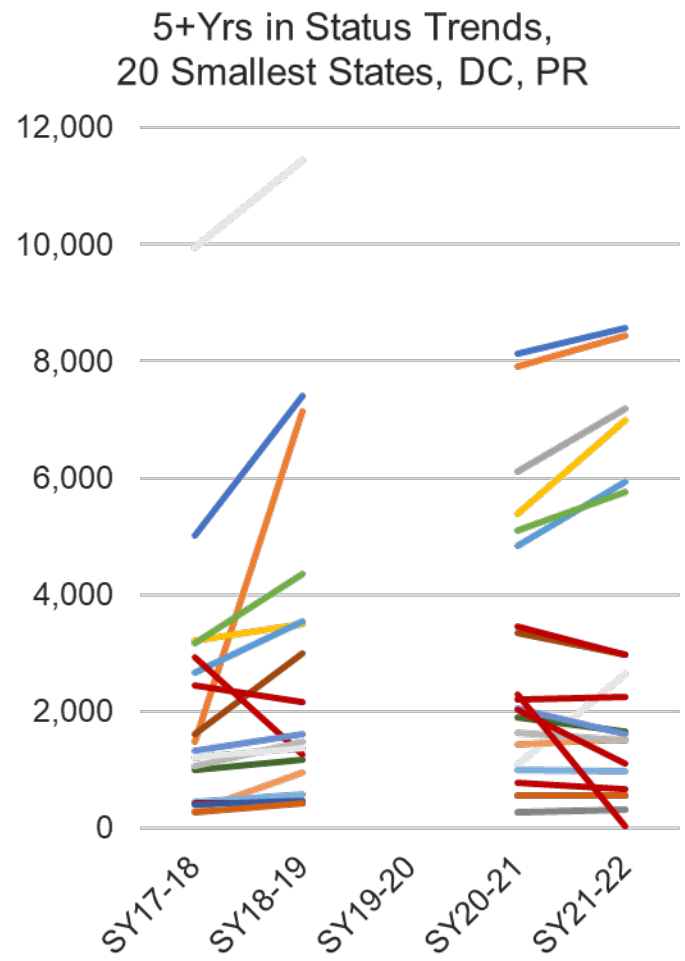


Sources: National Center for Education Statistics – Digest of Education Statistics + Condition of Education

Five-Year Trend: Students Not Proficient After 5 Years

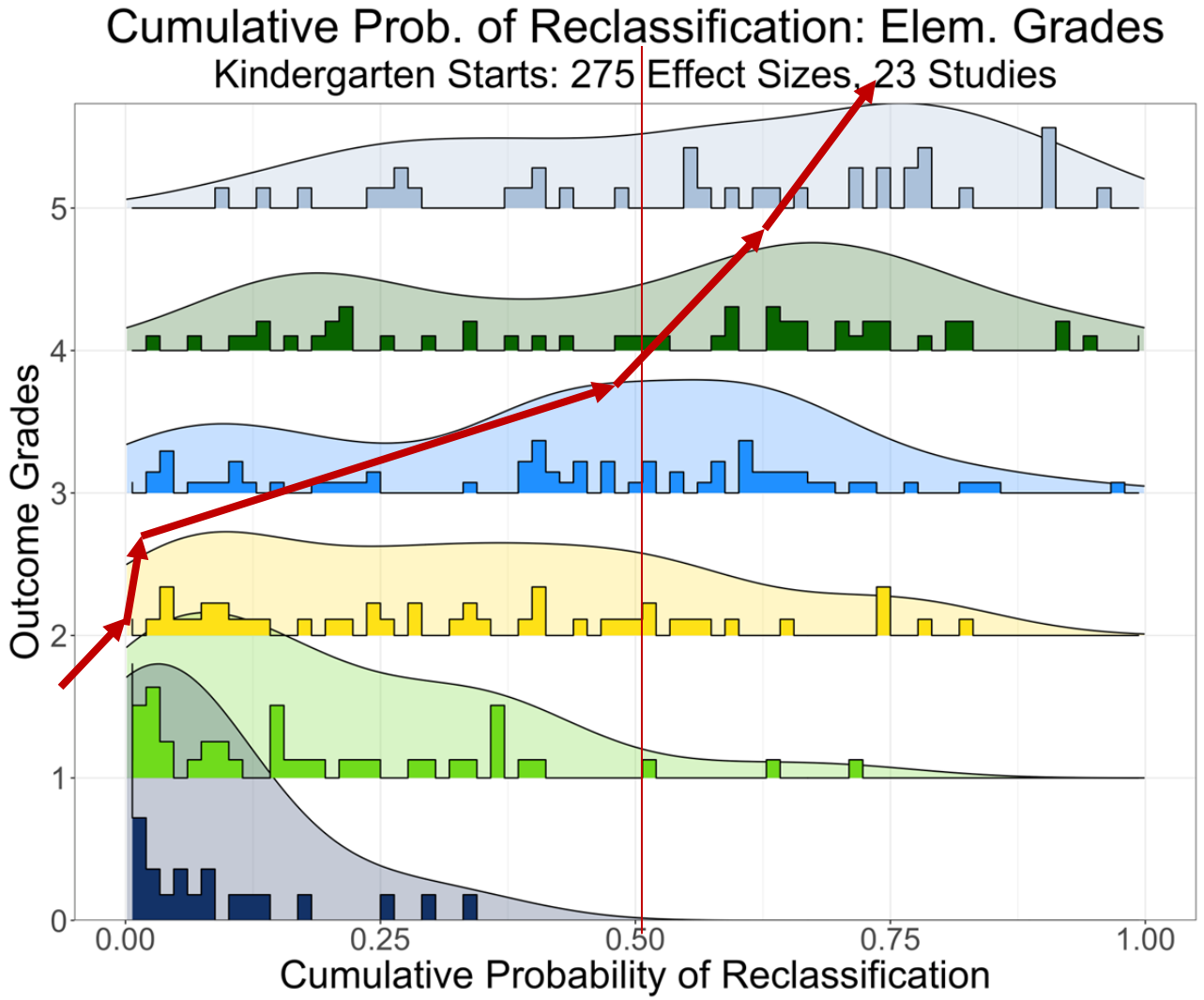






By What Point (Grade) Are Most English Learners* Reclassified?

*who start in kindergarten

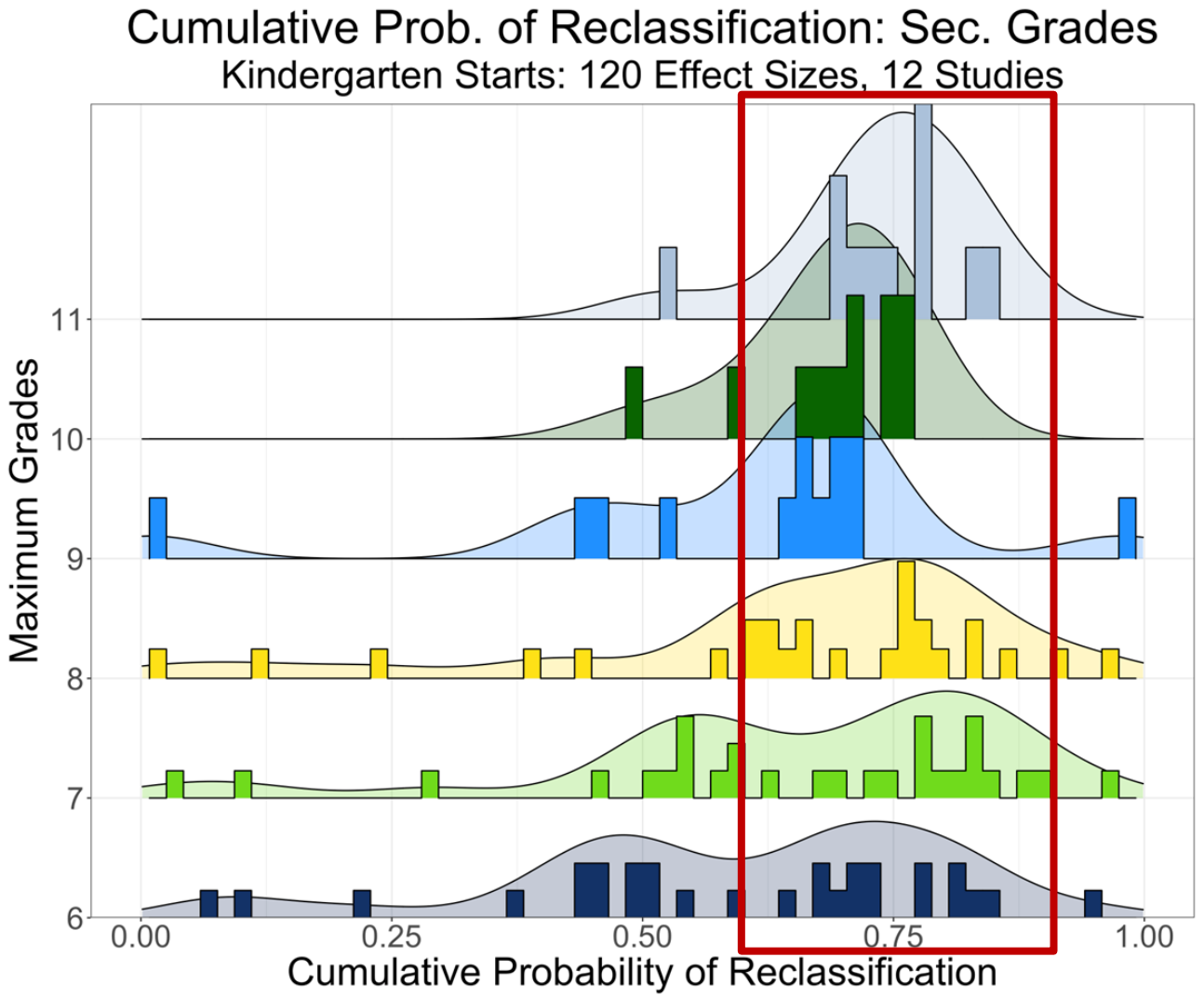


Explanation for Slide 15 diagram

- So here I'm showing results from a recent meta-analysis I did with Dr. Umansky where we looked at all the research that's been done on how long it takes students to reclassify out of EL status under either ESSA or its predecessor, No Child Left Behind.
- So here, we're looking at a bunch of different studies in different settings, and we're focusing only on studies that follow the same students over time, starting in kindergarten. And for one grade at a time, we're looking at the proportion of all those K-start students who have exited from EL status by the time the next grade is over. The question is: what proportion of those K-start students have reclassified after we get through each grade? So after first grade, what proportion of the cohort who started in K are no longer ELs? How about after second grade? We call these cumulative probability estimates because in each grade we're adding new exited students to the count of those who exited in the grades before. And Our hope and expectation is that, by some point before 12th grade, we've have accumulated 100% - that is, ALLof those students who started as ELs in kindergarten have exited from EL status.
- So the bottom row are cumulative probability estimates for K-start students reclassifying by the end of K; next row is K-start students' probability by end of G1, G2, etc., up through G5, so end of elementary school. Different studies find different things, so in each grade we have a range of different outcomes - those are the bars. The "hills" behind the histograms are density plots, so they show where the ES' tend to be clustered.
- What you can see is that, in elementary grades, the longer we follow K students, the more students experience reclassification. So the peaks start slow in the early grades, but than starting in grade 3, they move decisively and monotonically to the right (i.e., more students reclassified) with each grade. In many studies, about half of those K-start students have exited by grade 3, and we're up closer to 75% by grade 5.

By What Point (Grade) Are Most English Learners* Reclassified? (Continued)

*who start in kindergarten



Explanation for Slide 17 diagram

- So if we're at 75% in grade 5, we might hope that 100% of those K-start students will have exited from EL status by, say the end of middle school. But instead what we see when we keep following students into the secondary grades, is that we never really get above 75%.
- So, Here, what we see is that the cumulative ES are all basically in the same place — around 75% regardless of how long we follow students. So in plain language, this is showing us that, among K-start students, the highest cumulative reclass we get is about 75% of the sample. So even if we follow students all the way to the end of HS, about a quarter will never reclassify.
- So circling back to our question: is the growth of EL students in the middle grades a reflection of immigration or of students getting stuck in EL status? Here's more evidence to suggest it's the latter. Students are starting in kindergarten, and some of them are never getting out of EL status.

Upshot: Long-Term English Learners? Or Systemic Shortcomings?

- “Long-term English learner” is a student-oriented label that suggests the **student is struggling or falling short** based on how they progressing along a pathway…
- …but data suggest that it is the **pathways and systems that are failing the students**, not the other way around.

Systemic Considerations

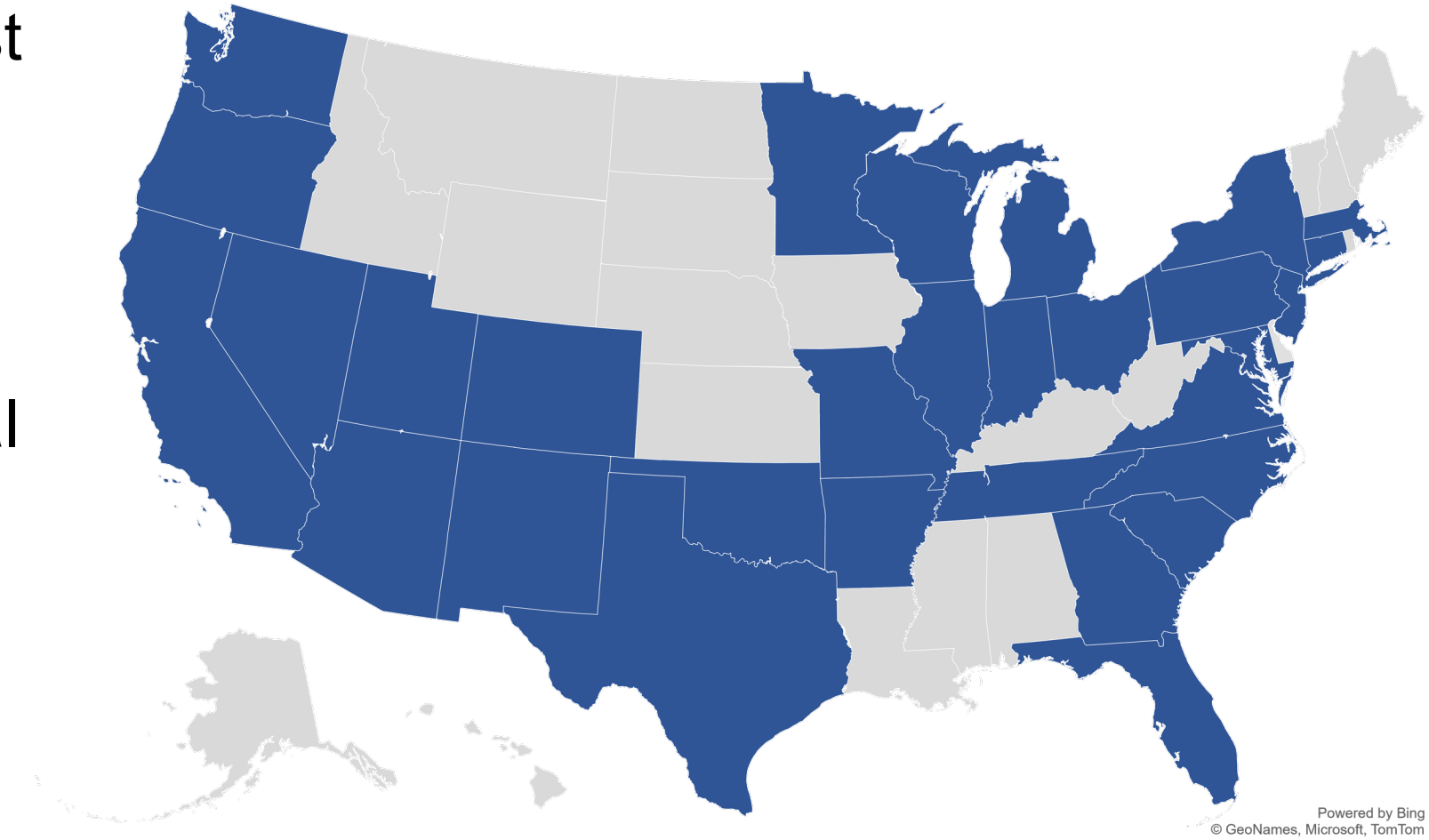
Why might a student spend more than 5 years in EL status?

- Lack of rigor or quality in EL services
- (Services failing to address) Learning or cognitive disabilities
- Dual language program participation
- Parental opt-out of EL services
- Overly stringent or restrictive exit criteria
- Disinterest/lack of engagement on ELP assessment

What about in your context? Tell us in the chat about your experiences with these different scenarios.

Study of the Impact of English Learner Classification and Reclassification Policies

- 30 states with the largest EL populations
- ~95% of all ELs in the country
- 10+ years of statewide, student-level longitudinal data
- 4 research questions
- Multiple national summary products



Research Focus, in Brief

1. **Standardization under ESSA.** Did it happen?
2. **Impacts of entrance/initial classification.** Are we identifying "the right" kids for EL services?
3. **Impact of exit/reclassification.** Are kids getting out at "the right" moment? Are we preparing kids for life after EL status?
4. **Relationships among state and district policies.** To what extent do impacts vary in different districts, and how can districts maximize benefits for students?

Discussion Topics

Molly Faulkner-Bond
Why talk about labels at all? What's the connection between labels and pathways?

Ilana Umansky
What does research show about the impacts of labels on student opportunities and outcomes?

Julie Lara
What can states do to improve student opportunities and experiences?

Patricia Sandoval-Taylor
What can districts do to improve student opportunities and experiences?

The Promises… and Pitfalls… of English Learner-Related Labels

Ilana Umansky
Associate Professor, University of Oregon

The (Infamous) History of the EL (and Related) Label

- LEP: Limited English proficient
- EL: English learner (2015→) (MLL)

But also:

- Long-term EL
- Student with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE)
- NEP, refugee, immigrant, newcomer, migrant, dually identified…

Not to mention:

- Immigration-related terms (illegal, alien)
- Racial, ethnic, linguistic, and religious epithets

Labeling Theory

- EL as “deviance” label (Goffman, 1963; Scheff, 1970)
- “Package deal” (Link & Phelan, 2013)
  - Potentially **beneficial** services
  - Potentially **detrimental** stigma and discrimination

The Promise! The Pitfalls …

HELP
Most basic: Know who among students are learning English
Teachers trained to work with students
Content instruction tailored for students
English language development instruction
Supportive environment for ELs
Content instruction in students' home language

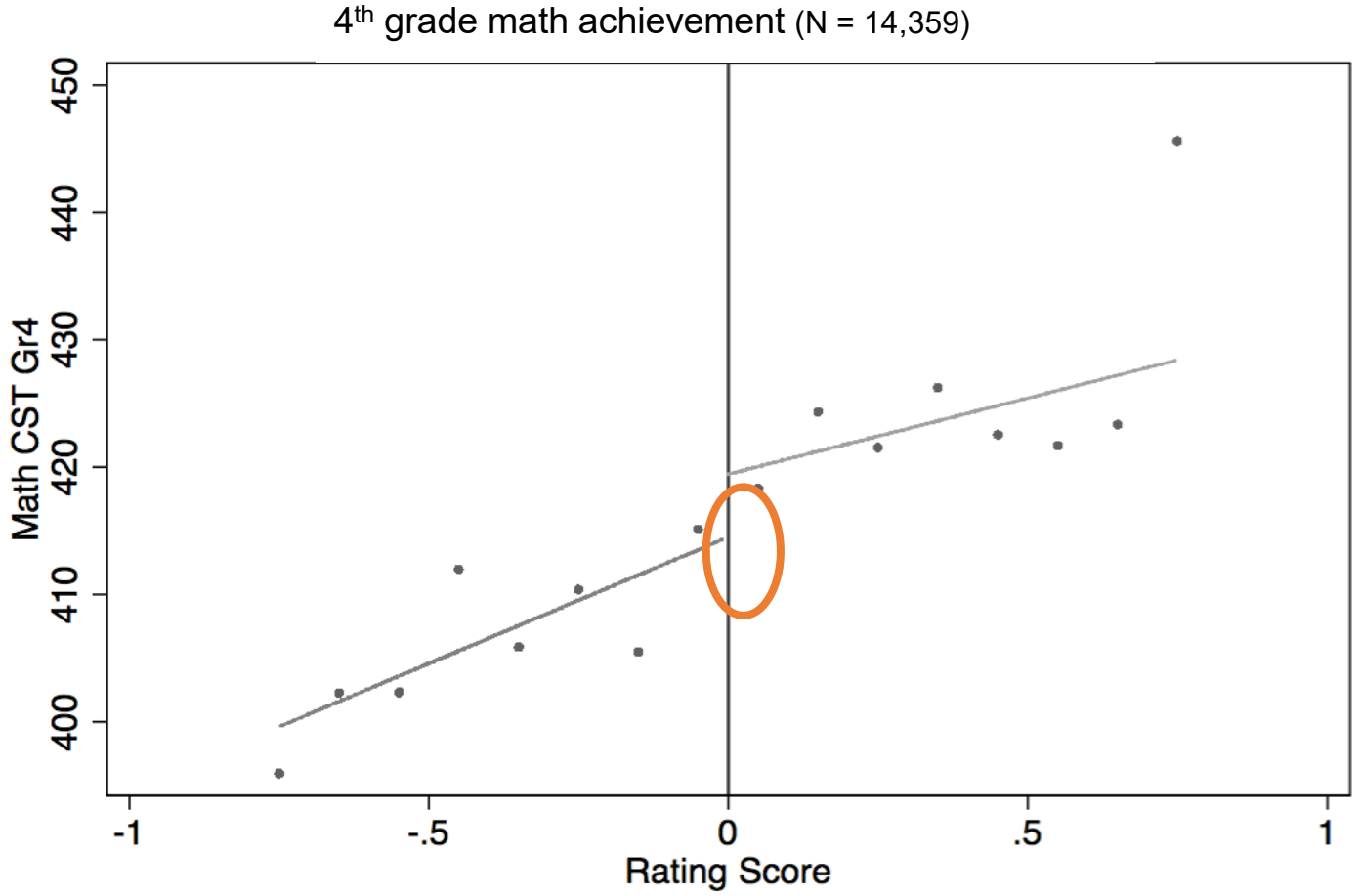
HARM
Single label masks diverse backgrounds/interests
Inappropriate placement into EL classification
Limited access to advanced coursework, full course loads, and specific teachers
Lack of access to English-speaking peers
Social stigmatization and stereotype threat
Low academic expectations from teachers and watered-down curriculum

POSSIBLE MODERATING FACTORS
English proficiency level
Language of instruction
Other contextual factors (COR, policies)

Does EL Classification in Kindergarten Affect Students? If So, How?

- Mixed results: some positive, some negative, some neutral

  "Among multilingual students who enter kindergarten with relatively advanced English proficiency, EL classification results in a substantial negative net impact on math and English language arts test scores in Grades 2 through 10."



Umansky, 2016

Does EL Classification in Kindergarten Affect Students Chart Explanation

This is from a study from 2015

Since this study several other studies have looked at the effects of being classified as EL in K. As we predicted earlier, these studies come to some different conclusions.

- This study — no effect in bilingual classrooms.
- A study by Nami Shin found small positive effects of EL classification in LAUSD.
- A study in Alaska that I worked on with colleagues Manuel Vazquez Cano and Lorna Porter indicates that EL in K negatively impacts Alaska Native students but not other students.
- A study by Angela Johnson suggests that EL classification in K has no effect on graduation.

So we know that how EL classification impacts you depends on who you are, what outcome you're looking at, how far out you are measuring, etc.

What this study does is to take advantage of a natural experiment. Students who score let's say 350 on the CELDT test become an IFEP, but students who score a 349 become an EL. However, test measurement error and small chance occurrences mean that on average students who score 349 are no different from those who score 350. Maybe one kid made a correct chance guess on one question and another kid didn't. Or a siren was going off outside of the room where one kid was taking a test and didn't for another.

In this method we estimate the academic achievement of students just above and just below the CELDT cut score. We track these students over time, make sure that nothing else differs for these students except their language classification and resulting services, and we can measure what the impact is of having fallen on one side or the other.

In this graph we have CELDT scores on the x axis, and the vertical line represents the cut score for IFEP classification. The y axis is 4th grade math CST scores (the California standardized test). We estimate the point just on the left of the vertical line and just on the right of the vertical line. The red circle is our estimate of the causal impact of EL classification and services and in this case of 4th grade math our estimate is that EL status results in roughly a 10-point drop on the CELDT.

Population of Causal Inference: Language minority K-entrant students in one school district who score close to the EL-IFEP cut point on the CELDT in the 2000s.

Idea is that just at the cut score — here the vertical line at 0 — students are randomly assigned. Any gap between where students fall on the EL side (the left side) and the IFEP side (the right side) is the CAUSAL impact of the classification and services.

- Measurement error in tests.
- One kid eats breakfast that morning and one kid doesn't.

We need a way to estimate what the average CST score is for students just below and just above the cut score. The way we do that is by using a narrow band of data to estimate a regression line of CELDT scores on CST scores and use that regression line to estimate the value of CST at the cut score coming in from the left and from the right.

We can calculate the optimal bandwidth of data to use based on the specific data we have. In this case the optimal bandwidth for all grades and for math and for ELA all fell close to the .75 value. That is .75 SDs above and below the cut score, as pictured here.

To clarify, we aren't estimating the average CST score for students in this range. Instead we are using the relationship of CELDT to CST in this range to calculate our estimate of students' average CST score at the CELDT cut score. I also use smaller and larger bandwidths to make sure that my findings are relatively consistent across bandwidth. In this presentation, however, I focus on the .75 bandwidth.

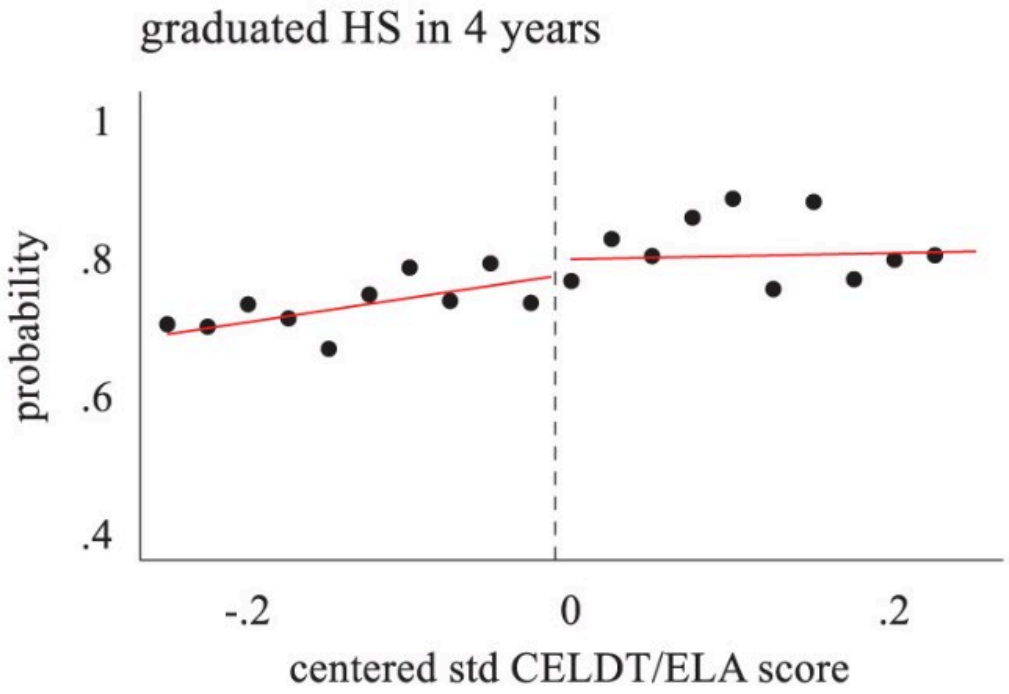
That is what this graph shows. The red circle indicates what we would estimate as the CAUSAL impact of IFEP versus EL classification in 4th grade math CST. In this case we'd conclude that having the IFEP classification and resulting services results in about an 8-point gain in the CST. So if we took an average kid whose English language ability was right at the EL-IFEP cut point and we assigned him to EL status and then we went back in time and assigned that same kid to IFEP status, we'd find that he ended up doing better on the CST as an IFEP than as an EL.

Dots are the average CST at each CELDT binding score level (bined at .02).

What About Failing to Reclassify (i.e., Remaining an EL) Over Time? How Does That Impact Students?

- Again, mixed results.
- Hot off the press! Meta-analytic results:
  - No main effects on ELA, math, or graduation
  - + initial bump; - effects thereafter
  - Early bilingual benefits transition
  - Locale matters (CA v. other contexts)

Effects of Reclassification in 5th grade on High School Graduation (4-yr)



Johnson, 2020

EL Classification Does Many of the Things It is Meant To Do! It Triggers:

- Enrollment in English Language Development (ELD) classes
- Enrollment in sheltered content classes in middle school
- Annual English proficiency testing

Umansky, 2018

Why, Then, Does EL Classification at Times Harm Student Outcomes?

- In a national study:

  "EL classification in kindergarten had a negative effect on teachers' perceptions of student academic skill level in first grade, and in math in second grade. Negative effect sizes ranged from a tenth to a third of a standard deviation."

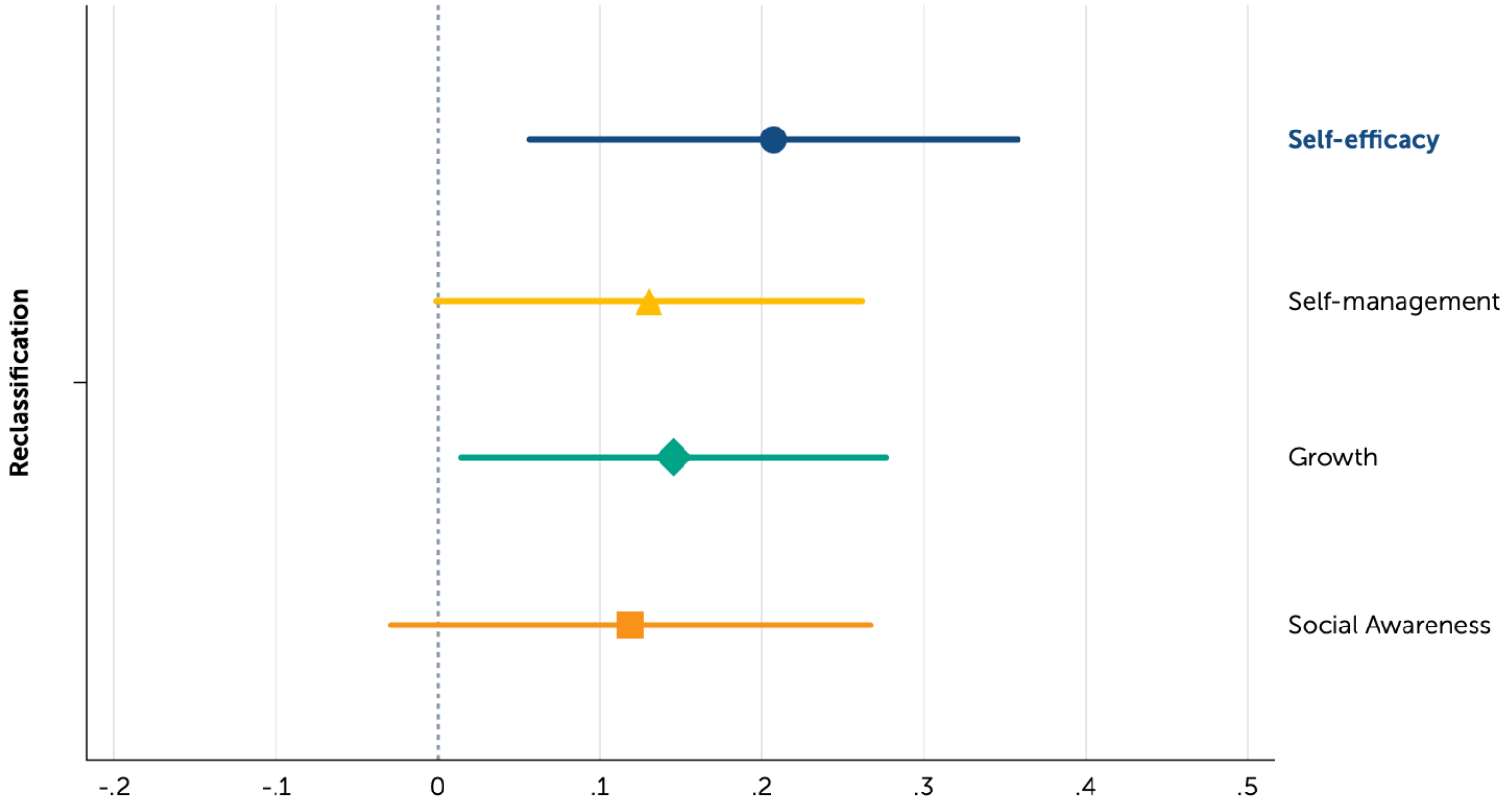
  (LA, math, social studies, science)

Umansky & Dumont, 2021

Why, Then, Does EL Classification at Times Harm Student Outcomes?

- EL status impacts students' ideas of themselves.
- Exiting EL status improves students' self-efficacy with more limited benefits to growth mindset and self-management.

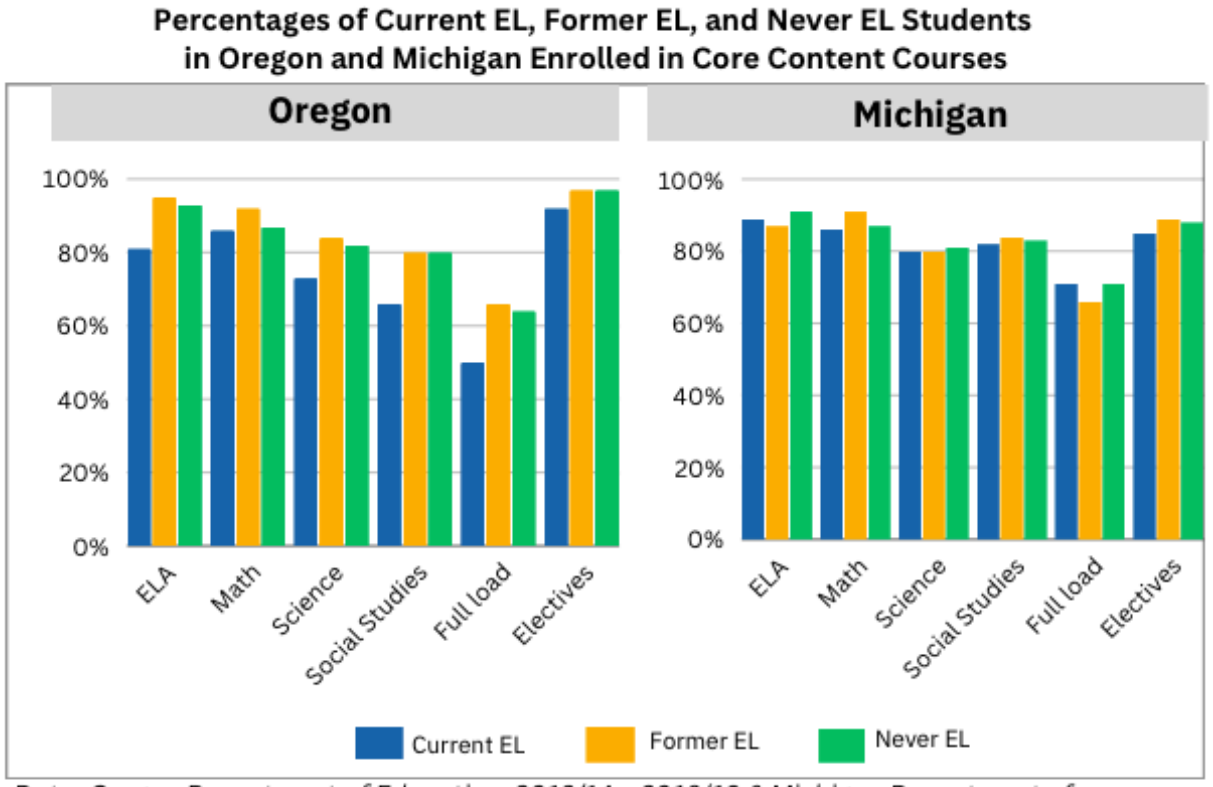
Figure 1. Impacts of Reclassification on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Constructs



Lee & Soland, 2022

Why, Then, Does EL Classification at Times Harm Student Outcomes?

- Several studies find that EL classification results in less access to curricular content.
  - ELA biggest gaps overall
  - Advanced courses
  - Electives may be the first to go
  - Implications for graduation and postsecondary outcomes



Data: Oregon Department of Education, 2013/14 – 2018/19 & Michigan Department of Education, 2011/12-2014/15

Notes: Full load = Enrolled in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies

The Effects of Being Classified As An EL Depend On …

- The kinds of services and resources that students have in school
- Teacher knowledge, skills, and preparation
- Student ELP
- Student age and grade (and other characteristics)
- Language of instruction

We can think of these as MODERATORS because they moderate the ways in which EL status impacts students.

Is the Problem Having a Classification At All?

"There is no monitoring, there is no help, there is no one to orient them. … They are not afraid, but they lose the knowledge that they bring with them. They lose it. They lose it. Because no one is monitoring what they bring with them. Instead, it has to be 'this is how I teach it here."

Father of a transnational student in Oaxaca.

Strategies to Understand and Counter EL Effects in Your Context

- Systematically examine and address EL students' content access.
- Systematically examine and address EL students' participation in special programs (TAG, IEP, after-school programs, etc.).
- Facilitate teacher and staff skills and knowledge through PD & collaboration.
- Use existing data to look not just at EL/non-EL, but former ELs, EL subgroups, etc.

- What else are you doing in your setting?

To Conclude

EL-related labels impact students' experiences, and not always in the ways we want or predict.

We are learning about why and how labels impact students' experiences. Addressing these barriers/practices may be a promising path forward.

Categories and labels play an important role in making students and their interests and outcomes visible.

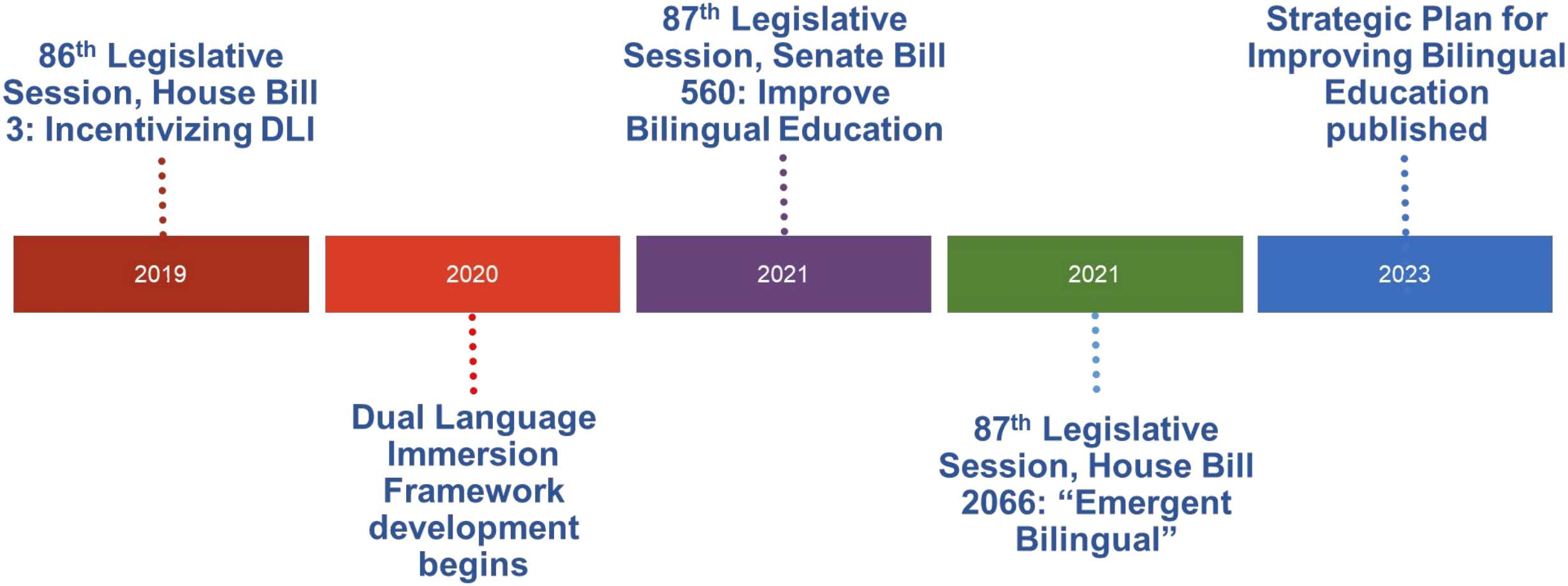
Unidimensional categories obscure diversity of skills, backgrounds, and interests.

Serving Emergent Bilinguals in Texas: The Texas Education Agency's Efforts to Implement Asset-Oriented Labels and Programming

Julie Lara
Emergent Bilingual Support Division Director

Texas Policy Changes

Texas's Legislative Progress Related to Bilingual Education



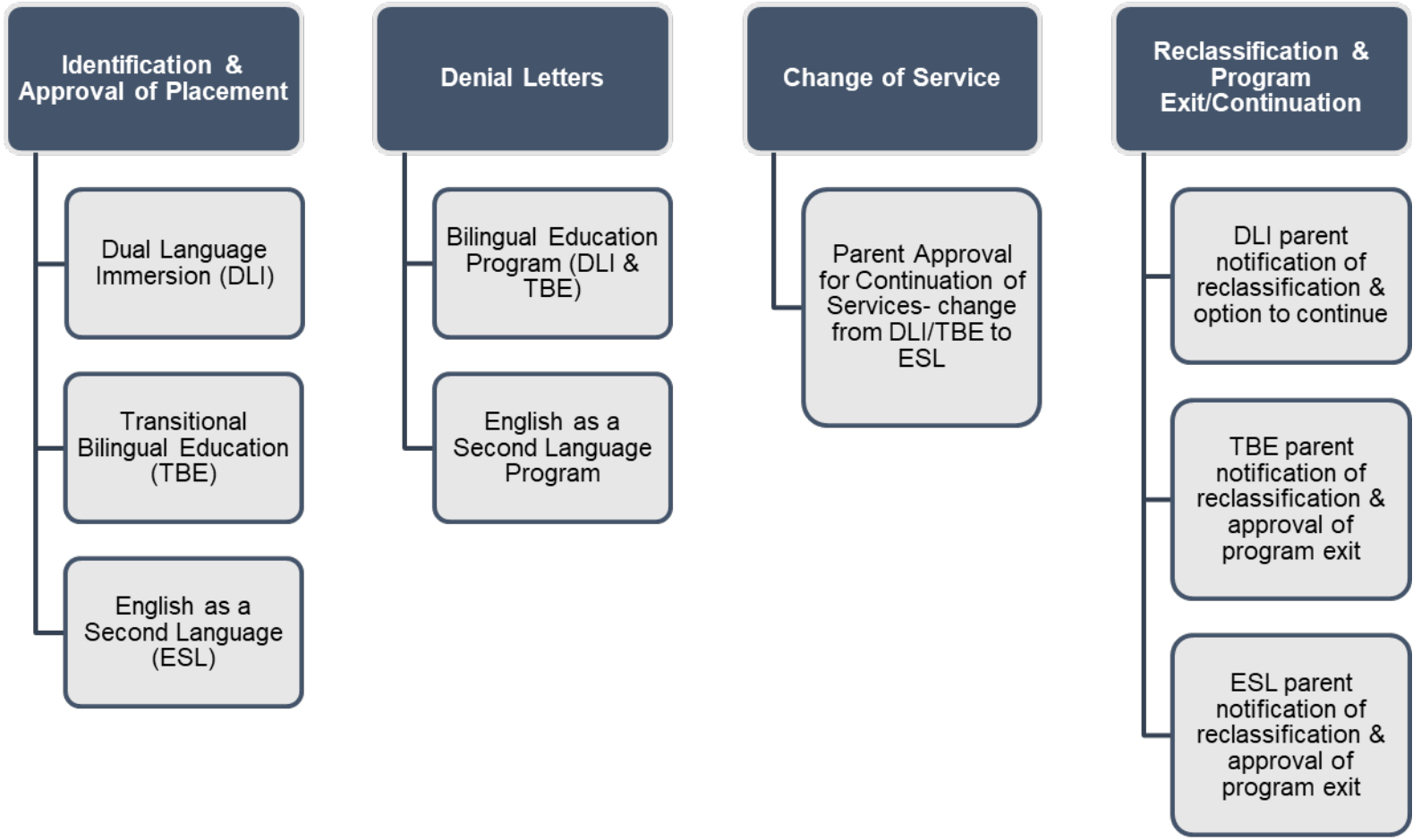
Standardized Home Language Survey

Home Language Survey

- All LEAs must implement the standardized HLS. This can be digital or paper.
- Please refer to the LPAC and Emergent Bilingual Students **FAQ** (page 7) or reach out to your local ESC for further clarification on the HLS.
- Available in 51 languages other than English.
- Available in 21 language packets (standardized letters).

Standardized Letters

All standardized letters can be found on the TEA website in the EB portal under the LPAC tab.
TXEL.org



2024 Reclassification Criteria Chart

Criteria 1: English Language Proficiency Assessment

TELPAS	TELPAS: English Language Proficiency Assessment Starting 2023–2024 SY student must score: ▪ Composite Score of Advanced High ▪ Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System can provide more guidance (page 5.5)

Criteria 2: State Standardized Reading Assessment

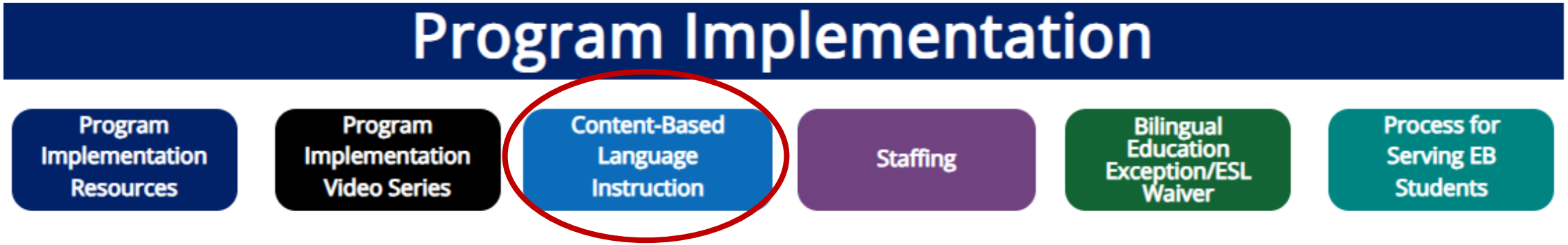
STAAR/EOC	**For 3rd–10th grades** ▪ Administered in English ▪ And if student received designated supports from ARD/504
Iowa Testing: Form F	**For 1st, 2nd, 11th, and 12th grades** ▪ Reading and Language Arts ▪ 40th percentile or above in each

Criteria 3: Teacher Subjective Evaluation

Current Teacher	**Description of Receptive and Expressive Skills** ▪ Grade-appropriate with no linguistic support

TEA Efforts to Grow Instructional Capacity and Rigorous Expectations

Content-Based Language Instruction (CBLI)

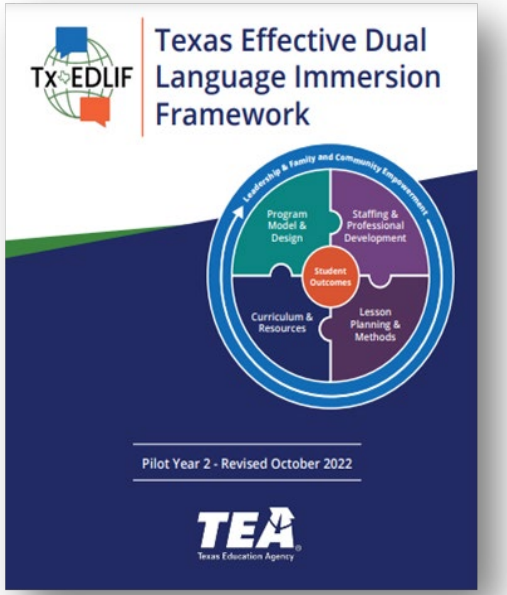


CBLI Website

Texas Effective Dual Language Framework (TxEDLIF)

Paradigm shift focusing on student achievement

DLI education is an enrichment program focusing on **Content Mastery** through partner language and English.

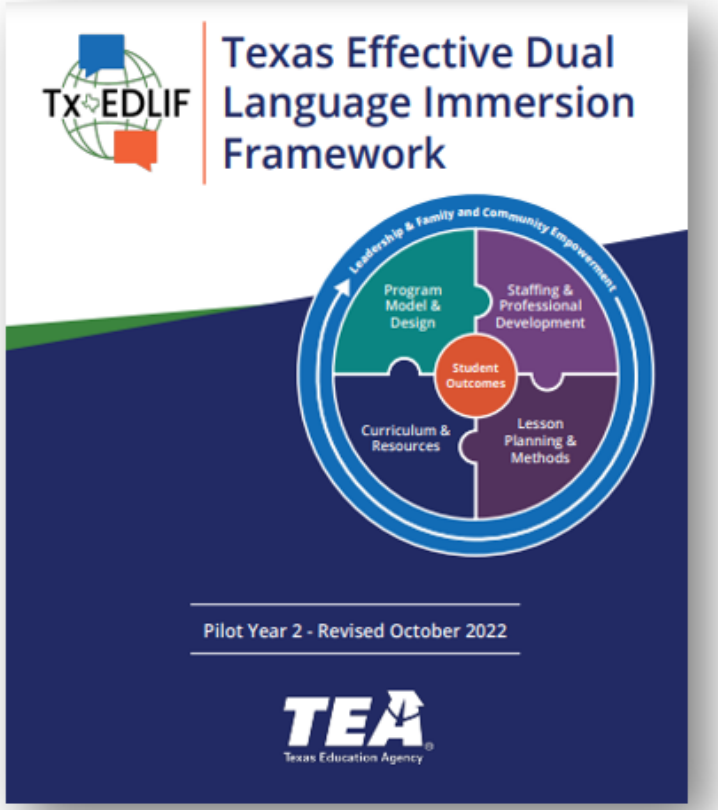


Increase the effectiveness implementation

Increase DLI programs PK-12

Increase student outcomes

Using the Texas Effective Dual Language Immersion Framework to Implement an Effective DLI Program



- Levers: Essential Actions & Key Practices
- 7 Essential Steps
- Success Criteria: Self-Review Card
- Rubric: 3 Levels of Implementation
- Stakeholder Checklists

Goal is to increase EB student outcomes.

It is a pleasure to share that Texas, Utah, New York, California, North Carolina, and OELA are collaborating to develop national best practices for DLI!!

OELA with EB Support Division and ESC 1 visited Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD in early March. We observed PK–12th grade DLI classrooms and met with faculty, families, and students.

Serving Language Learners in the Tucson Unified School District (TUSD): EL Programs and Pathways

Patricia Sandoval Taylor
Language Acquisition Department Director, Tucson Unified School District

TUSD's Demographics

- Large urban school district with about 40,000 students.
- 88 schools serving grades K–12.
- Over 5,000 ELs.
- 109 languages in the home.
- Top languages: English, Spanish, Arabic, Somali, Swahili, Kirundi/Kinyarwanda, Vietnamese, Dari/Farsi, and Pashto.
- Last year we received 530 refugees primarily from Afghanistan.
- We are 60 miles from the U.S.-Mexico border and receive unaccompanied youth.
- We have just under 2,000 students who are considered immigrant students.

Languages Spoken in TUSD

- **12% are classified as English learners (ELs)**

Our Story …

- Federal desegregation case (since late 70's)
  - Called for quality education for Latino and African American students
- Arizona English-only voter-approved initiative (since 2000)
  - 4-hour Structured English Immersion model
- Program alignment:
  - Court ordered we work with an expert to align our programs
  - Looked at current research in the field
  - Sought advocacy to create a pathway to best serve language learners
    - School leadership
    - School board
    - State board of education
    - State legislature

Important Contextual Shifts (1)

1. AT THE STATE LEVEL

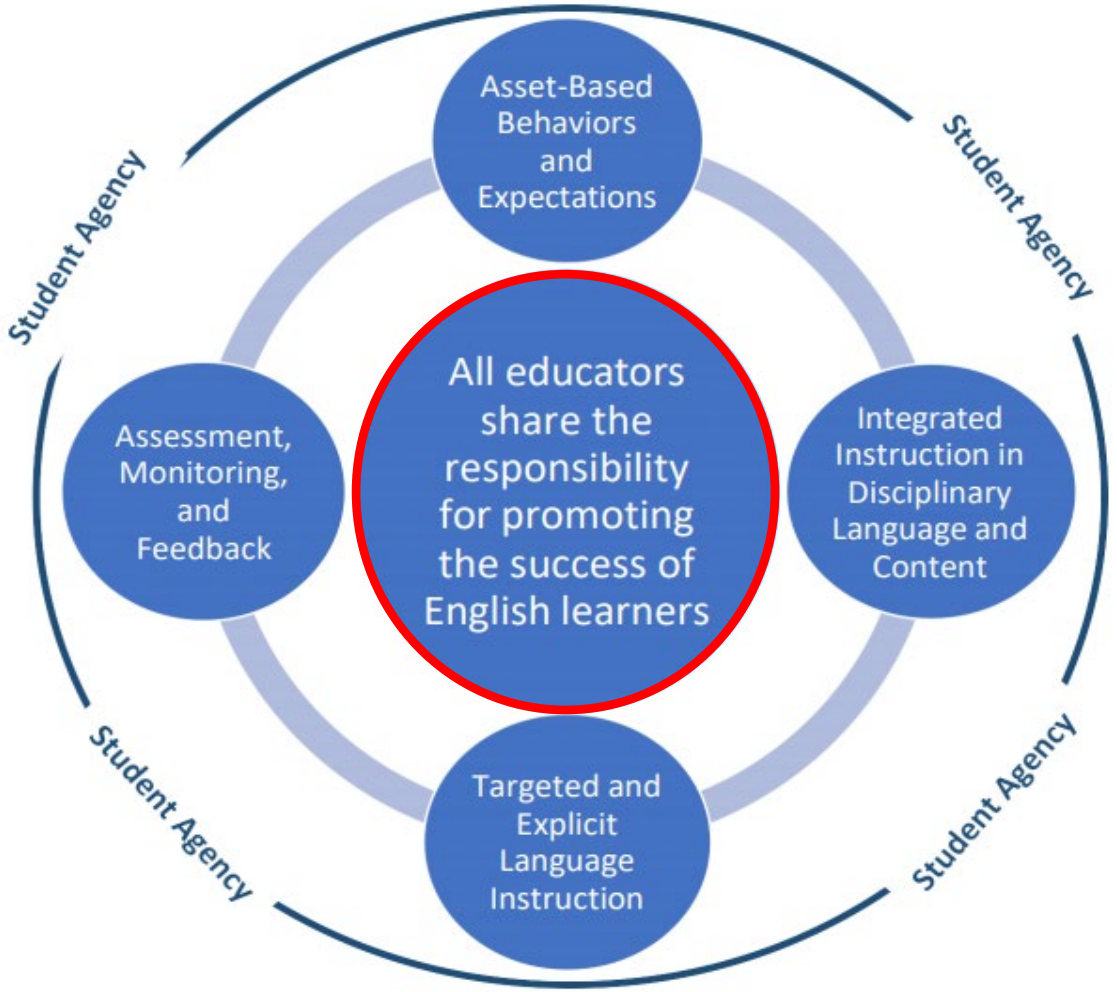
- Met with legislators across the aisle to inform them of the concerns regarding the 4-hour model. Planted the seed for new legislation.
- Participated in state advisory committees to influence changes to the state's Structured English Immersion (SEI) 4-hour model.

Results:

- Legislation to bring flexibility to the 4-hour model came about in 2019.
- The state developed a new LDA Framework (Language Development Approach).
- More pathways were created for ELs to qualify for dual language programs.

Arizona's Language Development Approach (LDA)

- The state's framework



[Arizona's Language Development Approach (azed.gov)]

Important Contextual Shifts (2)

2. AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL

- Met with stakeholders to align the TWDL program and to decide what SEI model we would implement.
- A **district** and individual **school** handbooks were created to reflect the *Guiding Principles of Dual Language Education.*
- The pathway for the TWDL program was defined and the expectation was that all 11 schools would follow the model.
- The SEI models were refined with parameters.

Results:

- We are implementing a 90/10 TWDL program in 12 schools in grades K–12 serving about 2,000 students.
- In 2021, we were able to satisfy a federal court in this area (43-year-old case).
- We have been awarding the *Arizona Seal of Biliteracy* since 2017. This year we have awarded just over 100 Seals on high school diplomas.

TUSD TWDL Model

Language Program Models in TUSD

For all ELs at the Secondary Level

- **SEI (2-hour model)** – Structured English Immersion
- **Newcomer Model (4–hour)** (Only for new arrivals)
- **LIEL Pull-Out** – Low Incidence English Learner model
- **TWDL** – Two-Way Dual Language program (qualifying waiver needed)

For all ELs at the Elementary Level

- **SEI or SEI-B (2-hour model)-** Structured English Immersion
- **LIEL (Pull-Out)** – Low Incidence English Learner model
- **TWDL** – Two-Way Dual Language program (qualifying waiver needed)

Student Labels We Use …

Are based upon the state's labels

- **PHLOTE** – Primary or Home Language Other Than English
- **FEP** – Fluent English Proficient
- **EL** – English Learner
- **R-FEP** – Reclassified (no longer qualifies for ELD services)
- **I-FEP** – Initial Fluent English Proficient

We Still Face Barriers

- The Arizona English-Only law still has strict requirements for ELs to qualify to participate in our TWDL program.
- Enough funding for the large influx of newcomer language learners has been needed.
- These barriers hinder our ability to continue to grow quality language programs.

Wrap-up

Reflection and Moving Forward

Labels Matter	What we call students affects how they see and are seen.
Pathways Matter	Learning opportunities affect current and future academic achievement.
Labels and Pathways Interact	Sometimes we define students by their pathways, or we deny them access to pathways based on their labels.
Asset Orientation Helps	Use labels and design pathways that emphasize what students can do or are capable of.
Think About the Student Perspective	How would you feel being labeled with these terms? What future would you see for yourself on these pathways?

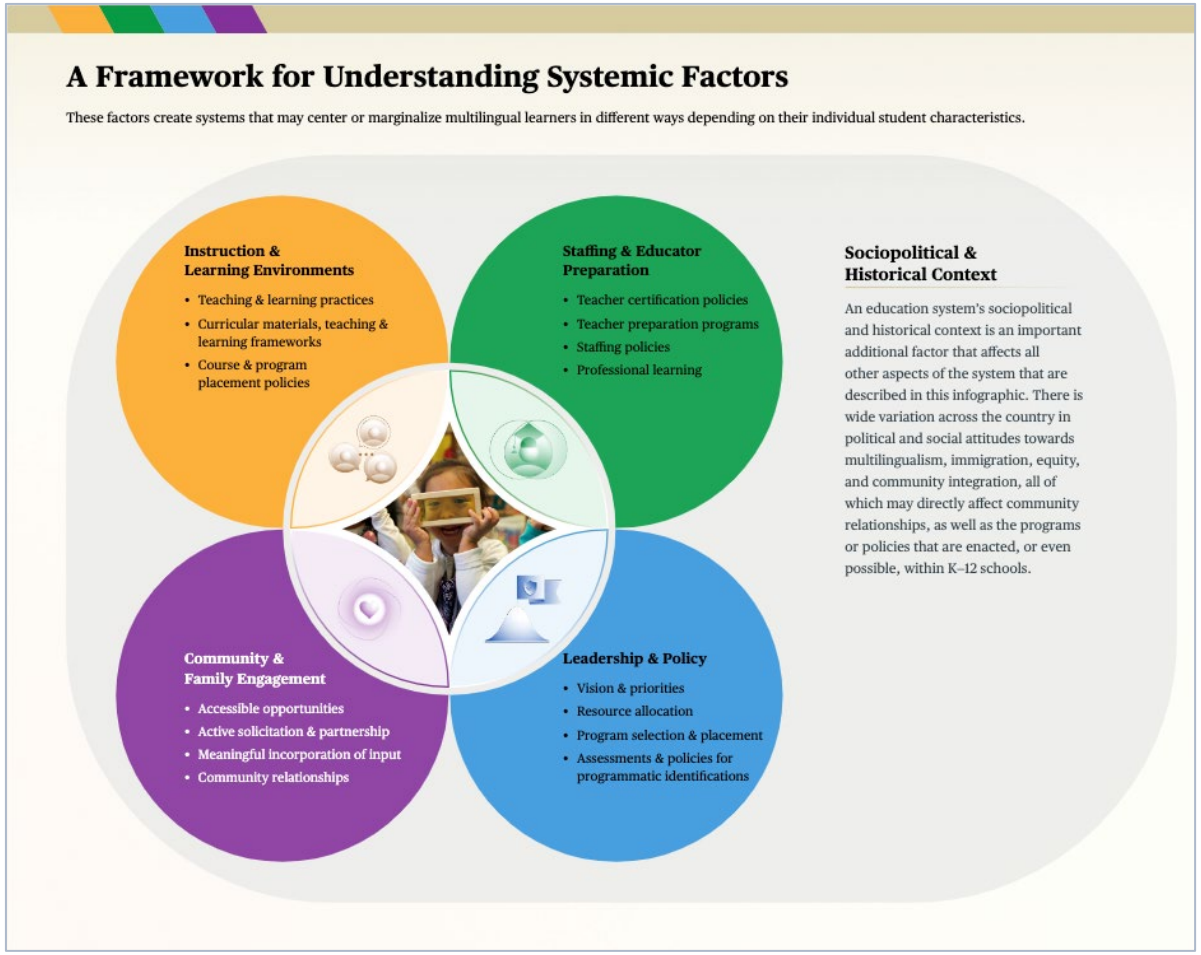
OELA Resources

https://ncela.ed.gov

Two New REL West Infographics

Why do labels matter?

What systemic factors affect opportunities?



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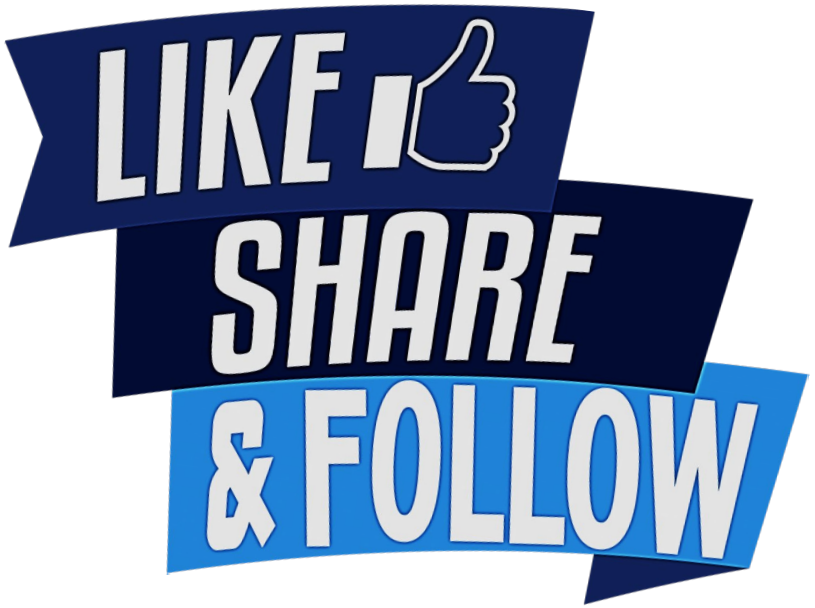

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Jennifer Himmel
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National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition

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Thank You!