



**Understanding and Supporting the
Educational Needs of Recently Arrived
Immigrant English Learner Students:
Lessons for State and Local Education Agencies**

THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The foreign-born population in the United States is larger than it has ever been with over 40 million immigrants living in the country. U.S. classrooms are increasingly diverse, with well over two million foreign-born children ages 5 through 17 enrolled in school, roughly 4.1 percent of the total student population (Brown & Stepler, 2016). Not only are there a record number of immigrant youth, but changing migration patterns have resulted in immigrant families and communities throughout the U.S., not just in traditional immigrant destinations (Massey & Capoferro, 2008; Terrazas, 2011). These arriving immigrants bring tremendous assets and strengths to U.S. classrooms and communities, yet it remains important to build understanding of how existing structures can best support these students' success in U.S. schools.

Recently arrived immigrant English learners (RAIELs) are a highly diverse group, encompassing important subgroups such as students with refugee status, unaccompanied minors, and students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFEs). RAIELs arrive in the U.S. filtering into all grade levels, with varied initial English proficiency levels, educational backgrounds, and home language literacy levels. These students bring unique and valued strengths to the classroom, but also frequently face shared challenges. While RAIELs share with other English learners (ELs) a common need to acquire English proficiency, they also often have needs that non-recently arrived EL students do not typically have. These include mental, physical, and social needs that are shaped by dislocation and trauma exposure; academic needs that pertain to limited or interrupted prior formal schooling; and adjustment to the

norms and characteristics of a new country, community, and school setting (Short & Boyson, 2012; Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). Given this wide range of challenges, it is no surprise that education agencies struggle to develop policies and practices that adequately address RAIELs' needs.

There is limited understanding of who RAIELs are as a student group and how their needs differ from those of English learners more broadly. A number of case studies explore the incorporation of students with refugee status and unaccompanied minors in U.S. schools (e.g., Short & Boyson, 2012), and research has identified a number of student characteristics that are associated with higher or lower academic outcomes among immigrant youth (Suárez-Orozco, Gaytán, Bang, Pakes, O'Connor, & Rhodes, 2010). There is limited, if any, research, however, examining how different levels of the education system (i.e., state, district, school) interact to shape the RAIEL student experience.

This report, and the studies that form the backbone of the findings reported here, were initiated by the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) English Learner State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (EL SCASS). This group, made up of leaders of English learner education from state departments of education across the country, identified a need to understand and improve their work supporting the education of immigrant students who had recently arrived in the U.S.

This report explores answers to three critical questions: (1) Who are recently arrived immigrant EL students? (2) What are their educational needs? and (3) What school, district, and state-level policies and practices are being

implemented to support them? Our hope is that the report offers information, support, and guidance for the work of both state departments of education and local education agencies as they design, implement, adapt, and evaluate their programs, policies, and services for this important group of students.

The report is organized into three main sections. Section I reports findings from descriptive quantitative analyses of RAIEL students in two U.S. states, filling gaps in our understanding of (1) who RAIEL students are, (2) how they are doing in school, and (3) how they are being served in school. Section II reports descriptive findings from case studies conducted in six school districts serving RAIELs around the country. That section is organized around the following two questions: (1) How are districts and schools responding to meet the needs of RAIEL populations? and (2) How do RAIEL supports vary across districts? While we cannot make claims about the effectiveness of any particular district policy or program, we provide an overview of how these districts, all of which were recommended as having innovative practices in place for RAIELs, have stepped up to the challenge of meeting RAIELs' needs. Section III draws on interviews with leaders within 18 state education agencies (SEAs) to examine the role of SEAs in supporting RAIEL education. In that section, we describe what state directors of English learner services (referred to as Title III directors; see Glossary) report as key challenges regarding their work supporting RAIEL education and their perspectives on the main roles that SEAs have in supporting RAIEL education, including key strengths and limitations within those roles.

In this executive summary, we synthesize the main findings from each section of the report.

SECTION I: CHARACTERISTICS AND SCHOOLING OUTCOMES OF RAIELS

Who are RAIELs? In the two states examined, RAIELs were an immensely diverse set of students constituting about 1 percent of the overall student population in each state. Important subgroups of RAIELs included refugee students, migrant students, unaccompanied minors, SLIFEs, and students with disabilities. On average, RAIELs were from low-income families. A sizable proportion of RAIELs were from Spanish-speaking homes, but important populations also spoke Arabic and Somali, among other languages. Characteristics of RAIELs differed by home language (which serves as an imperfect proxy for country or region of origin). RAIELs arrived in U.S. schools at all ages and grades, with the largest proportions entering in kindergarten and the smallest proportions entering in the 11th and 12th grades. RAIELs were often clustered into schools and districts that served large RAIEL populations, but many also attended low-incidence RAIEL schools and districts.

How are RAIELs doing in school? In both states examined, RAIELs had academic performance similar to other ELs but far below that of non-immigrant, English-speaking students. RAIELs' English proficiency levels tended to be lower than other ELs, but they made rapid growth across their first three years in the U.S. Despite rapid growth, most RAIELs were neither English proficient, nor at grade level academically, after three years. Secondary school-aged RAIELs faced steep obstacles for graduation. Graduation rates for these students were between 30 and 60 percent (depending on state and grade of arrival), far below their non-immigrant, English-speaking peers.

How are RAIELs served in school? In the one state where we have data about RAIEL services we found that few RAIEL students, even among those who enter in later grades, were in specialized newcomer programs in school. Instead, the dominant programmatic pattern at the elementary school level was sheltered content instruction, with push-in or pull-out English language development (ELD) instruction. The dominant pattern at the middle and high school levels was a separate ELD class and sheltered content instruction in English. (See Glossary for definitions of newcomer programs, ELD, and sheltered instruction).

SECTION II: THE ROLE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN SUPPORTING RAIEL EDUCATION

The six districts we examined were responding to RAIELs' needs by creating a continuum of supports along the K-12 (and beyond) trajectory and broadening the types of supports at any given point in that continuum. We focused our analyses on five key points on that continuum.

Intake. Intake processes for RAIELs supported two distinct but complementary goals: (1) to obtain information about students and families that would inform program placement and support provisions; and (2) to welcome refugee students and families and facilitate their transition to U.S. schools. Several of the districts created intake offices for RAIEL students or had developed standardized RAIEL intake processes to facilitate these two goals. Related to the first goal, districts used a variety of assessments, including language proficiency (English, and in some cases, home language) and academic tests, stress screeners to identify possible trauma, and parent interviews to

understand students' prior schooling and experiences. Concerning the second goal, districts employed a range of strategies, from taking pictures and videos to introduce students and families to their new schools, to riding the bus to and from school with students during their first week, to assigning RAIELs a buddy or mentor within the school.

Community partnerships. In all districts, community partners offered wraparound services to RAIEL students and families related to housing, food and nutrition, clothing, physical and mental health, supplementary education, adult language learning, and/or translation. In most cases, these services were coordinated by district- or school-based personnel who served as school-community brokers. In general, the most extensive supports offered via community-based partnership organizations tended to focus on refugee students and families, with wraparound services for non-refugee RAIELs primarily offered by school-based staff on a case-by-case basis. These partnerships often allowed school districts to focus more attention on the linguistic and academic needs of RAIELs, trusting that other needs were being supported by partners.

Programs and placements. In elementary schools, districts tended to place RAIELs in general education for most or all of the day, and often tried to place RAIELs with general education teachers who had EL certification (see Glossary). High school offerings tended to be more specialized and separated, sometimes in the form of newcomer centers, other times by clustering RAIELs in particular neighborhood schools. At all levels, districts negotiated a careful balance between supporting what they considered competing

core needs of RAIEL students: academic, social, psychological, linguistic, and career. Decisions about this balance were district-specific and also varied by school level, RAIEL age, district and school leadership philosophy, and community context. Programmatic decisions were intertwined with larger tensions surrounding the need to ensure RAIELs had access to specialized supports while simultaneously addressing their need for opportunities available to the general school population.

Personnel, staffing, and capacity building.

Three key facets of districts’ responses to RAIELs were (1) how EL directors shaped programs, (2) how districts added (or adapted) staff positions, and (3) how districts approached building teacher capacity. EL directors typically played a central role in efforts to welcome RAIELs and coordinate district responses in supporting RAIELs. They shaped programs even as they simultaneously faced many obstacles, chief among them a lack of resources. Districts also created new positions or adapted existing positions to support RAIELs, including positions such as refugee liaisons, community liaisons, and newcomer graduation specialists. Finally, districts responded by creating or offering professional development (PD) opportunities to teachers and administrators in supporting RAIELs (although this often took the form of general EL-related PD). Some districts created incentives for teachers to get EL teacher certification, while others offered more widespread PD on instructional modifications for general education teachers. PD that was more specifically targeted toward RAIEL education focused on refugees or trauma-informed practice, with two districts partnering with refugee resettlement organizations to provide informational PD.

Graduation. School districts grappled with supporting RAIELs’ pathways to graduation, work, and/or post-secondary education. For RAIELs who arrived in elementary and, to a lesser extent, middle school, there was often a sense across districts that these students would be on track to graduate. The prognosis for RAIELs who arrived in their early or later teens, however, was considered more tenuous. While graduation was considered within reach for students able to take credit-bearing classes as they began high school, it was difficult for students to acquire sufficient credits within four years if they began high school in newcomer classes or programs (which typically do not earn content-area credits). This was also true if they were placed into mainstream classes but failed to pass them. Districts had multiple ways of supporting RAIEL students in acquiring graduation credits or in providing alternatives to graduation requirements. These included online credit recovery programs, world language requirements that gave credit for students’ home language literacy, and awarding credits for classes taken outside the U.S. However, graduation rates among older RAIEL students remained an enormous challenge across all six districts.

SECTION III: THE ROLE OF STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES IN SUPPORTING RAIEL EDUCATION

Interviewing Title III directors from 18 states, we found that SEAs face similar challenges with regard to supporting RAIEL education and are developing a set of functions to respond to district, school, and student needs.

Building from challenges. State Title III directors faced shared challenges with regard

to supporting RAIEL education. These common challenges included the following:

- (a) supporting secondary-school age RAIELs,
- (b) collecting data regarding RAIELs,
- (c) implementing effective intake and enrollment policies and practices for RAIELs,
- (d) having sufficient and appropriate RAIEL-specific resources, and
- (e) supporting low-incidence or rapid influx RAIEL districts.

State education agency functions. All state Title III directors reported that their SEA engages in roles of compliance, funding, and technical assistance with regard to RAIEL education. The scope of what that engagement entailed, however, varied across states. There were two areas where there was more variation in the agency role described, as fewer SEAs reported participating in or facilitating networks and partnerships and very few SEAs reported engaging in policymaking specific to RAIELs. We detail each of the five functions below.

Compliance. Federal compliance requirements drove data collection, reporting, and monitoring functions within state Title III divisions. Director responses suggested that their role in compliance work could both limit and enhance the scope of RAIEL-specific actions. Some directors stated that their role could be limited in that often compliance activities were seen to drive or enable agency actions, in effect restricting the areas of Title III directors' work as well as resource allocation. In contrast, other directors reported that federal compliance requirements gave SEAs new authority, allowing the state to mandate specific actions from local education agencies

(LEAs) regarding RAIELs such as requiring additional data collection elements.

Funding. A major role of the SEA was distributing and monitoring funds that originated from state and federal levels. Broader EL Title III funding, as well as more targeted funds, were used to support RAIEL educational initiatives. As with compliance, the state's role in providing and monitoring funding for RAIEL education was described as both inhibiting and enhancing RAIEL education. Limitations were most notably tied to the availability of funds — almost all interviewees expressed that there were simply not enough funds at the federal or state level for RAIEL education. In contrast, some directors expressed that they had the power within their state role to shape funding channels. These directors explained that part of their role was to determine how funds for ELs were distributed to LEAs. This allowed them to actively adjust funding based on significant increases in immigrant student populations, or to support smaller districts that may not have enough EL or immigrant populations to qualify for refugee or immigrant grants (see Glossary).

Technical assistance. All 18 states reported engaging in functions regarding the provision of RAIEL-focused guidance and technical assistance to LEAs. Informal guidance was frequently described in the context of responding to immediate and specific situations arising in schools or districts. Directors described these calls for support as single-case phone calls or emails from district personnel, school administrators, teachers, or even families. SEAs also supported the education of RAIELs through more formalized technical assistance. Technical assistance often included professional development as well

as printed or online resources. Guidance and technical assistance was an area where SEAs appeared to be very active, yet state Title III directors expressed mixed views on their ability to provide accurate and sufficient guidance. Some expressed a sense of not having enough knowledge themselves to be able to support LEAs, while others saw this area as one in which they were able to devote resources to building up expertise to help support LEAs. An example from one state was the internal development of a handbook that focused specifically on RAIEL students, drawing on collaborative stakeholder input to address context-specific LEA needs.

Partnerships/Networks. Education is collaborative work, and many of the state Title III directors interviewed talked extensively about their participation in, or facilitation of, partnerships and networks. Some were very structured and formal, while others were informal and reliant on personal relationships. While the makeup and purpose of collaborative work varied, many described these networks and partnerships as promoting both resources and information-sharing around RAIELs. Nine directors mentioned being part of formal statewide networks that were focused on immigrant and/or refugee needs. In addition to formal networks, eight directors described their engagement as members of informal networks and/or partnerships. Directors often described their role in partnerships and networks (formal or informal) as one that facilitated more meaningful engagement in RAIEL-specific work.

Policymaking. Sixteen out of 18 state Title III directors reported that they did not have specific state-level policies regarding RAIEL education. Two did, both states with relatively large immigrant populations and a history of serving RAIELs in their schools. Notably, the

two states varied regionally, with one in the Midwest and the other in the Northeast. Both directors noted that RAIELs, and SLIFEs more specifically, were student groups of particular focus at the state and local levels. In the first case the state developed a mandated intake process, described as state-level regulations, which included a state-level definition of SLIFE, a survey developed at the state level to identify SLIFEs, an assessment tool to assess home language literacy, a video for parents to inform them of resources and rights at the state level, a requirement that a qualified staff member complete the interview, and a regulation that allows for reassessment of placement decisions to ensure proper student placement. In the second case, the state included RAIEL-specific regulations within larger EL reform legislation. Specifically, the legislation included a focus on capacity-building to support RAIELs as well as a requirement for LEAs to develop individualized learning plans (ILPs; see Glossary) for SLIFEs.

This report explores an important, but often overlooked and poorly understood, need in U.S. schools — the education of recently arrived immigrant English learner students (RAIELs). We hope that the report supports the work of SEAs and LEAs, broadening opportunities and improving experiences and outcomes of recently arrived immigrant EL students.

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INTRODUCTION

MOTIVATION FOR THIS REPORT

The foreign-born population in the United States is larger than it has ever been, with more than 40 million immigrants living in the U.S. in 2014. Classrooms are increasingly diverse, with well over 2 million foreign-born children ages 5 through 17 enrolled in U.S. schools, roughly 4.1 percent of the total student population (Brown & Stepler, 2016). Not only are there a record number of immigrant youth but changing migration patterns have resulted in immigrant families and communities throughout the U.S., not just in traditional immigrant destinations (Massey & Capoferro, 2008, Terrazas, 2011). Classrooms across the U.S. are afforded the opportunity to build upon the strengths that come with diverse student backgrounds, yet education policy challenges persist. State and local education agencies struggle to support the unique and varied needs of foreign-born students.

Recently arrived immigrant English learners (RAIELs) are a highly diverse group, encompassing important subgroups such as students with refugee status, unaccompanied minors, undocumented students, students with disabilities, and students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFEs). RAIELs of all ages come with varied initial English proficiency levels, educational backgrounds, and home language literacy levels. These students bring unique and valued strengths to the classroom, but also frequently face shared challenges. Challenges include the need to acquire English; psychological, physical, and social needs that are shaped by dislocation and trauma exposure; academic needs that pertain to limited or interrupted prior formal schooling; and adjustment to the norms and characteristics of a new country, community, and school setting (Short & Boyson, 2012; Suárez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). Given this wide range of challenges, it is no surprise that education agencies struggle to implement policies and practices that adequately support RAIELs.

Academic outcomes for immigrant youth are improving over time, however there remains a continued need for intervention. The 2014 dropout rate for immigrant students (7.0 percent) is almost double that for U.S. born students (3.8 percent) (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Challenges are compounded for immigrant youth who arrive with limited or no English skills, as English language proficiency is a key predictor of student adjustment and academic success (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2010). Education policymakers and practitioners are becoming increasingly aware of the need to provide specialized supports and policy attention for RAIELs, yet often report insufficient information and resources to do so.

Broadly speaking, there is limited understanding of who RAIELs are as a student group — and how their needs differ from those of English learners more broadly. A number of case studies explore the incorporation of students with refugee status and unaccompanied minors in U.S. schools (e.g., Short & Boyson, 2012), and research has identified a number of student

characteristics that are associated with higher or lower academic outcomes among immigrant youth (Suárez-Orozco, et. al., 2010). Existing research, however, has not taken a systems-level approach toward understanding how different levels of education policy and actors interact to shape the RAIEL student experience.

For immigrant youth, public schools are often primary contact points in their new communities. How youth are supported through psychological, social, and academic adjustment can powerfully impact their life course (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Across all education levels, there is a need to more comprehensively understand how state and local education agencies can develop and implement effective supports for immigrant youth.

GOALS OF THIS REPORT

This report, and the studies that form the backbone of the findings reported here, were initiated by the Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) English Learner State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (EL SCASS). This group, made up of leaders of English learner education from state departments of education across the country, identified a need to understand and improve their work supporting the education of immigrant students who had recently arrived in the U.S.

The EL SCASS identified three priority questions to address: (1) Who are recently arrived immigrant EL students? (2) What are their educational needs? and (3) What are promising school, district, and state-level policies and practices to support them? This report begins to answer these critical questions and offers information, support, and guidance for the work of both state departments of education and local education agencies as they design, implement, adapt, and evaluate their programs, policies, and services for this important group of students.

The report synthesizes findings from three sources within the education system: statewide datasets, local school districts, and state education agencies. A number of key findings emerged regarding (a) state-level RAIEL demographics and outcomes, (b) district level experiences in supporting RAIELs, and (c) state-level policy engagement with RAIEL education. The findings presented in the report are descriptive in nature, and we make no claims regarding the best or most appropriate responses to support RAIELs.

Rather, the goal of this report is to provide an overview of RAIEL education in the United States, outlining both what is in place and what needs remain, as well as to document agencies' perceptions of successes and challenges within existing RAIEL supports.

This report provides an overview of RAIEL education, outlining what is in place, what needs remain, and agencies' perceptions of successes and challenges.

DEFINING TERMS

Throughout the report we use a single term in referring to the main population we are interested in — recently arrived immigrant English learner students, or RAIELs. As is often the case in education, names and terms can be troublesome. They can be troublesome because their definitions are too narrow, or because they are understood or used in different ways by different people, or because they become loaded with unintended meanings or end up having unintended consequences. We have decided to create and use the term RAIEL to be clear in our meaning and attempt to avoid some of these pitfalls.

Before defining RAIEL, we will first explain the terms currently in use in the field, their definitions, and why they are not appropriate for this report.

RAEL, or **recently arrived English learner**, is a term used in the current federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 (ESSA, 2015). The term recently arrived limited English proficient student was used, with the same definition and a similar purpose, in the prior version of the law, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (NCLB, 2001). The Every Student Succeeds Act defines a RAEL student as an English learner student who has been enrolled in U.S. schools for less than 12 months. The purpose of the term is to allow for flexibility in assessment requirements for this group of students. Specifically, states may alter or delay certain assessments of RAEL students (see Linqunti & Cook, 2017). The term, therefore, has a very specific time-based definition. Furthermore, it was not created to have any relevance regarding the educational needs of these students and, in fact, covers a time period that is considerably shorter than necessary to have much bearing on any instructional or educational-based definition (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). For these reasons, RAEL was not chosen as the primary group of interest for this report.

Immigrant children and youth is also a term in ESSA (2015). This term refers to individuals aged 3-21 who were born outside of the U.S. and who have not been in U.S. schools for more than three full academic years. The term is developed and used in ESSA primarily to facilitate identification of school districts that are eligible to receive a federal grant for districts undergoing rapid growth in their immigrant student population. The time embedded in the immigrant term – three years – is more aligned with a length of time one might expect specialized policies, programs, or services for arriving students, as compared with the 12-month definition embedded in RAEL. However, we chose not to use the term immigrant student because it is quite confusing given that the broader societal definition of ‘immigrant’ is simply a person who was born outside of the U.S. In other words, the term ‘immigrant student’ is, outside of ESSA, commonly understood to be a student born abroad, independent of how long he or she has been in the U.S.

Finally, **newcomer** is a commonly used term to describe newly arrived immigrant students. The U.S. Department of Education (US DOE) defines newcomer in their Newcomer Toolkit as “any foreign-born students and their families who have recently arrived in the United States” (US DOE, 2016). This is, therefore, a much more general term and is not linked to any specific

time period. It is also the term that tends to be used at the school and district level to describe recently arrived students. While we debated using the term newcomer throughout this report, we decided against it because it is a very broad, catch-all, term that can be used differently by different people and in different places. For instance, some districts define newcomers by their English proficiency levels, while others define them by the amount of time they have been in the district or the U.S. Still others just use the term generically without any definition. Finally, for our quantitative analysis in Section I of the report we needed to have a term that included a particular period of time since arrival.

For these reasons, we decided to define our population of interest as **recently arrived immigrant English learner students, or RAIELs**. This term combines several important elements. First, it states our interest in students that are recently arrived. By including the term immigrant, we reference the 3-year definition in the ESSA immigrant definition. Finally, the term indicates our interest in students who are classified as English learners when they arrive in the U.S., an important point since a sizable population of immigrant students arrive in the U.S. already proficient in English (as we will discuss in Section I). Bringing this all together, **we define RAIELs as foreign-born students who have been in U.S. schools for up to three academic years and who, upon entry into U.S. schools, were classified as English learners**. This is the term that we will use throughout the report.

We define recently arrived immigrant English learner (RAIEL) students as foreign-born students who have been in U.S. schools for up to three academic years and who, upon entry into U.S. schools, were classified as English learners.

It should be noted that while RAIELs are our primary population of interest, not every piece of data collected, analyzed, or reported here is specific to RAIELs. For instance, teachers may have described services that extend beyond students' first three years or state leaders may have answered questions in reference to all recently arrived students, rather than just those classified as English learners. We note these deviations in places in the report where we think they may be important.

SECTIONS OF THE REPORT

The report is structured as follows. It begins with an executive summary followed by this introduction. The main components of the report are three analytic sections.

Section I reports findings from descriptive quantitative analyses of RAIEL students in two states over the last several years. This section is aimed at helping fill gaps in our understanding of (1) who RAIEL students are, (2) how they are doing in school, and (3) how they are being served in school. In it, we describe RAIEL students' home languages, ages and grades upon entry; available characteristics (such as special education rates); and distribution across schools and districts. We also describe their academic performance levels in school, how they grow linguistically and academically over their first three years in the U.S., and the types of instructional services they receive.

Section II turns to look at the types of supports in place for RAIEL students in six school districts across the U.S. In that section, we report findings from case studies conducted in each district. We chose these districts to represent a diversity of districts of different sizes, with different EL concentrations, and in different regions of the country. We organize that section around two key questions: (1) How are districts and schools responding to meet the needs of RAIEL populations? and (2) How do RAIEL supports vary across districts? In the section, we describe five key supports for RAIELs that run the continuum from students' first entrance into each district (intake) to students' exit (graduation). For each, we discuss key challenges and innovations in the six districts.

Section III examines the role of state education agencies (SEAs) in supporting RAIEL education. Data for that section come from interviews conducted with directors from 18 SEA EL/Title III divisions. In that section, we have two goals. First, we aim to describe what state Title III directors report as key challenges regarding their work supporting RAIEL education. Second, we report directors' perspectives on the main roles SEAs take on to support RAIEL education and the key strengths and limitations within those roles. We compile and analyze findings from the 18 states, painting a comprehensive picture of both the challenges and successes in state functions to support RAIEL education.

The report then closes with a conclusion summarizing main ideas and takeaways across the three sections. The report Appendix offers a brief description of the methods used for each of the three sections of the report, and the Glossary defines key terms.

SECTION I: CHARACTERISTICS AND SCHOOLING OUTCOMES OF RAIELS IN TWO STATES

While state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) are increasingly aware of their recently arrived immigrant English learner (RAIEL) students, LEAs and SEAs also report that they know relatively little about these students. In reports and analyses, RAIEL students tend to be grouped in with the larger population of EL students primarily because many states, districts, and schools do not collect or do not have access to the data needed to disaggregate RAIELs from the overall EL population. At the same time, SEAs and LEAs recognize that understanding who RAIEL students are, how they are doing in school, and how they are being served in school is crucial to supporting their educational progress and success.

As such, this first section of this report focuses on these issues. We draw upon two state datasets and examine student-level data from the last 3-4 years in each of the two anonymous states. See the report Appendix for a description of the research methods used for this section. We take advantage of the fact that in these two states the SEA collects data that allow us to identify recently arrived students. Interestingly, the two states collect these data for distinct reasons. State 1 collects data on *immigrant students* (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015) following the US DOE definition established in order to provide grants for districts experiencing rapid immigration. State 2, meanwhile, collects data on *recently arrived ELs (RAELs)* instigated by affordances in federal education law to alter or delay standardized testing of students who have been in U.S. schools for fewer than 12 months (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). (See the report introduction or Glossary for more specifics on the definitions and uses of the terms immigrant students and RAEL students.)

In each state, we can track students across time. Data collections for these RAIELs are quite new in both states so we can only track the most recent cohorts of students. The section is broken into three subsections answering the following research questions:

1. **Who are RAIEL students?**
2. **How are RAIEL students doing in school?**
3. **How are RAIEL students being served in school?**

We do not purport to answer these questions for all RAIELs or all states or districts, in part because the RAIEL population varies greatly from place to place, and indeed from moment to moment based on changes in immigration patterns, law and policy, and international events. Furthermore, for research question 3, we can only report findings from one state, where these data are collected at the state level. However, we hope that by providing some answers to these questions, we can identify trends in RAIEL populations and schooling, as well as point out differences across locales.

WHO ARE RAIEL STUDENTS?

As an initial point of departure, Table 1.1 shows basic information about the RAIEL population in the two states examined here. In both states, RAIELs constituted about one percent of the overall student population. In order to demonstrate how RAIEL populations differ from non-RAIEL populations in each state, we separate students into four categories:

RAIEL. *Recently arrived immigrant EL* students are students who have arrived in the U.S., been enrolled in U.S. schools for fewer than three academic years, and are classified as English learners upon entry.

RAINEL. *Recently arrived immigrant non-EL (RAINEL)* students are also immigrant students but are fluent in English when they arrive. We differentiate these students from RAIEL students because often their needs differ from those of RAIEL students. Many RAINEL students may be, for example, study abroad students, or relatively socio-economically advantaged children in professional families that come to work in the U.S. Some RAINEL students may more closely resemble traditional RAIEL students, however. For example, children arriving from countries where English is an official language such as South Sudan or the Marshall Islands may share many of the social, economic, and psychological experiences of RAIEL students even though they arrive fluent in English.

OEL. The third group of students discussed in this section of the report is *other English learner (OEL)* students. These are English learner students who are not considered immigrant students according to the federal Department of Education definition. Many OEL students are born in the U.S. while others immigrated to the U.S. but have been in the U.S. for more than three years. This group of students includes all English learners who are not recently arrived, so, for example, it includes both young EL students as well as students who have remained EL-classified throughout elementary and into middle or high school.

OEP. The final group of students is *other English proficient (OEP)* students. These are non-immigrant, English proficient students. This group constituted the vast majority of students in both states. Notably, it includes former English learner students who have been reclassified out of EL status after attaining English proficiency.

RAIELs compared to other groups of students. The RAIEL population in the two states shared many similarities, and, in each state, RAIELs compared in similar ways to the other student groups. In both states, roughly two-thirds to three-quarters of RAIEL students were low-income, qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. In both states, this was far more than OEPs and RAINELs, but less than the rates for OELs. RAIELs' academic standing was roughly equivalent to that of OELs, although their English proficiency levels were, on average, lower than OELs. Finally, while between and third and a half of RAIELs in each state spoke Spanish as a home language, they were far less likely, as a group, than OELs to be Spanish-speaking.

Table 1.1

Descriptive Statistics of Students, by State and Immigrant and Language Status, in Students' First Observed Occasion in Data Sets

	State 1					State 2				
	Total	RAIEL	RAINEL	OEL	OEP	Total	RAIEL	RAINEL	OEL	OEP
EL	7.25%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	11.71%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Immig.	1.27%	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	1.87%	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Female	48.61%	46.15%	50.66%	46.92%	48.75%	48.44%	47.53%	51.87%	46.97%	48.60%
FRPL	36.91%	74.58%	64.01%	80.24%	33.45%	52.93%	68.33%	28.21%	88.21%	48.66%
Spanish	8.85%	49.25%	33.72%	80.70%	3.41%	NA	38.23%	NA	78.69%	NA
ELP*	3.36	3.06	.	3.40	.	2.79	2.34	.	2.83	.
ELA*	2.20	1.11	1.91	1.17	2.25	2.48	1.56	2.85	1.55	2.59
Math*	2.18	1.26	1.87	1.25	2.23	2.18	1.67	2.67	1.52	2.29
GPA	2.97	2.38	2.71	2.22	3.00					
<i>n</i>	784217	6942	3034	49884	724357	769343	8506	5855	81604	673378

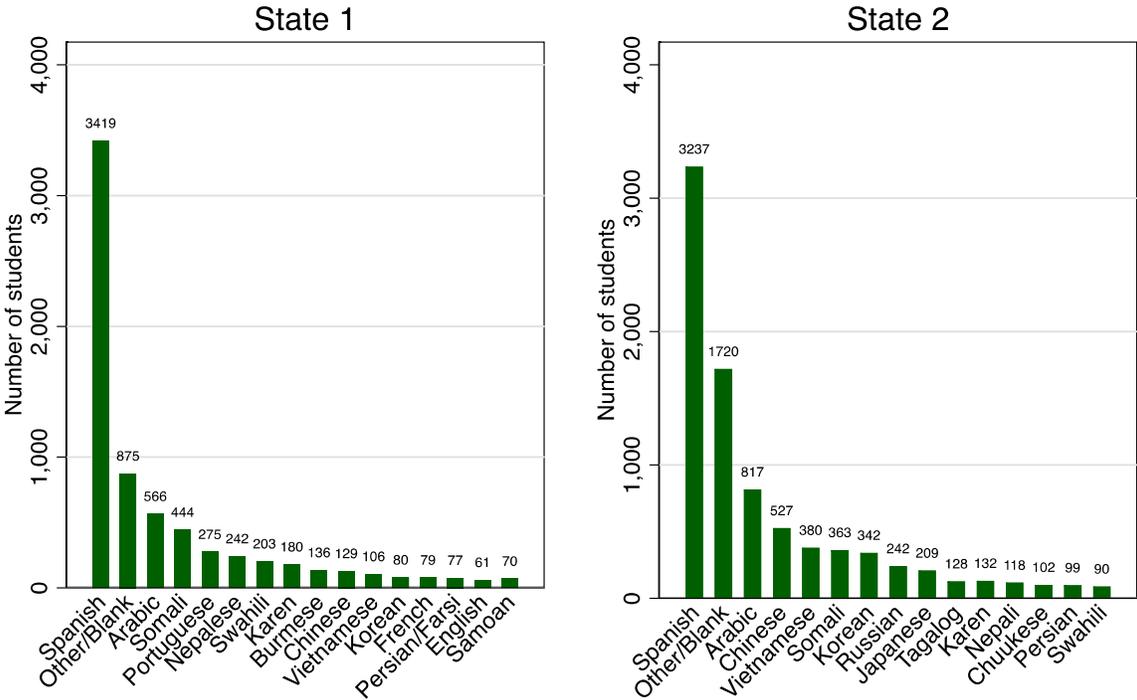
* ELP scores range from 1-6 in State 1 (levels 5 and 6 considered proficient) and 1-5 in State 2 (level 5 considered proficient). ELA and math scores range from 1-4 in both states, with both states setting grade level proficiency at level 3 (although they are not the same tests across states).

Note. RAIEL = Recently arrived immigrant English learner. RAINEL = Recently arrived immigrant non-English learner. OEL = Other English learner. OEP = Other English proficient. EL = English learner. Immig. = Immigrant. FRPL = Free/reduced priced lunch. Lang. = Language. EPL = English proficiency level. ELA = English language arts. GPA = Grade point average. Language of origin data is only available for English learners in State 2. Therefore, for State 2, we only report the proportion of students who are Spanish speakers among groups classified as ELs.

Formally, schools and school districts typically collect little, if any, information on the background of RAIEL students. This leaves education providers with little knowledge of the individual needs and experiences of these students. This topic will be explored in more depth in Sections II and III of this report, as we detail some promising practices of education providers in collecting data on RAIELs. While limited, states and districts did frequently collect some information that sheds light on the backgrounds, experiences, and needs of these students. For example, states frequently collected data on home language, migrant status, special education status, and homeless status. Other states collected additional information, including refugee status, unaccompanied minor status, and status as a student with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). Figures 1.1 and 1.2 present this information on RAIELs in the two states, Figure 1.1 on home language, and Figure 1.2 on other subgroups.

Figure 1.1

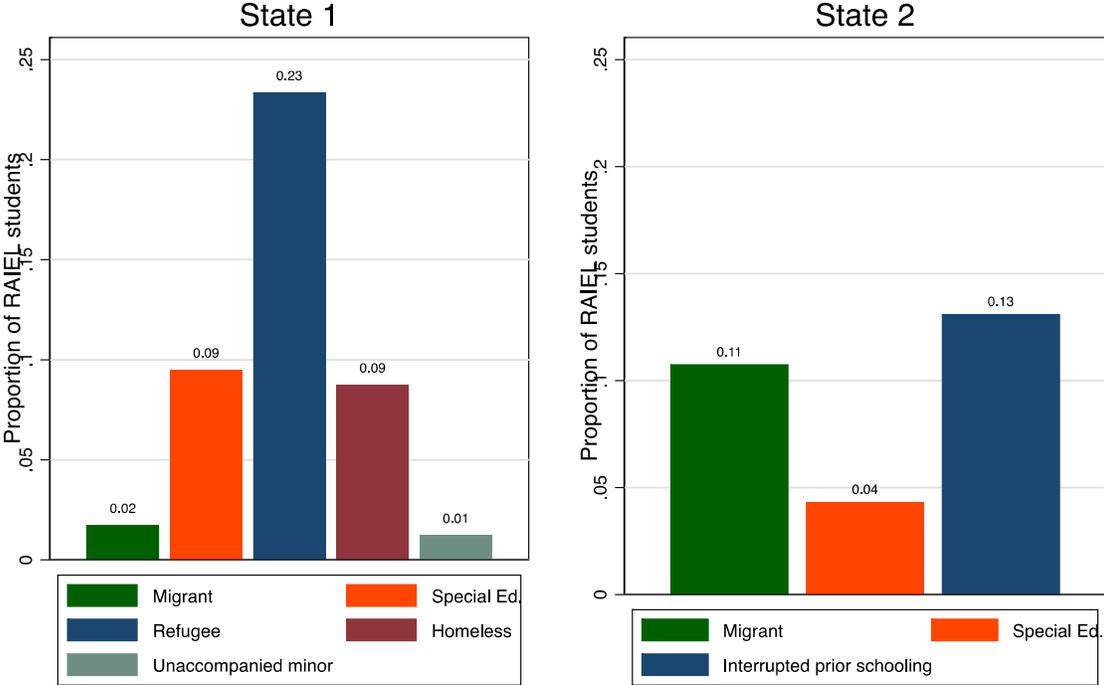
Home Languages of RAIEL Students



Note: RAIEL = Recently-arrived immigrant English learner.

Figure 1.2

RAIEL Student Subgroups



Note: RAIEL = Recently-arrived immigrant English learner.

Home language. Figure 1.1 shows RAIEL students' home languages in each state, for those languages that represent at least one percent of the RAIEL population (other language groups are clustered in the 'Other/Blank' category). In both states, there was a wide array of home languages of RAIEL students, and these languages reflected global immigration into both states, with language groups from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, among other regions. Despite immigration from all corners of the world, the figure indicates that the predominant language group of RAIEL students, like the dominant language among ELs more broadly, was Spanish. In both states, Spanish-speaking RAIELs constituted four (State 2) to six (State 1) times the number of students from the next highest single language group (Arabic, in both states). Both states were home to sizable populations that speak Arabic and Somali. Other language groups were shared across the states but in different numbers. For example, State 1 had a bit over 100 Chinese-language-speaking RAIELs while State 2 had more than 500. Figure 1.1 also indicates other differences in immigration patterns across the two states. For example, State 1 had sizable groups of Portuguese, Burmese, French, and Samoan speakers among its RAIELs, while State 2 had sizable populations of Russian, Japanese, Tagalog, and Chuukese speakers.

At times, home language is nearly the only formal data education agencies have about the backgrounds of their newly arrived students. While insufficient, home language can provide some clues regarding the educational, social, and economic backgrounds of arriving students. As we will discuss in Section II of the report, some districts use home language information to share broader information with teachers and school administrators about the home country and political and economic conditions among immigrant families.

Subgroups. Figure 1.2 shows other subgroups of RAIEL students in the two states. Note that in some cases subgroups can be identified in both states (migrant students and students in special education) and in other cases can only be identified in one state (State 1: refugees, homeless students, and unaccompanied minors; State 2: SLIFE students). As most of these variables (with the exception of special education) are relatively new, and there are numerous sensitivities attached to these classifications, the data summarized should not be considered absolute. There could be errors and omissions. Of note, in State 1 nearly a quarter of RAIEL students had refugee status. In State 2, 13 percent of RAIELs were classified as SLIFE students. The proportions of students identified as migrant and as participating in special education differed considerably among RAIELs in the two states, with State 1 having more than twice the special education identification rate among RAIELs, and State 2 having more than five times the migrant rate.

To extend this analysis, we examined how these subgroups, and other basic characteristics, differed for students from six different prominent linguistic origins in the two states. We used language of origin here as a proxy for country or region of origin, even though it is an imperfect proxy. All the same, this analysis allows us to see if, for example, Spanish-speaking RAIELs have different characteristics and needs, on average, compared to Arabic-speaking RAIELs. Results are presented in Table 1.2 and confirm that the average characteristics of RAIEL students often varied by language of origin. In State 2, Nepali and Arabic-speaking RAIELs were far more likely to have limited or interrupted formal schooling than other groups. (One-third of Nepali speakers and one-quarter of Arabic speakers were classified as SLIFE.) Somali and Nepali-speaking RAIELs were overwhelmingly classified as refugees in State 1, compared to less than 1 percent of Spanish-speaking RAIELs and 3 percent of Vietnamese-speaking RAIELs. In both states, Chinese language RAIELs (neither data set differentiates between Mandarin and other Chinese-origin languages) were the least likely to be economically disadvantaged and had the highest English proficiency, ELA, and math levels. These differences reflect differences in immigration patterns from different countries and regions (Feliciano, 2005; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). While these patterns are generalizations, examining how student characteristics differ across language groups can help schools and districts plan and develop appropriate supports for students.

Notably, the characteristics of a given language group can vary by state, at least in the two states examined here. For example, a full 26 percent of Spanish-speaking RAIEL students in State 2 were classified as migrant students, while the comparable proportion in State 1 was 3 percent. Also of note, Arabic-speaking RAIELs in State 1 were far more likely to be eligible for free or reduced priced lunch than those in State 2 while the reverse pattern was true for Vietnamese-speaking RAIELs. These differences likely speak to the diversity of students and families from any given language origin and differences in immigration patterns across states, as well as inconsistencies and inaccuracies in data collection about RAIEL students.

Table 1.2

Characteristics of RAIEL students, by language group and state

	Spanish	Arabic	Somali	Nepali	Chinese	Vietnamese
State 1						
Female	46.53%	41.34%	47.07%	50.00%	46.51%	41.51%
FRPL	75.20%	87.46%	94.59%	82.64%	54.26%	59.43%
GPA	2.28	2.45	2.58	2.66	2.75	2.90
ELP*	3.12	2.62	2.64	2.89	3.48	3.24
ELA score*	1.09	1.07	1.04	1.03	1.50	1.24
Math score*	1.20	1.18	1.10	1.12	2.36	1.82
Migrant	3.33%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Special ed.	11.82%	6.18%	4.95%	5.79%	5.43%	7.55%
Refugee	0.61%	57.24%	85.14%	84.71%	10.85%	2.83%
Homeless	14.16%	2.30%	0.68%	0.83%	2.33%	7.55%
UAC	2.02%	0.35%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
<i>n</i>	3419	566	444	242	129	106
State 2						
Female	47.54%	44.19%	46.56%	44.07%	49.15%	47.89%
FRPL	82.64%	71.11%	83.57%	90.68%	50.67%	81.58%
ELP*	2.01	2.04	1.85	2.03	2.84	2.66
ELA score*	1.37	1.25	1.21	1.40	1.95	1.83
Math score*	1.33	1.37	1.07	1.57	2.83	2.15
Migrant	25.56%	2.08%	4.18%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Special ed.	5.72%	3.43%	3.58%	4.24%	4.17%	3.16%
SLIFE	11.92%	23.76%	6.76%	33.33%	4.46%	9.78%
<i>n</i>	3237	817	363	118	527	380

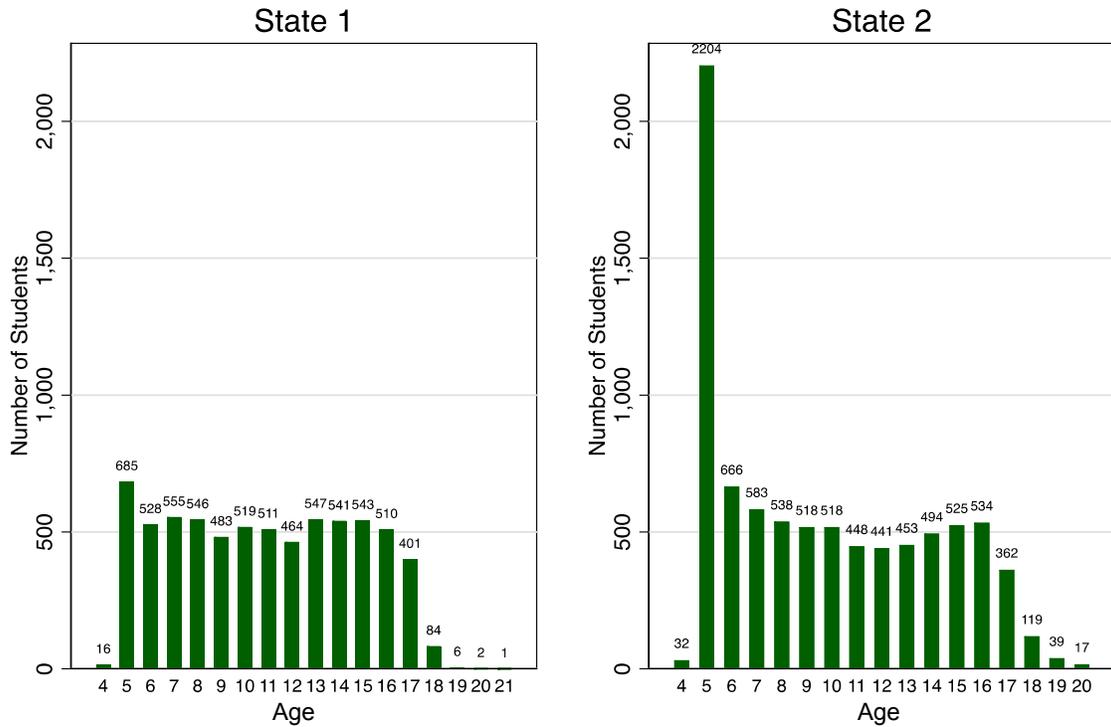
* ELP scores range from 1-6 in State 1 (levels 5 and 6 considered proficient) and 1-5 in State 2 (level 5 considered proficient). ELA and math scores range from 1-4 in both states, with both states setting grade level proficiency at level 3 (although they are not the same tests across states).

Note. RAIEL = Recently arrived immigrant English learner. FRPL = Free and reduced priced lunch. GPA = Grade point average. EPL = English proficiency level. ELA = English language arts. Ed = education. UAC = Unaccompanied minor. SLIFE = Student with limited or interrupted formal education.

Age, grade, and school level. In addition to background characteristics, another crucial piece of information for education agencies is the age and grade of arrival of RAIEL students, as these factors have enormous implications for educational systems. Figures 1.3 and 1.4 provide these two pieces of information. In both states, RAIEL students joined the U.S. education system in considerable numbers at all ages and grade levels. Perhaps surprisingly, in both states, RAIEL students were most likely to enter U.S. schools in kindergarten at age 5. This is because a student may have arrived at age 3, 4, or 5 and still be considered an immigrant student since their arrival was in the prior three years. This is particularly evident in State 2 where the number of RAIEL students entering the system at age 5 was more than three times that of any other age. Depending on how immigrant status was captured in State 1, some immigrant children who arrived within three years of kindergarten may not have been counted as RAIEL in the state dataset.

Figure 1.3

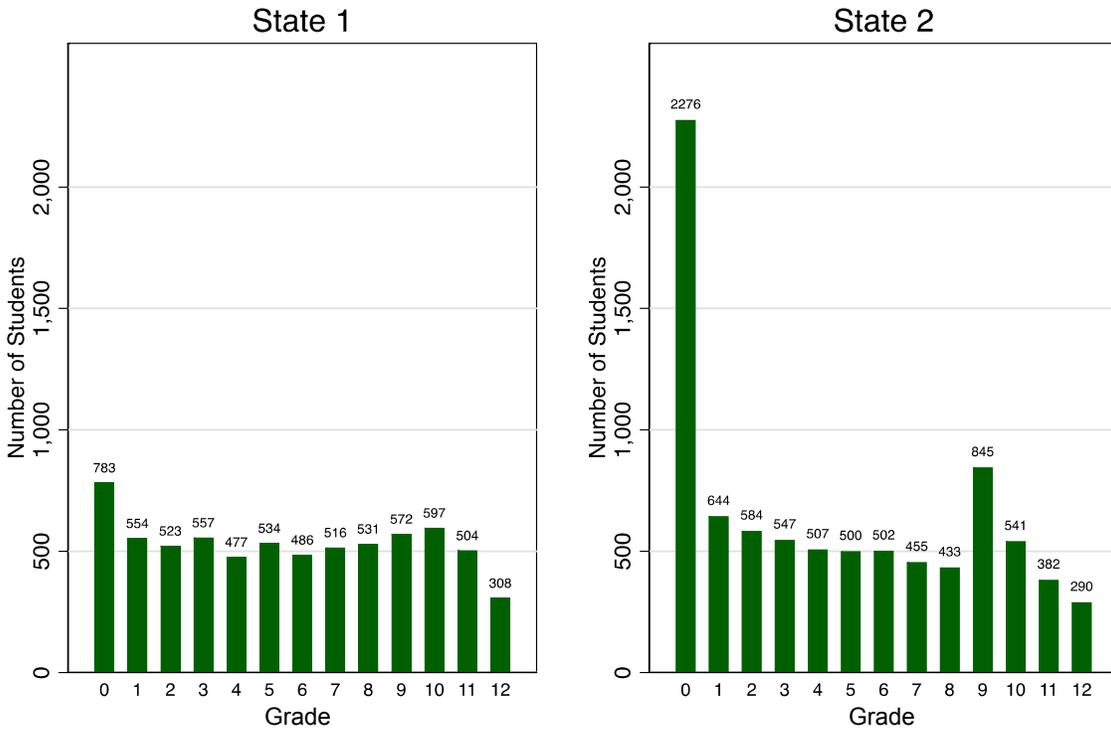
Age of RAIEL Students at Entry into Dataset



Note: RAIEL = Recently-arrived immigrant English learner.

Figure 1.4

Grade of RAIEL Students at Entry into Dataset

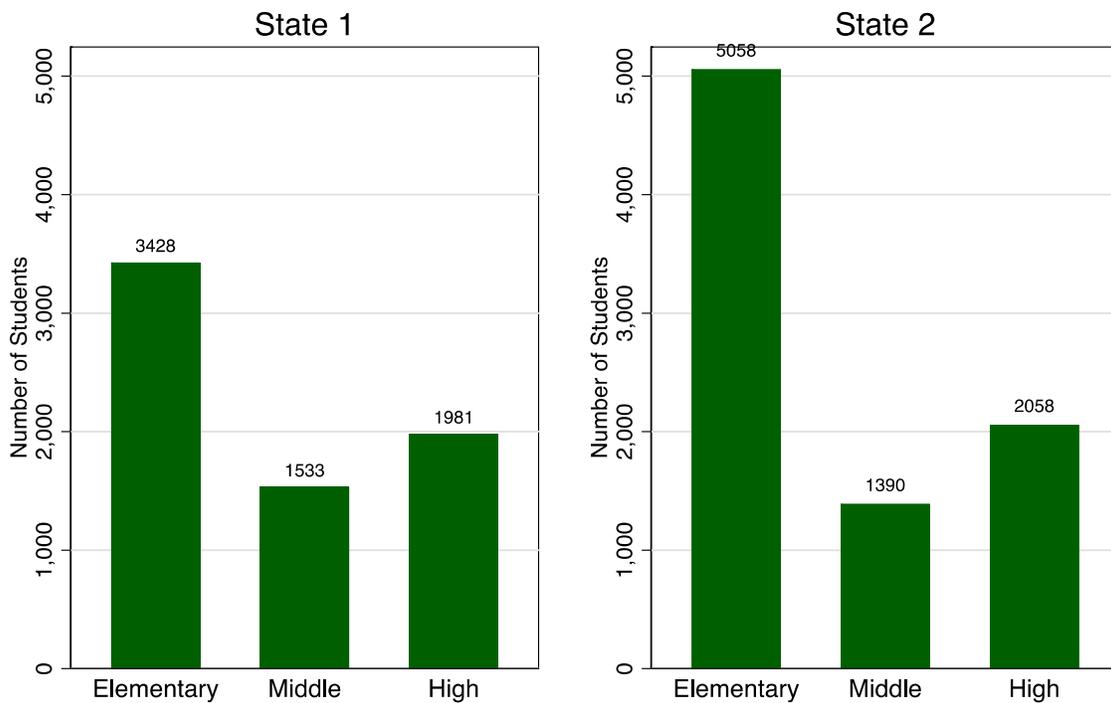


Note: RAIEL = Recently-arrived immigrant English learner.

As a result of this overarching pattern, and as a function of the fact that elementary schools serve six grades, while middle schools only serve three and high schools four, elementary schools took in the largest proportion of RAIEL students (see Figure 1.5). Despite this, as will be discussed in the following sections of this report, students who enter at later ages and grades face unique challenges since they have missed many more years of schooling in the U.S. compared to younger RAIEL students, who are more likely to be integrated into mainstream programming more quickly. In all, middle and high schools took in 51 percent of the RAIEL population in State 1 and 41 percent of the total RAIEL population in State 2.

Figure 1.5

School Level of RAIEL Students at Entry into Dataset



Note: RAIEL = Recently-arrived immigrant English learner.

A final point regarding students' ages and grades upon arrival was the pattern, evident in both states, of far smaller numbers of students 17 years or older (11th and 12th graders) compared to those under those ages/grades. It is not entirely clear why we see this drop off, given that immigration was likely to be as high or higher for 17-year olds, 18-year olds, and higher, compared to younger youth. However, one theory based on data presented in the subsequent sections of this report is that states may have in place policies or practices that counsel students near age-out limits (see Glossary) away from the K-12 system, and, possibly, into other resources such as community or technical colleges for English supports and/or high school equivalencies.

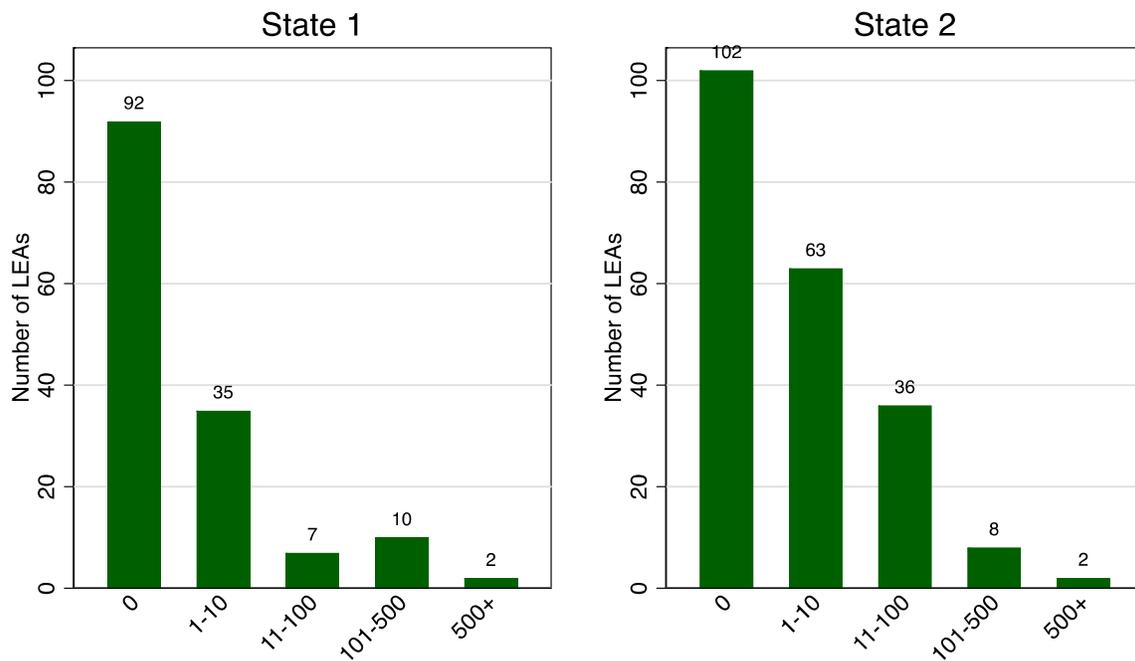
Distribution by district and school. Similar to RAIELs' somewhat unbalanced entry into schools by grade, RAIEL students were not equally distributed across schools and school

districts. Many districts had no RAIEL students, others had one or two, while other districts supported the education of many hundreds of RAIEL students. This is evidenced in Figure 1.6 which presents the distribution of RAIEL students across school districts. Similar patterns are evident across schools (not pictured). For example, in both states close to 50 percent of schools had no RAIELs, while a handful of schools had between 50 and 200 RAIELs. There are important implications of this unequal distribution, again as discussed later in this report. For schools and districts with just a handful of RAIELs, they may not have systems in place or personnel with skills and experience to support RAIEL students. For those with large numbers of RAIELs, they may need additional resources, partnerships, and services to meet students’ needs, as well as possible flexibilities in accountability mechanisms.

Many districts had no RAIEL students while other districts supported the education of many hundreds of RAIEL students. Similar patterns were evident across schools.

Figure 1.6

Number of LEAs, by Number of RAIEL Students in Each LEA, 2015-2016



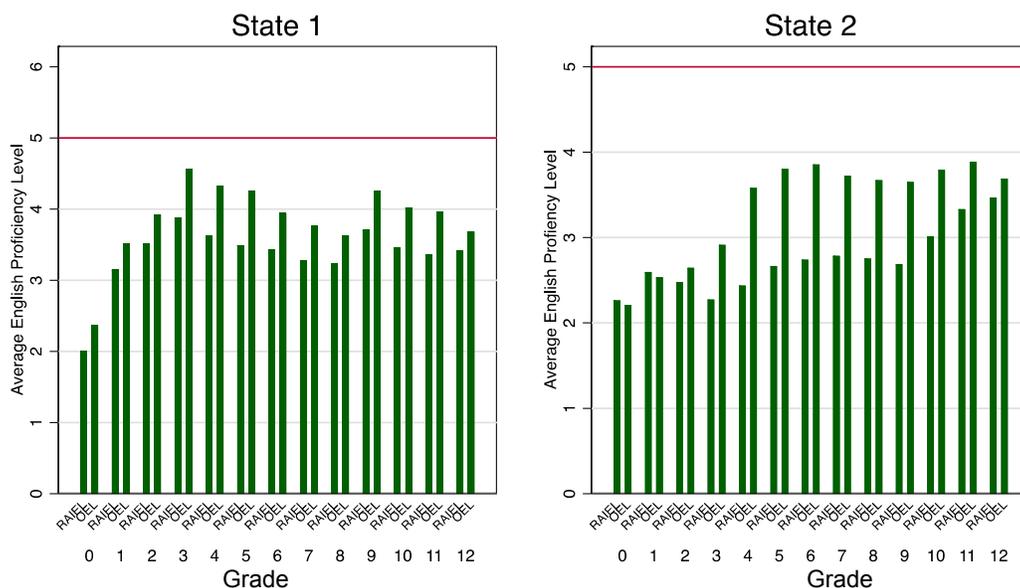
Note: LEA = School district. RAIEL = Recently-arrived immigrant English learner.

HOW ARE RAIEL STUDENTS DOING IN SCHOOL?

The second research question explores how RAIELs are doing in school, comparing RAIELs to other groups of students both in terms of English proficiency and academic performance. Here we also look at how RAIEL students are growing linguistically and academically over time, as well as their graduation rates. Importantly, while we show results from state standardized tests in English language proficiency (ELP), math, and English language arts (ELA) in both states, all three tests were different in the two states. In other words, State 1 did not use the same ELP, math, or ELA tests as State 2, so we cannot compare results across the two states.

Figure 1.7

Average English Language Proficiency Level, by Grade and Language & Immigrant Status



Note: RAIEL = Recently-arrived immigrant English learner. OEL = Other English learner. Horizontal lines represent proficiency. Data from State 1 come from 2013/14 - 2015/16. Data from State 2 come from 2012/13 - 2014/15. States 1 & 2 do not use the same test.

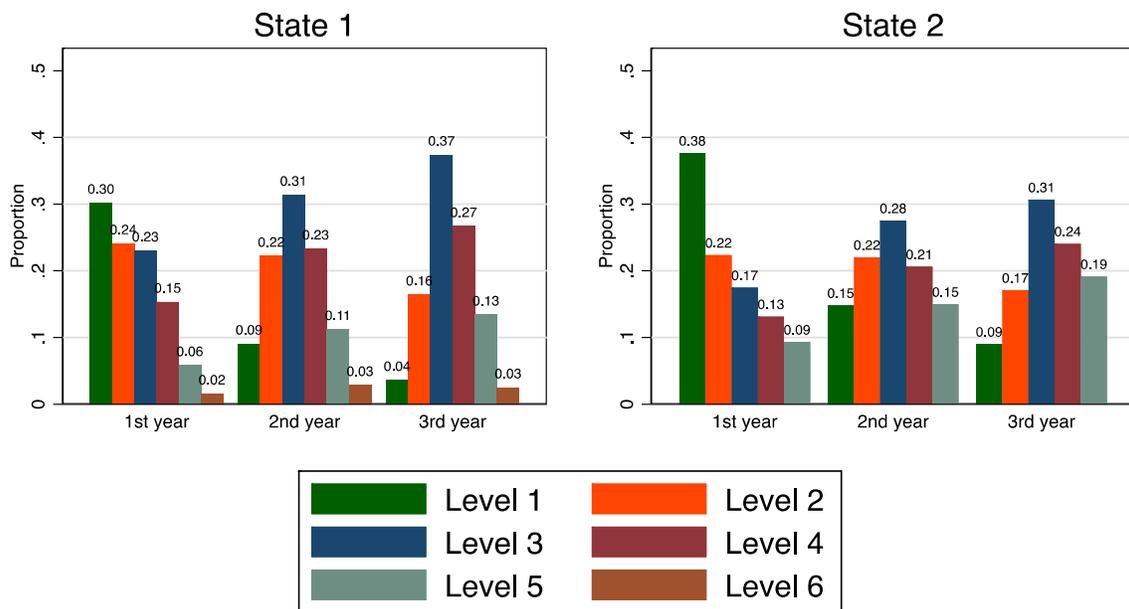
English language proficiency level. Figure 1.7 shows English proficiency levels, by grade, for RAIELs and OELs (the other two groups of students do not take English proficiency assessments). In the figure, RAIEL students are grouped, regardless of whether they are in their first, second, or third year in the U.S. (OELs are also clustered, regardless of the number of years as ELs.) For both states, we chose years when the same test was given each year so that the scores are comparable over time within each state. There were a total of six proficiency levels on the State 1 test and five proficiency levels on the State 2 test. Both states considered students who scored at level 5 (or higher, in State 1) to be English proficient. This is indicated in Figure 1.7 by the horizontal red lines. RAIELs’ average English proficiency levels fluctuated some across grade level, likely due to changes in the RAIEL subgroup (because of

the arrival of new students each year, and students leaving the RAIEL group after having been in the U.S. for three years) as well as changes in the test (by grade band). Overall, however, proficiency scores were lower in early elementary than in later grades. RAIEL proficiency levels were typically lower than those of OELs by about one proficiency level, except in early elementary when proficiency levels between the two groups were relatively similar. Average RAIEL English proficiency scores across grades were roughly 1-3 levels below the threshold for English proficiency in State 1, and 1.5 to 3 levels below the threshold for proficiency in State 2.

Low English proficiency levels of first-year RAIELs pose a challenge for schools and districts, particularly in providing these students access to core academic content.

Figure 1.8

Proportion of Recently-Arrived Immigrant EL Students at Each English Proficiency Level, by Year Since Arrival



Note: State 1 has 6 proficiency levels on their English proficiency test while State 2 has 5 levels. In State 1 levels 5 & 6 are considered English proficient. In State 2 level 5 is considered proficient. EL = English learner. Data for State 1 come from 2013/14 - 2015/16. Data from State 2 come from 2012/13 - 2014/15. States 1 & 2 do not use the same test.

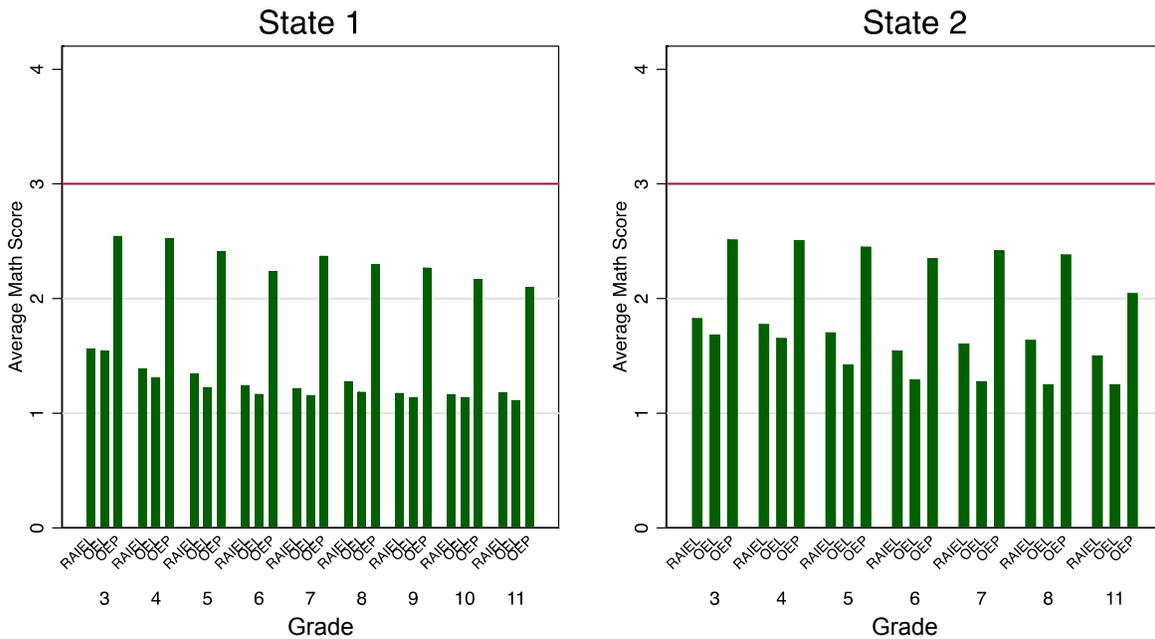
Figure 1.8 shows the proportion of RAIELs at each English proficiency level, by year, since arrival in the U.S. The figure shows rapid growth in English proficiency in both states, with many RAIELs moving from level 1 to levels 3 and 4 by their third year. It is noteworthy, however, that by the end of their third year, few RAIELs had reached English proficiency (16 percent in State 1, and 19 percent in State 2). Also of note, the low English proficiency levels of first-year RAIELs pose a

challenge for schools and districts particularly with regard to providing these students access to core academic content. This challenge is even more acute at the secondary level where academic content is more challenging. In Section II of this report, we document the range of ways schools and districts design instruction and programs to support these students with beginning English proficiency who are entering districts at all grade levels.

Math achievement. Figure 1.9 compares RAIEL student performance to that of OELs and OEPs. (We left RAINELs off the graphs for ease of reading, but RAINELs performed relatively close to that of OEPs.) While the tests were different in the two states, both states considered scores at or above level 3 (out of four possible levels) as proficient for the grade level. In both states, RAIELs performed approximately one full proficiency level lower than OEPs at every grade level. In both states, RAIELs, on average, scored between levels 1 and 2, significantly below proficiency cutoffs. RAIEL scores were closer to level 1 in State 1 and closer to level 2 in State 2, although this likely reflects differences across the two tests. In both states, average RAIEL scores were lower in the upper grade levels. This may be due to increasing difficulty of tests in higher grade levels. RAIELs in both states scored higher, on average, than OELs. In some cases, RAIELs' math achievement might have been positively impacted by educational opportunities in their home countries prior to immigration.

Figure 1.9

Average Math Achievement by Grade and Language & Immigrant Status

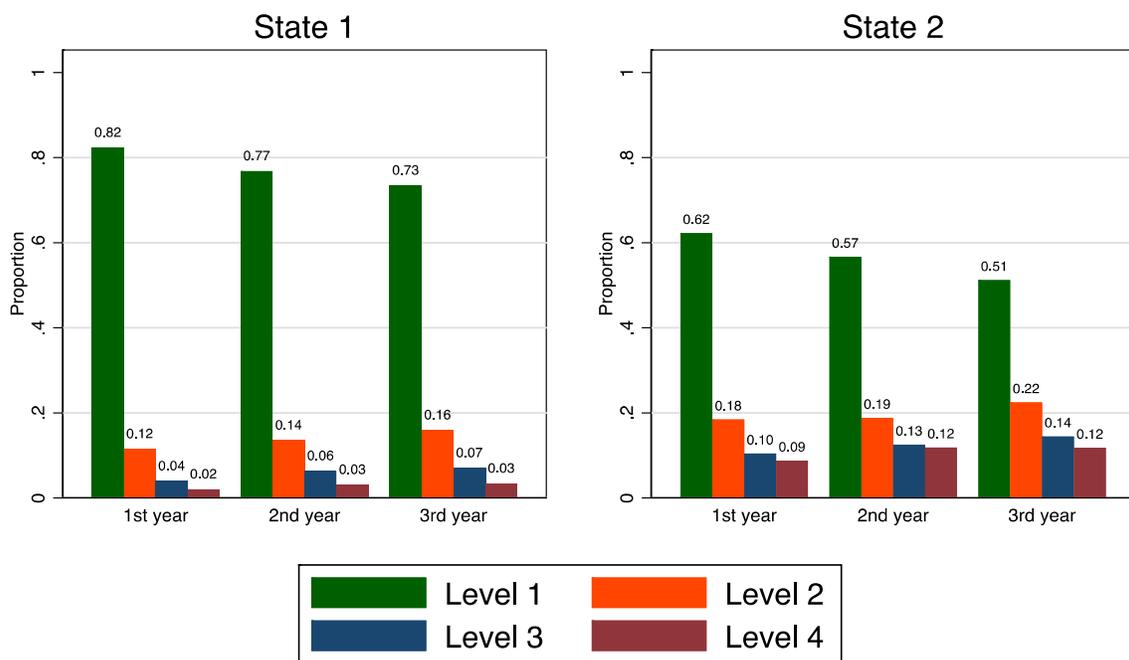


Note: RAIEL = Recently-arrived immigrant English learner. OEL = Other English learner. OEP = Other (Non-Immigrant) English proficient. Horizontal line at 3 represents proficiency. In State 1 the test is taken in grades 3-11. In State 2 the test is taken in grades 3-8 & 11. Data for State 1 come from 2013/14 - 2015/16. Data from State 2 come from 2014/15 - 2015/16. States 1 & 2 do not use the same test.

Figure 1.10 shows the proportion of RAIEL students at each math proficiency level, by year since arrival for RAIELs in their first, second, and third years in the U.S. In both states, the majority of RAIELs (82 percent in State 1, and 62 percent in State 2) performed at proficiency level 1 in their first year. Students made steady growth in both states across years, but performance remained low for many students, even in their third year in the U.S. In State 1, nearly three-fourths of RAIELs were still at math level 1 in their third year, and the comparable proportion in State 2 was 51 percent. Ten percent of RAIELs in State 1 and 26 percent in State 2 had reached math proficiency by their third year. Again, this difference between states is likely driven by differences in the two tests, as well as by differences in the characteristics of RAIELs in the two states.

Figure 1.10

Proportion of Recently-Arrived Immigrant EL Students at Each Math Proficiency Level, by Year Since Arrival

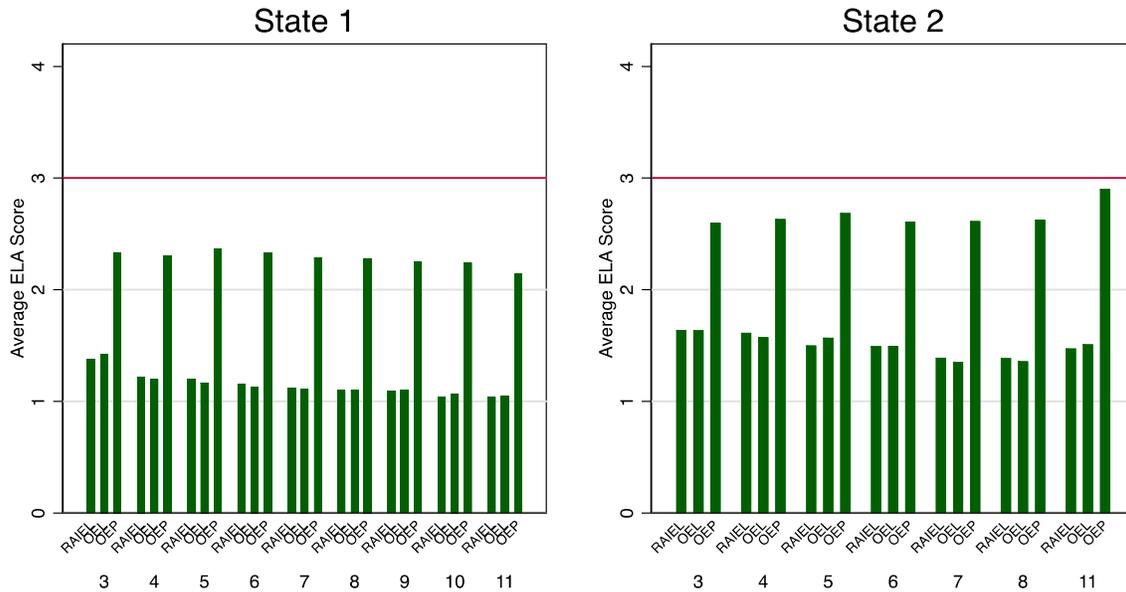


Note: EL = English learner. Levels 3 & 4 are considered proficient at grade level. Data for State 1 come from 2013/14 - 2015/16. Data from State 2 come from 2014/15 - 2015/16. States 1 & 2 do not use the same test.

English language arts achievement. RAIEL ELA achievement closely parallels that of math (see Figure 1.11). As in math, RAIELs’ ELA scores fell between levels 1 and 2, with lower scores in higher grades. Average RAIEL scores were roughly one proficiency level below those of OEPs. In both, states RAIELs’ ELA scores were similar to those of OELs at all grade levels.

Figure 1.11

Average English Language Arts (ELA) Achievement, by Grade and Language & Immigrant Status

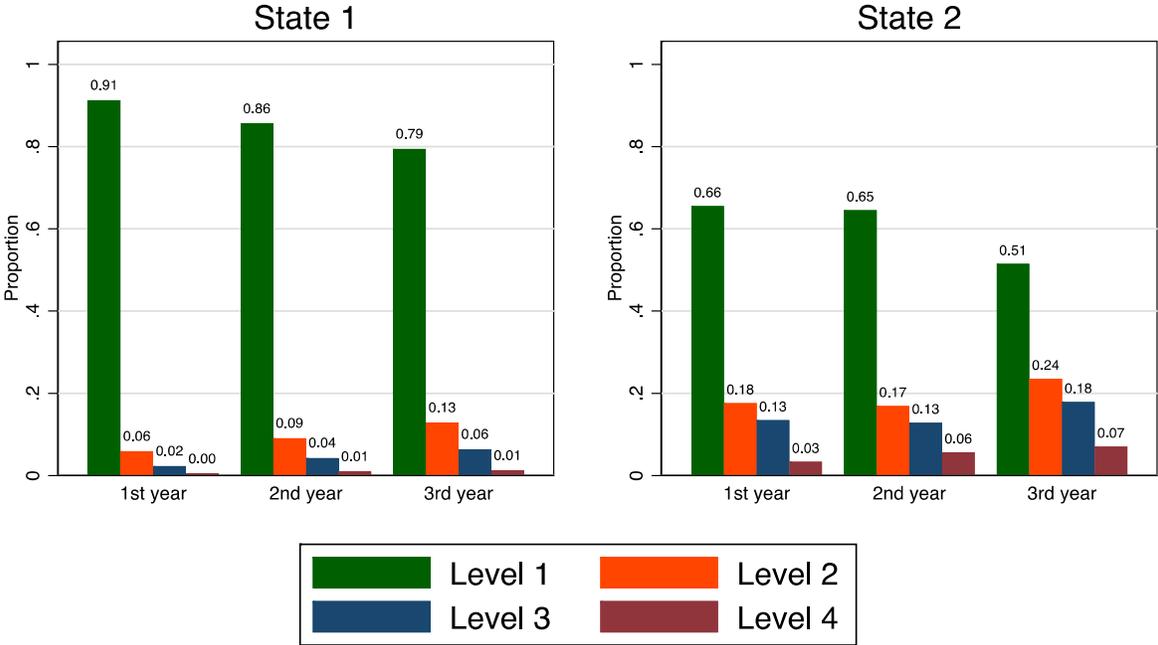


Note: RAIEL = Recently-arrived immigrant English learner. OEL = Other English learner. OEP = Other (Non-Immigrant) English proficient. Horizontal line at 3 represents proficiency. In State 1 the test is taken in grades 3-11. In State 2 the test is taken in grades 3-8 & 11. Data for State 1 come from 2013/14 - 2015/16. Data from State 2 come from 2014/15 - 2015/16. States 1 & 2 do not use the same test.

Figure 1.12 shows the proportion of RAIELs at each ELA proficiency level for their first, second, and third year in the U.S. As in math, the vast majority of first-year RAIEL students scored at ELA proficiency level 1, which is not surprising given the English language demands of these assessments. Performance improved steadily with each additional year, but by students’ third year only 7 percent of State 1’s RAIEL students and 25 percent of State 2’s RAIEL students had reached proficiency (level 3 or higher).

Figure 1.12

Proportion of Recently-Arrived Immigrant EL Students at Each ELA Proficiency Level, by Year Since Arrival



Note: EL = English learner. ELA = English language arts. Levels 3 & 4 are considered proficient at grade level. Data for State 1 come from 2013/14 - 2015/16. Data from State 2 come from 2014/15 - 2015/16. States 1 & 2 do not use the same test.

In both states, tests were administered predominantly in English, even among EL-classified students. While tests in both states had accommodations for students who were not yet proficient in English, some of the gaps between RAIELs and OEPs were likely due to language bias (Abedi, 2008; Abedi & Lord, 2001). The language demands of all content areas, including math, are high under college and career-ready academic standards (influenced by the Common Core State Standards movement; Bunch, 2013; Moschkovich, 2012). Even considering language bias present in test scores, these results, and in particular, the high proportions of students scoring at the very low end of academic proficiency, represent a challenge for schools and districts and a concern for equity in educational outcomes.

Graduation. A final, critical outcome for RAIEL students is high school graduation. Table 1.3 shows graduation rates for RAIEL students who arrived in the U.S. in high school (grades 10-12) and compares it to the graduation rate of non-immigrant English speakers (OEPs). As will be discussed in detail in Sections II and III of this report, graduation poses an acute challenge for states and districts looking to support their RAIEL students who arrive during the high school years. This is evident in the graduation rates of both states where graduation rates for RAIELs fell between one third and two thirds of the graduation rates of OEPs. In State 2, graduation rates dropped precipitously by grade of entry among secondary school-aged RAIELs. In both states,

In both states, between 40 and 70 percent of RAIELs who arrived in their high school-age years and enrolled in school did not graduate from high school. Increasing secondary school-aged RAIELs' ability to graduate is of urgent concern.

between 40 percent and 70 percent of RAIELs who arrived in their high school-age years and enrolled in school did not graduate from high school. Increasing secondary school-aged RAIELs' ability to graduate is of urgent concern.

It should be noted that we could only look at graduation rates for these later-arrivers. (We only have a limited number of years of data, and earlier arrivers did not reach graduation age in our data.) While we cannot speak to graduation rates among RAIELs who arrived in elementary or middle school, according to data collected for the other sections of this report, graduation is far less of a concern for RAIELs who arrive at younger ages.

Table 1.3

Graduation rates by entry grade, among RAIELs, compared to the graduation rate of non-immigrant, English proficient students (OEPs), by state.

		State 1			State 2		
RAIELs*	Entry grade	N (4-year)	4-year graduation rate	N (4-year)	4-year graduation rate	N (5-year)	5-year graduation rate
	10	335	57.59%	262	43.51%	134	50.75%
	11	369	51.04%	167	32.34%	165	45.45%
	12	308	57.47%	138	19.57%	107	28.97%
OEPs	N/A		81.71%	90,536	70.30%	85,984	76.42%

* Because of data limitations we can only examine graduation rates for students who enter the U.S. in grades 10 and higher. We include in the sample only those students who, based on their timing and grade of arrival, could have graduated by the time our data ends. When tabulating graduation rates, we include all students for whom graduation outcomes are available, including students not counted in the adjusted cohort for federal reporting purposes. Four-year graduation rates are defined as the proportion of students who graduate with a regular high school diploma within four years of what would have been each student's year of 9th grade. For example, if a RAIEL student enters the U.S. school system in 12th grade they would have to graduate at the end of that year to contribute to the 4-year graduation rate. Five-year graduation rates, likewise, are defined as the proportion of students who graduate with a regular high school diploma within five years of what would have been each student's year of 9th grade.

Note. RAIEL = Recently arrived immigrant English learner. OEP = Other English proficient students.

HOW ARE RAIEL STUDENTS BEING SERVED IN SCHOOL?

Of the two states examined, only State 2 had access to data about instructional program models in which English learners are enrolled. Thus, in this state, it is possible to analyze the types of instructional program models in which RAIEL students participate. State 2 collected information about two types of program models. The first type contains information about the program model through which students have access to English language development (ELD; see Glossary). The second type contains information about the program model through which students learn core academic content, including types of bilingual programs (see Glossary). Tables 1.4 and 1.5 below provide information about the proportion of RAIELs that participated in each type of program model during the 2015-16 school year, with information reported separately for students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Regarding program models for ELD, data indicate that relatively similar proportions of students at the elementary level received ELD through push-in and pull-out models (45 percent and 50 percent, respectively). The ELD push-in model has gained increasing attention in recent years, and an increasing number of schools and districts are implementing this approach (Baecher & Bell, 2017). At the middle and high school levels, however, the vast majority of students (80 percent at middle school and 81 percent at high school) had ELD instruction during a separate class period. Perhaps surprisingly, relatively few RAIEL students (0 percent at the elementary level, 8 percent at the middle school level, and 12 percent at the high school level) received ELD through a separate program designed specifically for newcomer students.

For core content instruction, the majority of students at all levels (87 percent at the elementary level, 93 percent at the middle school level, and 85 percent at the high school level) received core content through sheltered instruction. Sheltered instruction is content instruction delivered in English using accommodations and modifications to increase accessibility and comprehensibility among students who are not yet proficient in English (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010). Again, very small proportions of RAIEL students received content instruction through newcomer programs (0 percent in elementary, 2 percent in middle, and 6 percent in high school).

Very few RAIEL students were served in specialized newcomer programs. The dominant programmatic pattern at the elementary school level was sheltered content instruction with push-in or pull-out ELD. The dominant pattern at the middle and high school levels was a separate ELD class and sheltered content instruction in English.

Of note, small proportions of RAIELs also participated in various types of bilingual programs, particularly at the elementary level (12 percent in elementary, 3 percent in middle school, and 2 percent in high school). Finally, a small proportion of RAIEL students (1 percent in elementary, 2 percent in middle school, and 6 percent in high school) did not participate in any program models designed for English learners because their families had waived services.

These data show that very few RAIEL students, even among those who enter in later grades, were in specialized newcomer programs. Instead, the dominant programmatic pattern was, at the middle and high school levels, a separate ELD class and sheltered content instruction in English. The dominant pattern at the elementary school level was, again, sheltered content instruction with push-in or pull-out ELD.

Table 1.4
Proportions of RAIELs participating in different instructional program models for English language development, 2015-16, State 2

	ELD Push-in	ELD Pull-out	ELD Class Period	Newcomer Program ELD	Not Participating	<i>n</i>
Elementary	45%	50%	5%	0%	1%	1306
Middle	4%	7%	80%	8%	2%	314
High	0%	2%	81%	12%	6%	539

Table 1.5
Proportions of RAIELs participating in different instructional program models for learning core content, 2015-16, State 2

	Two-Way Immersion	Transitional Bilingual	Developmental Bilingual	Other Bilingual	Sheltered Instruction	Newcomer Program Core Content	Not Participating	<i>n</i>
Elem.	9%	3%	0%	0%	87%	0%	1%	1306
Middle	3%	0%	0%	0%	93%	2%	2%	314
High	1%	0%	0%	1%	85%	6%	6%	539

Note. Elem = Elementary.

KEY THEMES

In this report section, we presented descriptive information regarding RAIEL students in two anonymous states in the U.S., examining who RAIELs are, how they are doing in school, and, in State 2, how they are being served. The following are key findings from this section:

- RAIELs are an extraordinarily diverse set of students, coming from all over the world.
- RAIELs arrive at all different ages and with many unique needs, including having experienced gaps in formal schooling (SLIFE students), having fled dangerous situations (refugees and others), having disabilities, and being in the U.S. without parents (unaccompanied minors).

- RAIELs arrive into elementary, middle, and high schools both in areas with a lot of immigrant resettlement where they are among many other RAIELs, as well as in new destinations where they are the only RAIEL student or they are one of very few.
- RAIELs often make very rapid progress toward English proficiency, a testament to their resiliency, assets, and capacity, but few are fully proficient in English after three years in the U.S. This is not surprising given existing research that it generally takes ELs 5-7 years to reach English proficiency (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2017).
- While some RAIELs perform very well on academic assessments, most perform far below their U.S.-born and English-speaking peers, and therefore need targeted, high-quality linguistic and academic supports in school.
- In State 2 where we can speak to RAIEL services, very few RAIEL students are in programs designed for newcomers. Instead, most are in sheltered instructional environments where instruction is in English. At the middle and high school levels, the overwhelming proportion of RAIELs are in a specialized, separate ELD class.

SECTION II: THE ROLE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN SUPPORTING RAIEL EDUCATION

In this second section of the report we discuss findings from a set of case studies we undertook in six anonymous school districts across the country serving recently arrived immigrant ELs. We selected school districts that differed by size, concentrations of ELs, and geographic region to capture diversity in school district experiences and to consider variation in traditional versus new immigrant destinations. In most cases, the districts were recognized by state leaders as implementing new and/or innovative approaches for RAIELs.

While we continue to use the term RAIEL here, it is important to note that district and school staff typically referenced newcomers more generally (i.e., EL students who had immigrated in recent years, without giving a specific time period since arrival). We spent several days in each school district, interviewing district personnel, elementary and secondary staff members, and community members when applicable. See the report Appendix for a more detailed description of our research methods. We explored the following two research questions:

1. **How are districts and schools responding to meet the needs of RAIEL populations?**
2. **How do RAIEL supports vary across districts?**

Through the course of this research, we identified several key ways in which districts and schools attended to RAIEL needs. In this section, we report on five components of RAIEL education that were prominent across all districts, and that represent a continuum of supports for RAIELs, from entry into the district to graduation. These five components include (1) intake, (2) community partnerships, (3) programs and placements, (4) personnel, staffing, and capacity building, and (5) graduation. For each, we attempt to address both of the above research questions and to identify any areas of supports that were particularly promising or challenging. Before going into each component, we first briefly describe the six school districts (see also Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Basic Characteristics of the School Districts in the Study

District	District Size	EL Concentration	Geographic region
1	10,000	5%	Midwest
2	> 10,000	> 10%	Midwest
3	< 5,000	> 33%	West
4	40,000	> 15%	West
5	25,000	25%	West
6	170,000	10%	South

Note. Both district size and EL concentration are approximated in order to ensure district anonymity. EL = English learner.

District 1 was a small urban school district in the Midwest that served approximately 10,000 students. Approximately 5 percent of the school district's students were English learners, and most of these were RAIELs due to the proximity of a refugee resettlement agency. The school district and community were predominantly White, monolingual, and non-immigrant while the RAIEL population was predominantly comprised of refugees of many origins. The district also served a small proportion of second and third generation Latino and Asian immigrant students, some of whom were ELs. Although the district was situated in a politically conservative state, the immediate community was described as generally supportive of immigrants and refugees in particular.

District 2 was a small urban school district in the Midwest of over 10,000 students. The school district was racially diverse with the largest groups being African-American, White, and Latino, in that order. Over ten percent of the district population was EL. The city, located in a political swing state, was described as very welcoming to newcomers. It was a historic refugee resettlement location and served a very diverse set of RAIELs as well as second generation (and beyond) immigrant students and EL students. Refugee resettlement bolstered the districts' enrollment numbers; without refugee students, district enrollment would have declined in a setting that had suffered economic distress as manufacturing jobs had left the region.

District 3 was a small and highly diverse school district in the West with fewer than 5,000 students. Latino, Asian, and African-American students were the largest ethnic/racial population groups within the school district, and over one third of the district was classified as EL. The school district had been serving ELs and RAIELs for more than 15-20 years and also served large numbers of both refugee and non-refugee RAIELs. The state and community context were welcoming to newcomers and immigrants generally, yet some tensions existed between the school district which sought to welcome immigrants, and a White minority population that had responded unfavorably to the rapid diversification that took place in the district. Yet generally, the context was welcoming to RAIELs and other immigrants.

District 4 was a large urban school district in the West with around 40,000 students. Over 15 percent of the school district population was classified as EL, and the school district population was largely White and Latino. The city had sizable populations of Latino, Pacific Islander, and Eastern European (non-refugee) RAIEL students as well a growing population of refugee students, due to recent refugee resettlement patterns in the state. Located in a moderately liberal state and community, the district was described as supportive of immigrants and refugees, though leaders often did their work "under the radar" to avoid public scrutiny.

District 5 was a medium-sized (around 25,000 students) school district in a large urban center in the West. The district was roughly one quarter EL and the majority of students in the district were Latino. The district was in a traditional immigrant-receiving area and had both RAIEL students as well as students from families that immigrated one or more generations before. RAIELs were primarily from Mexico and Central America. Though located in a politically liberal state and within a community described as generally supportive, around the time of our data collection immigration raids were common, creating a tense climate for newcomers.

District 6 was a large (over 150,000 students) and diverse urban school district in the South, where the ethnic/racial composition of students was predominantly African-American, Latino, and White, in that order. Around 10 percent of the district's students were ELs. The district's RAIEL students were largely Latino students from Central America, and many were unaccompanied minors and/or students with limited or interrupted formal education. While the immediate community was described as mostly welcoming to newcomers, the district was situated in a politically conservative state that had restrictive immigration policies in place.

INTAKE

Although all districts had processes in place to facilitate RAIELs' entry into the U.S. school system, some districts relied primarily on "business-as-usual" registration processes at individual school sites, and others had established newcomer welcome centers that facilitated specialized processing, especially for refugees. In general, intake processes for RAIELs supported two distinct but complementary goals: (1) to obtain information about students and families that would inform placement decisions and help educators identify appropriate supports; and (2) to welcome students and families and facilitate their transition to U.S. schools.

Related to the first goal, districts used a variety of assessments, including language proficiency and academic tests, stress screeners to identify possible trauma, and parent interviews to understand students' prior schooling and experiences. When possible, student transcripts were also obtained to facilitate program and course placement, especially at the secondary level. With respect to welcoming students and facilitating transitions, districts employed a range of strategies, from taking pictures and videos to introduce students and families to their new schools, to riding the bus to and from school with students during their first week, to assigning RAIELs a buddy or mentor.

In the two districts with the largest percentages of ELs (Districts 3 and 5), responsibility for intake was placed on individual school sites and was not always differentiated for RAIELs. In District 5, for example, all parents were expected to register their children at their neighborhood school, and to complete an online registration form and home language survey. If parents had difficulty completing the forms, which were provided in English or Spanish only, front office staff might call a bilingual community liaison to assist. These liaisons were responsible for facilitating parent relationships for *all* students in their assigned school; consequently, they were not always available to welcome RAIEL students and families. Based on the information provided during registration, students were flagged as RAIELs if they spoke a language other than English at home and were new to U.S. schools. Teachers were then responsible for administering an English language proficiency assessment, which was given to all students who might qualify for EL services.

While little if any additional information was gathered for RAIELs at the elementary level in District 5, EL instructional specialists at some middle and high schools conducted interviews with RAIEL students and families to ascertain prior school history. At one high school, the EL specialists also asked RAIELs to complete a writing sample to facilitate course placement while awaiting official English language proficiency test results. The counselor assigned to RAIELs at the high school

also asked for students' transcripts and translated them when possible to give them appropriate course credit. Intake processes were similar in District 3, except that paraprofessionals were responsible for administering language proficiency assessments rather than teachers. Moreover, given the language diversity in District 3, it was sometimes challenging to locate someone to assist RAIEL parents during school registration, especially in cases when students came from language backgrounds that were not common. The exception was refugees, who received additional support from a local resettlement agency that collaborated with a district-based refugee coordinator.

In contrast, the other four districts had centralized locations that were designated for RAIEL registration and intake. In District 4, for example, increasing numbers of recent-arrivals, and especially refugees, motivated leaders to create a newcomer welcome center and to articulate formal intake procedures for RAIELs. District-based outreach coordinators were often families' first point of contact; when learning of newly-arrived students from the local refugee resettlement agency or school site, they reached out to families to schedule intake interviews and school registration. In addition to the outreach coordinators who represented various immigrant groups in the district (e.g., Russian, Arabic), families met with bilingual (English-Spanish) newcomer specialists, nurses, and translators when needed. While newcomer specialists coordinated language and academic assessments, nurses verified immunization records and administered a parent questionnaire to assess students' prior experiences and identify any potential trauma triggers, as well as to determine dietary restrictions or nutritional needs. When possible, specialists also collected previous school transcripts and arranged for translation so that they could recommend appropriate course placement. At the time of our study, all of this information was being organized into individual student newcomer profiles that could be shared electronically with principals, teachers, and school-based newcomer/EL specialists.

Regarding the processes for welcoming RAIELs, Districts 3 and 5 left it up to individual counselors and teachers to offer support (especially for RAIELs not classified as refugees). Sometimes this meant that RAIELs may not have received additional supports to help them transition to U.S. schools. When supports were offered, they included placing RAIELs in classes with students who spoke their language or identifying a buddy or mentor to assist. Alternatively, the other four districts offered additional supports, often through outreach coordinators or specialists who facilitated school-community relations. For example, outreach coordinators in District 4 spent about a week with all RAIELs, coordinating their transportation, introducing school and classroom routines, and connecting family members to additional resources, such as housing, clothing, or medical services. Keenly aware of the traumatic experiences some students faced, coordinators were also in the process of developing a video to explain fire drills and to reduce any associated stress for RAIELs. A newcomer specialist summarized District 4's process in this way, "We think big ...we know that if we can transition them well, the academics will come along once they're safe and stable and aren't fearful of coming to school." Districts 1 and 2 had similarly centralized intake processes for their RAIELs, as did District 6, but only for RAIELs at the secondary level.

In general, districts serving EL populations that either made up smaller percentages of the overall student body, or were increasing in percentage rapidly, tended to have centralized intake supports

that included processes for information gathering and for facilitating RAIELs' transition into U.S. schools, while districts serving larger percentages and well-established EL populations had fewer additional intake services for RAIELs beyond those offered to all ELs.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

To varying degrees, all districts collaborated with community partners to offer wraparound services to RAIEL students and families (including services that went beyond addressing RAIELs' educational needs, addressing needs related to housing, food and nutrition, clothing, physical and mental health, supplementary education, adult language learning, and/or translation). In most cases, these services were coordinated by district- or school-based personnel who served as school-community brokers. These services tended to be most extensive for refugee students and families, as resettlement agencies and related organizations were often involved in ensuring that families were supported in all aspects of their transition, especially in the early phases. In three districts, community-wide support networks were in place to facilitate communication between school districts and other organizations serving RAIELs, especially refugees.

Neither District 5 nor District 6 served large refugee populations; in these locales RAIELs tended to receive wraparound services on a case-by-case basis as facilitated by school-based community liaisons or outreach coordinators. In District 5, for example, community liaisons coordinated with a food pantry to provide groceries to families in need, and in District 6 outreach coordinators collaborated with an eyeglass provider to offer free eye exams to select students. Although RAIELs were often recipients of these supports, they were available to any family or student in need in the district. Liaisons and coordinators in Districts 5 and 6 also worked with RAIEL students and families on an individual basis to ensure access to adequate housing, food, clothing, medical care, and counseling services, often drawing from a list of community resources developed by district personnel. Additionally, each elementary school in District 6 had a parent center, and a full-time bilingual parent liaison was available to connect families to external resources and organizations as needed.

In contrast, the other four districts in our study had more explicit relationships with community partners, focused on supporting refugees. Partners included resettlement agencies and faith-based organizations who sponsored refugee families and facilitated housing, medical benefits and screenings, and school enrollment. In most cases, volunteers from these organizations were assigned to families to facilitate their transition and to ensure that their basic needs were met. As a District 4 leader put it, "It helps us [to have these partners] because we know we can worry about transition to education, and they're going to surround families with housing and jobs and clothes and food." District staff coordinated with these partners during the intake process, in one case (District 1) through a formal data sharing agreement that allowed district staff to access information gathered by the community partner if the family consented. In Districts 1, 3, and 4, community partners also offered training to administrators and teachers related to supporting refugees' transitions to U.S. schools.

Refugee-focused partners also offered out-of-school time educational programming. In District 2, a community-based refugee center opened with funding from a federal Refugee School Impact Grant (see Glossary) to provide afterschool and summer programs in collaboration with the district’s bilingual education department. The afterschool program was held at district schools and provided tutoring from students at the local university, along with dinner and transportation. The summer program included a five-week camp focused on relationship-building and acclimation to the U.S. Districts 3, and 4 offered similar afterschool programs, with District 4’s partners offering a range of programs for refugees from different linguistic and cultural groups.

In three districts, community-wide support networks helped to coordinate refugee services. In District 2, the district’s EL director spearheaded the development of a community collaborative that met monthly to share resources and facilitate cross-organizational communication for refugee and immigrant service providers in the area. District and school staff in District 3 also held monthly providers’ meetings to facilitate

communication with external partners. In District 4, a community partner described their network as “a centralized place for everyone trying to reach the same goal of meeting families’ needs.”

In general, the most extensive community partnerships and networks focused on support for refugees with less coordination and fewer supports for non-refugee RAIELs.

This group, led by a local faith-based organization, consisted of six resource teams that gathered or developed resources in the areas of greatest need for refugees: housing, employment, education, healthcare, cultural navigation, and English language learning. In general, the most extensive community partnerships and networks tended to focus on offering support for refugees, with wraparound services for non-refugee RAIELs primarily offered by school-based staff or community partners on a case-by-case basis.

PROGRAMS AND PLACEMENT

In our interviews with district and school personnel, a central tension emerged when discussing programs for RAIELs — whether to place students with other RAIELs and ELs (separating them) or with their general education peers (mainstreaming them). In general education courses, RAIELs’ needs may not necessarily be addressed, particularly in settings with scarce EL teaching expertise. Conversely, specialized placements could limit RAIELs’ interaction with mainstream peers and isolate them, and in some cases, limit access to content and/or opportunities for credit-bearing courses for graduation (discussed below in the graduation section). This tension was exacerbated when meeting the needs of RAIELs who were older upon arrival, had larger educational gaps, or had endured trauma. As a District 6 administrator noted,

We’ve been dealing for years with kids coming in with no English.... [T]hat has really gotten to the point where we almost yawn. Not a problem. But, the...extent of the low formal schooling combined with the trauma, I think the principals were saying, “We cannot deal with all of this effectively in a traditional high school.”

The influx of large numbers of RAIELs with limited formal education in District 6 spurred the creation of a newcomer program for SLIFE students. Yet in District 3, the EL director noted that the district had long-ago dismantled their newcomer program—something that she was relieved about because the thought of separating RAIELs made her uneasy.

The tension between separating versus mainstreaming RAIELs emerged across all cases. However, despite the clear articulation of this tension, districts often employed multiple approaches in different settings and at different levels, with more models identified as “universal” or “integrated” at the elementary levels and more separation and differentiation at the high school levels. In elementary schools, districts tended to place RAIELs in general education courses for most or all of the day. In some elementary schools, staff described “push-in,” “co-teaching,” or “inclusion” models where EL teachers or aides worked side by side with mainstream teachers, and in other cases they described using a “pull-out” model where an EL teacher or aide worked with individuals or small groups of students focusing on English language development (ELD) for a limited time. Regardless of whether elementary-school RAIELs participated in a “pull-out” or “push-in” model, these students tended to spend the majority of their school days in mainstream courses conducted in English. (The exception to English instruction was District 4, which offered a widely-available elementary Spanish bilingual program.)

The tension between separating versus mainstreaming RAIELs emerged across all districts. In general there were more integrated services for elementary RAIELs and more separated services for secondary RAIELs.

In general, elementary schools tried to place RAIELs in classrooms with general education teachers who had EL certification. However, because Districts 1 and 2 faced serious shortages of EL-endorsed teachers, they were unable to do this consistently; instead, they clustered and routed RAIELs to specific elementary schools where EL teacher expertise was more concentrated.

Middle schools were much more variable in terms of their programmatic offerings for RAIELs. While two districts (District 1, District 6) offered middle school RAIELs the option to attend newcomer programs at high schools, this was seen as problematic, particularly when students were much younger than high-school aged students. In District 3, RAIEL schedules were “book-ended” during first and last periods — RAIELs were placed in a specialized support class taught by an EL-endorsed teacher, and for the remainder of the day students were mainstreamed. One exception to this general placement policy was for SLIFE students with limited previous exposure to mathematics instruction; they were placed into a specialized mathematics course taught by a dually-certified mathematics and EL teacher who used computer programs where students worked independently at different skill levels.

High school offerings tended to be more specialized and separated than elementary and middle school programming. At times, specialized programs came in the form of newcomer

centers that were geographically located in separate spaces or co-located with other schools (Districts 1, 4, and 6). In Districts 1 and 6, newcomer programs were only offered for RAIEL students with limited or interrupted formal education [SLIFEs]. In other districts, program specialization took place within neighborhood schools. Yet not all neighborhood schools necessarily had the EL teacher expertise needed. Depending on the geographical span and resources of districts, the issue of scarce EL teacher expertise was exacerbated.

At all levels, districts negotiated a careful balance between what were considered competing core needs of RAIEL students: academic, social, psychological, linguistic, and career. Decisions about this balance were district and school specific and varied by school level, RAIEL age upon entry, district and school leadership philosophy, and community context. In District 1, there was a strong districtwide philosophy that students' basic needs came first and that a student could not learn academics or English

until they felt safe, welcomed, comfortable, and physically secure. In District 6, a political climate that was hostile to undocumented students, particularly in terms of providing access to higher education, led the

Districts negotiated a balance between what they perceived as competing core needs of RAIEL students: academic, social, psychological, linguistic, and career.

district to focus their high school newcomer program on career and technical training and development. In District 3, district leadership believed that educational equity for RAIEL students was contingent on providing equal access to academic content, and thus RAIEL services tended to focus on linguistic and academic supports first and foremost.

In some districts and schools, there was great attention to careful course sequences. For example, District 3 offered a planned sequence of ELD and content-area courses leading to mainstreaming. ELD courses were very specialized (with five levels to choose from), while sheltered content-area courses were offered for those at beginning levels. Intermediate-level students took English language arts (ELA) in a general education setting and were simultaneously enrolled in an ELA support class taught by an EL teacher. Once students reached an intermediate level of English proficiency, they were mainstreamed for content-area instruction. The District 3 EL director emphasized that program placements were flexible, "We don't hold back kids." Importantly, program placements were not determined by English proficiency scores alone; students took an additional writing assessment that was collectively reviewed and discussed by the EL department. The department also took into account students' prior exposure to mathematics and social studies when making placements. The EL department relied on multiple sources of information and their own expertise when making placement decisions.

In summary, programmatic decisions were intertwined with larger tensions surrounding the need to ensure RAIELs had access to specialized supports while simultaneously addressing their need for opportunities available to the general school population.

PERSONNEL, STAFFING, AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Staffing emerged as a key issue in our interviews with participants across the six districts. Below we discuss the three major facets concerning staffing: district EL director’s roles, the range of staff positions districts created to meet RAIELs’ needs, and capacity-building efforts.

EL district staff played a central role in efforts to welcome RAIELs as well as to coordinate district responses in supporting RAIELs. They often shaped programs even as they simultaneously faced many obstacles, chief among them a lack of resources. A theme that emerged often was balancing the acute needs of RAIELs in relation to students who were sometimes referred to as “legacy ELs” (Administrator, District 1), for example, EL students who were not recently-arrived (often second generation ELs).

District EL directors’ roles varied widely across districts. For example, in District 3, the EL director focused on supporting RAIELs’ instructional needs first and foremost. In contrast, in District 2, the EL director spent a great deal of time coordinating directly with community partners to support a wider array of RAIELs’ needs. Walking through a school site, the director noticed a recent arrival’s shoes — she was wearing plastic flip-flops below a thin skirt after a January snowstorm. The director noted keeping an eye on such issues and working with community partners to attend to students’ basic needs, while also spending a great deal of time with budgets — something that the EL director in District 3 had less control over. Indeed, District 2’s EL director spent hours reviewing budgets because of the central role played in forging the staffing policies through going after grants to fund a specialized cadre of “bilingual specialists.” Careful in articulating and elevating the roles of these staff members (distinctly giving them a “specialist” title rather than an “aide” or “paraprofessional” title), the EL director met with them regularly, and included them in district-wide EL staff meetings, to keep a close pulse on what was happening in classrooms. Bilingual specialists in District 2 were also central in building relationships and trust with RAIEL families, and one beloved specialist was described by school staff as a grandmother figure to youth. The EL director played a central role in creating and maintaining these staff roles, and was able to find bilingual staff who could build relationships with RAIELs through developing deep partnerships with community groups. Many of the bilingual specialists were former refugees who came up through the ranks through the organizations that the district had developed deep partnerships with, initially as contract translators, and later as district and school staff.

Districts created new staffing positions to support RAIELs. These staff were not merely translators; they actively bridged school and community divides and assisted RAIELs as they transitioned to life in the U.S.

The creation of the “bilingual specialist” role was but one example of the array of job titles we encountered across the six districts. At times called “parent liaisons” (District 5), and other times “community liaisons” (District 3) or “community school outreach coordinators” (District 4), these roles often drew directly from bilingual community members in specific languages, including Spanish,

Arabic, Russian, Marshallese, Somali, Nepali, and others. These staff were not merely translators; their primary function was often to actively bridge school and community divides and assist RAIELs as they transitioned to life in the U.S. Also present were roles such as “family engagement coordinator” (District 5), “refugee liaison” (District 1), and “adolescent outreach specialist” (District 6).

At the same time that districts focused staffing on the broader needs of RAIELs and refugees, instructional staffing emerged as a central issue. Some districts (especially District 1, District 2, District 6) faced critical shortages of staff with EL certifications — particularly general education teachers. In District 6, these shortages had spillover effects that created disincentives for teachers obtaining EL endorsements. The shortage of qualified teachers led to a policy of only placing EL support staff in classrooms where teachers did not hold EL certifications. Therefore, EL certified teachers ended up getting less support in their classrooms. Additionally, EL teachers and support staff described being “stretched too thin,” especially in districts experiencing rapid influxes of RAIELs (District 4 and District 6). In some districts where EL staff were limited, EL teachers and support staff had to work across multiple schools (District 1, District 2).

With such great needs for capacity building, formal professional development took a variety of forms. In District 6, for example, the district EL director for the secondary level developed short online modules for staff covering a range of topics, including a module focused on RAIELs. Although not a substitute for EL certification, it was intended as a basic introduction. There were also efforts to pay for teachers to earn EL endorsements (District 6), yet sometimes these initiatives were not able to be sustained over time (District 3). Often resources were dedicated to professional development programs such as the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) or Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) which were focused on helping teachers develop skills in instructional methods for ELs generally (District 3, District 5). RAIEL specific PD was less common although two districts (District 3 and 4) offered trauma-informed training for teachers and administrators in partnership with community refugee resettlement agencies, although they were described as more informational than instructional in nature.

While some districts’ capacity-building efforts were centralized and formal, including the provision of instructional coaches, other times capacity building occurred from the bottom up. This was seen in the case of an organic departmental professional learning community (PLC) where teachers gathered to evaluate student work and discuss what was working or not working for students. While we emphasize the variation across districts in capacity building efforts, we also clearly saw great needs across districts for continued capacity building focused specifically on RAIELs as a distinct EL subgroup.

GRADUATION

Another key challenge for districts was supporting RAIELs’ pathways to graduation, work, and/or post-secondary education. Our participants across districts conveyed that RAIELs who arrived in elementary and, to a lesser extent, middle school, would typically be on track to graduate. The prognosis for RAIELs who arrived in their early or later teens, however, was considered more tenuous to outright “doomsday” (high school counselor, District 4). Much of this variation was

because of graduation requirements. Graduation requirements (which relate to both the number of courses taken in high school and the content areas of those courses), shaped opportunities differentially across settings. These requirements are generally set at the state level, with districts able to add in additional requirements on top of those mandated by the state. While graduation requirements were considered within reach for students able to take credit-bearing classes as they began high school, it was widely considered difficult for students to acquire sufficient credits within four years if they began high school in newcomer classes or programs (which typically do not carry graduation credits) or if they were placed into mainstream classes but failed to pass them.

To address this issue, districts had multiple ways of supporting RAIEL students in acquiring graduation credits or in providing alternatives to graduation requirements. In all districts, there was an effort to give credit for courses taken and passed in other countries; however, many students arrived without transcripts, and when transcripts were available, classes were frequently considered not to have relevant equivalencies. Other innovations were district specific: Districts 2 and 6 had online credit recovery programs; District 3 encouraged students to double-up on content area electives; and in District 1, there was flexibility in awarding credits, including for community service projects, or passing content-area tests. Furthermore, districts allowed some or all RAIEL students to enroll in one or more extra years of high school, as long as they had not aged-out (discussed below). In most districts, the option to enroll in one or more additional years was available for all current and former RAIELs. However, in District 5, a RAIEL needed to meet certain criteria and get principal permission to enroll in a fifth year.

Three districts (Districts 2, 3, and 5) discussed world language graduation requirements and how these posed dilemmas for newcomers. While the districts had affordances for students to meet this graduation requirement by demonstrating proficiency in their home languages, the districts did not have assessments in many of the home languages of RAIEL students and were therefore unable to award these credits. Instead, students were sometimes left in the position of having to take foreign language classes – or otherwise meet this requirement – at the same time as they were acquiring English.

A dilemma in all the districts was that schools serving large numbers of RAIELs were penalized for having low 4-year graduation rates despite the fact that many students were arriving into these schools with little English skills or academic preparation. In nearly all districts, interviewees acknowledged that students who arrived in their late teens were at times counseled away, or, less commonly, outright refused from enrolling in school, in part for this reason.

Across all districts, respondents described that when RAIELs arrived in their later teens (16+), their graduation prospects were highly compromised (as seen in Section I of this report). This was especially indicated for RAIELs with limited or interrupted formal education, those with low English proficiency levels, those without home language literacy, and those without transcripts. Due to age-out policies, which in our six districts ranged from 19 to 21, there was a widespread sense that graduation within district K-12 systems was a near impossibility for these students.

Given this difficult scenario, districts responded in a number of ways. District 2, for example, had a strong partnership with a nonprofit organization that created a program especially for immigrant students who were at or close to aging-out. In this program, students took classes online at the organization’s center with volunteer teacher support for four hours a day. With successful completion, these students could earn an accredited high school diploma. In District 6, the district ran an adult school that offered a general education diploma (GED) program. And in District 3, a high school administrator collaborated with a local community college to provide courses at no cost to students. In District 4, by contrast, few, if any, supports existed in this area, and while there were efforts in place to try to get older students modified diplomas, there was a general sense that students who aged-out were left to their own devices.

Districts spoke about the need to support RAIELs with “exit plans” (high school principal, District 6) as they neared graduation or aging-out. In some districts, interviewees lamented the caseload and language barriers faced by high school counselors and felt that students were not getting the support they needed for future planning. Other districts created innovations to meet this need. District 3, for example, created a position for someone to work exclusively with newcomer students on supporting the graduation pipeline.

Beyond these broad tendencies across our districts, some issues surfaced as particularly poignant in specific districts. A case in point is the situation of undocumented RAIELs in District 5. This district has large numbers of undocumented students and is located in a state with hostile laws toward undocumented immigrants. These laws impact students’ ability to enroll in post-secondary, to pay for higher education, and to find work. The precarious nature of many students’ possibilities in District 5 led to a pervasive goal among interviewees to retain RAIELs within the public K-12 system as long as possible in order to provide them with as many skills and resources before their opportunities constricted. Because they knew that many of these students would age-out before getting their diplomas, this district created a newcomer program strongly geared toward career training and preparation.

In summary, supporting RAIEL students who arrived into the U.S. in their teen years was a source of major concern in all of the districts studied. Districts — and to a lesser extent, states, as discussed in Section III below — put a range of innovations and stop-gaps into place, but moving these students successfully through high school graduation felt nearly impossible to many interviewees. This area of supports remains crucial for further work.

KEY THEMES

Our research in six school districts – all innovating and adapting to serve large or growing populations of RAIELs – leaves us with two key takeaways helpful for states and districts looking to improve supports for RAIEL students.

- **RAIELs benefit from a continuum of supports that extends both vertically and horizontally.** The districts we examined were responding to RAIELs’ needs by creating a

continuum of supports both along the K-12 (and beyond) trajectory as well as broadening the types of supports at any given point in that continuum. By vertical supports, we refer to supports for students over time, as they progress from the time they arrive until they leave the K-12 system (or beyond). By horizontal supports, we refer to the breadth of supports for RAIELs at any given point in time, including supports for academic, linguistic, social, emotional, physical, familial, or psychological needs. With regard to the K-12 trajectory of vertical supports, districts were developing and refining key supports at different points, beginning with intake, as students entered the school system, through elementary schools where districts had in place a combination of push-in, pull-out, clustering, mainstreaming, and co-teaching models, into middle schools and high schools where districts supported a range of services including magnet schools and newcomer programs, and through graduation and post-secondary, where districts were grappling with awarding credits, negotiating requirements, and establishing opportunities for RAIELs approaching graduation or high school age limits.

With regard to the horizontal breadth of services, districts were broadening the scope of supports for RAIELs both within the district system, for example by creating new staffing positions to link RAIEL families into the school system, as well as, importantly, through the creation and maintenance of partnerships with outside organizations and businesses to provide social-emotional, psychological, physical, transportation, and health supports, among others.

As witnessed in several of the districts, the intake process is an important opportunity to learn as much as possible about both trends in RAIEL student assets and needs, as well as the unique background of every student and family. This intake process is key, therefore, in shaping both district RAIEL plans and the net of supports and individual planned pathways for every student. Similar to school improvement plans, or district EL plans, a holistic plan for RAIEL supports that addresses both the vertical and horizontal continuum of supports may be a promising way of envisioning RAIEL supports at the district level.

- **Unique needs of both RAIEL populations and district and school context mean that there is no ‘one size fits all’ in supporting RAIELs.** A final takeaway from our district research is that while there is ample overlap in RAIEL needs and supports (and therefore much promise in centralized state supports and networks or partnerships for districts learning from one another), there is also incredible diversity in both the contexts of school districts and the characteristics of RAIEL populations. This diversity means that districts’ strengths and the needs of RAIEL populations differ and cannot be addressed nor mandated with a ‘one size fits all’ approach.

Unique needs of both RAIEL populations and district and school context mean that there is no ‘one size fits all’ in supporting RAIELs.

Key factors that moderated the work that we saw districts doing include district size; EL concentration; timing since RAIEL influx; concentration of refugee students specifically; the relative presence of partnering organizations such as community colleges and universities, local businesses, nonprofit community groups, and religious organizations; and the larger state policy environment and social and political atmosphere. Key factors with regard to the RAIEL population that had a large bearing on the supports developed included concentration or dispersion among home languages; prior schooling levels and experiences; exposure to trauma prior to or during migration; and documentation status, among others. This underscores the importance of developing systems to understand the RAIEL population and their needs as comprehensively as possible as well as tapping into the strengths and assets present within each community.

SECTION III: THE ROLE OF STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES IN SUPPORTING RAIEL EDUCATION

In the prior section, we examined the work of school districts/local education agencies (LEAs) in supporting RAIELs. In this final section, we turn to the important work of state education agencies (SEAs). The relative role of the SEA, as compared to that of the federal government and local education authorities, varies by state and across time. The current political climate is trending toward a heightened relative role of SEAs in relation to a decreasing role of the federal government. As such, SEAs are likely to have a growing role in supporting the needs of RAIEL students. The SEA divisions most relevant to this work are those that oversee English learner (EL) instruction. These divisions are often termed Title III divisions in reference to the section of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act that relates most specifically to EL instruction (currently the Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA] of 2015).

This report explores two questions to help support the growing role of SEAs:

- 1. What do state Title III directors report as key challenges in their work supporting RAIEL education?**
- 2. Across states, what types of roles do SEAs take on to support RAIEL education, and what do state Title III directors describe as key strengths and limitations within these roles?**

These questions provide a foundation to better understand the current work being done to support RAIELs at the state level. Across interviews, directors expressed a desire to engage more deeply in RAIEL education. It is our hope that these findings, synthesized as key takeaways at the end of this section, can begin to inform future work at the state-level to facilitate this desired engagement.

This section draws on interviews conducted with 18 state-level employees identified for their role in managing or directing state-level activities related to ELs and immigrant students. States were convenience sampled; see the report Appendix for a description of methods used to recruit states, conduct interviews, and analyze data. Position titles varied by state, but for confidentiality and continuity all interviewees are referred to in this section by the general term of 'state Title III directors.' We interviewed state Title III directors from states in the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West. State Title III directors participated from traditional as well as new immigrant destination states, and states with both large and small EL and RAIEL populations. In the interviews, state Title III directors were asked a set of questions about how they currently supported RAIEL education and what they considered to be gaps or needs in state-level supports.

It is important to note that the information provided here is qualitative and descriptive. We synthesize and report on the opinions and statements of the state directors, rather than claiming to state objective truths. We believe there is an enormous amount to be learned from the expertise and experience of state directors about both the challenges and successes of supporting RAIEL education.

BUILDING FROM CHALLENGES

The growing role of the SEA in RAIEL education presents an exciting opportunity for SEAs to actively support a student group in need of specialized attention. However, there are many challenges faced at the state level in supporting RAIELs. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the challenges identified by directors across interviews. There was substantial overlap across states in terms of challenges. Here we detail the five most commonly cited challenges. At the end of this challenges section we also briefly define the other challenges mentioned by states. The five key challenges discussed below are (1) supporting secondary school-aged RAIELs; (2) collecting data regarding RAIELs; (3) implementing effective intake and enrollment policies and practices for RAIELs; (4) having sufficient and appropriate RAIEL-specific resources; and (5) supporting low-incidence or rapid influx RAIEL districts.

Table 3.1

Challenges Faced by State Education Agencies in Supporting Recently Arrived Immigrant English Learner Students

State ID	Secondary-age RAIELs	Data Collection	Intake & Enrollment	Resources	Low-incidence/rapid influx districts
1	X			X	X
2	X	X		X	X
3	X			X	X
4		X	X	X	X
5				X	
6	X			X	X
7	X		X	X	
8	X	X		X	
9		X	X	X	
10	X		X	X	X
11	X	X		X	
12	X	X		X	X
13	X	X		X	
14		X		X	X
15	X			X	X
16	X	X		X	X
17	X	X		X	X
18	X		X	X	

Note. An “X” indicates that the director referenced the column header as a challenge their state faces in supporting recently arrived immigrant English learners. The protocol asked questions about the challenges faced at the state, local, and individual student level. An absence of the challenge in the interview should not be interpreted that the state does not face challenges in that specific area, but that it was not explicitly noted in the director interview. Each challenge is defined in the text under the subsection “Building from Challenges”. RAIEL = Recently arrived immigrant English learner.

Secondary school-aged RAIELs. Paralleling findings presented in Sections I and II of this report, state Title III directors often cited existing graduation policies as barriers to secondary-school age RAIELs obtaining a high school diploma. An overarching challenge was the creation of pathways to graduation for RAIELs entering the education system at middle and high-school ages. Graduation requirements and the cap on funding for students once they reach a certain age (age-out policies) were both policies described as inhibiting the ability of schools to meet the needs of secondary school-age RAIELs. Graduation requirements set at both the state and local level often require a series of courses (such as four years of English or three years of math) that directors felt secondary-school age RAIELs could not realistically complete in time. This overlaps with policies that cap funding for students at a certain age. Directors cited that many RAIELs who arrive during secondary school cannot complete the requirements for a diploma before the state determined age at which student funding is no longer provided. Directors suggested that innovations and interventions that support instructional differentiation and integrated language and content could facilitate greater graduation possibilities.

Directors also expressed a desire for supports, policies, or guidance around the processing of transcripts in order to better understand student content knowledge, as well as provide credit for previous courses taken. While transcripts are of little utility for primary school age RAIELs (placement of these students is typically done by age alone), understanding prior knowledge is critical for course placement in high school and awarding credits for prior coursework is one of the few ways to help secondary-school age RAIELs graduate.

Data collection. Ten interviewees described a need for the state to gather more comprehensive data on RAIELs. A common theme was that both SEAs and LEAs need a better understanding of the RAIEL populations they serve in order to support them effectively. One director stated, “The only way that you can have educational equity and access is to better understand who the learners are and the experiences that they bring with them” (State 11). More knowledge at the state level was projected to have two benefits: (1) helping to provide accurate, targeted guidance to LEAs, and (2) informing efforts toward policy change and resource allocation for RAIELs. Identified information gaps included refugee status, prior schooling experiences, content knowledge in a student’s primary language, migratory experiences, and mental and physical health needs.

Intake and enrollment. An area for growth identified across interviews was the student intake process. Some directors expressed a desire for more comprehensive and centrally regulated RAIEL intake processes in order to improve identification of unique student needs, facilitate correct course/grade placement, and to lay the foundation for relationships with the student and family. Particular elements of the intake process that were identified as challenges include appropriate translation services, transcript processing, placement procedures, and comprehensively addressing unique student needs. As mentioned above, the issue of processing transcripts, especially for older students, and then interpreting these transcripts for credit was a particular challenge. Directors reported that intake processes are decentralized and varied, a finding mirrored by the variation found in Section II. In general, RAIEL intake is done at the local level with little state regulation.

Resources. All directors described a lack of sufficient resources at both the state and local level to support LEAs in their work with RAIELs. Common resources identified as lacking were instructional and curricular materials, guidance and support documents, and personnel. Directors described a need for quality instructional and curricular resources that meet diverse LEA needs. Directors also expressed a desire for materials providing accurate data on RAIELs, best practices for RAIELs, and guidance on instructional strategies. Secondary school-aged RAIELs and RAIEL students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFEs) were specifically noted as subgroups for whom appropriate curricular resources are lacking in availability, with ten directors specifically noting this need for SLIFEs.

Low-incidence/rapid influx districts. A prevalent challenge that directors identified was supporting LEAs with low-incidence populations of RAIELs, or LEAs experiencing a dramatic increase in their RAIELs population. Within this broad challenge, one commonly noted phenomenon was that many LEAs facing these population changes — unlike LEAs that historically serve RAIELs — lack sufficient established community and district infrastructure and resources for supporting RAIEL students and families. Another challenge noted was the lack of experience and knowledge about RAIEL education that school staff have in these LEAs, as well as the shortage of staff who speak languages other than English. Directors described low-incidence LEAs as often having limited access to translation services and resources to build up appropriate programmatic supports for RAIELs.

The result of this challenge, many directors articulated, was that RAIELs who enroll in low-incidence districts or districts newly serving immigrant populations often may not receive appropriate supports. These students were described as more likely to not have access to appropriate instructional methods, wraparound services within the community, and personnel able to respond in linguistically and culturally appropriate ways to RAIEL student needs. This was often described in comparison to larger, more established immigrant-destination districts that have infrastructure in place to support RAIELs.

STATE EDUCATION AGENCY FUNCTIONS

State Title III directors provided an overview of their agencies' roles in supporting RAIELs; analysis revealed considerable overlap in key areas. As summarized in Table 3.2, all directors reported that their SEA engaged in roles of compliance, funding, and technical assistance. The scope of what that engagement entailed, however, varied across states. There were two areas where there was more variation in the agency role described; fewer SEAs reported participating in or facilitating networks and partnerships and very few SEAs reported engaging in policymaking specific to RAIELs. The following section details the nature of SEA work being done in these five areas. Each section details barriers identified as limiting the SEA role in that arena, as well as promising examples of SEA actions taken within these roles to address the aforementioned challenges regarding RAIEL education.

Table 3.2

Primary Functions of State Education Agencies in Supporting Recently Arrived Immigrant English Learner Students

State ID	Policymaking	Guidance/Technical Assistance	Funding	Network/Partnership	Compliance
1		X	X	X	X
2		X	X	X	X
3		X	X	X	X
4		X	X		X
5		X	X	X	X
6		X	X		X
7		X	X	X	X
8		X	X	X	X
9		X	X	X	X
10		X	X		X
11		X	X	X	X
12		X	X	X	X
13		X	X	X	X
14		X	X	X	X
15		X	X	X	X
16	X (SLIFE-specific)	X	X	X	X
17	X (intake)	X	X	X	X
18		X	X	X	X

Note. An "X" indicates that the director referenced the column header as a function of their SEA.

Compliance.

What work is being done? All state Title III directors reported that their agency engaged in activities related to state and local compliance with federal law and regulation. Data collection, reporting, and monitoring were functions that state Title III directors identified as driven by federal compliance requirements. These federal requirements were often described as broadly applying to accountability measures regarding ELs. The SEA also plays a large compliance-oriented role in facilitating federally-required standardized assessments. ESSA gives states some flexibility in assessing recently arrived ELs (RAEL; i.e., ELs who have been in the U.S. for fewer than 12 months, as per the federal definition presented in the report introduction), creating a role for SEAs to shape decisions about how LEAs assess and/or report on these students. This topic is explored at length in a recent CCSSO report (Linquanti & Cook, 2017).

Strong models of action and key limitations. Director responses suggested that their role in compliance work both limited and enhanced the scope of RAIEL-specific actions. Some noted that compliance activities are often the primary driver of agency actions, in effect restricting the areas of Title III directors' work as well as resource allocation. In contrast, other directors

reported that federal compliance requirements gave SEAs new authority, allowing the state to mandate specific actions from LEAs regarding RAIELs.

One example of compliance both enabling and limiting the state's work on RAIEL education dealt with state-level data collection. Ten directors, when asked to describe RAIEL data collection and storage at the state level, described how their data collection practices were limited to the elements required by federal reporting. Many noted that districts and schools often collected more data on students, but states could not request these data because the data were not required for federal reporting. Directors described that they could not request 'extra' data from LEAs because of the burden and cost of such requests and because of student privacy laws such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. One director stated "...it is tricky for [the SEA] to add in other [data collection requirements] like refugee status, [and] unaccompanied minor status, because most of our data collections must be based in federal or state statute or rule and if there is not a requirement to report that information out...then we can't get it added" (State 2). That said, two directors felt that ESSA regulations around RAEL testing flexibility created the opportunity for increased state-level data collection. Another director mentioned that other federal guidance from the Office of Civil Rights prompted the state to add a new data element regarding students with interrupted formal schooling. Interestingly, as was evident from the different data elements collected by the two states in Section I of this report, different states interpret federal guidance and regulation differently, and have in place different data collection requirements for RAIELs.

Funding.

What work is being done? Funding is another domain in which SEAs were active in RAIEL education. A major role of the SEA was distributing and monitoring funds that originate from state and federal levels. This often overlapped with compliance activities, most often as monitoring district use of federally-distributed Title III funds and Immigrant Child and Youth Grants (described below, and in the Glossary). State Title III directors spoke about funding supports specific to RAIEL students. They also mentioned that their funding activities aimed at EL students, migrant students, homeless students, or students in poverty also impact RAIEL students.

The Title III State Formula Grant Program is the federal funding mechanism to support EL-classified students (ESSA, 2015). State Title III directors spoke about how these general EL funds support RAIEL students. As an example, directors described general EL funding as supporting both newcomer programs and bilingual programs, both of which serve RAIEL students. The SEA role within Title III funding was most often described as distributing funds, and also monitoring the use of funds. Two directors noted that this monitoring occurred every three years, a process to ensure that LEAs are using funds in manners allowable under Title III law. In descriptions of monitoring activities, three directors explicitly noted that the state's role is to communicate the broad requirements for allowable uses, but that there is a great deal of local control in deciding how funds are used.

Moving beyond broad EL funding, state directors also spoke about both federal Title III Immigrant Children and Youth Grants (ESSA, 2015) and federal Refugee School Impact Grants (RSIGs) (Immigration Reform and Control Act, 1994). Both are streams of funding more specific to RAIELs. Title III Immigrant Children and Youth Grants are U.S. Department of Education funds that SEAs can grant to qualified districts with immigrant students based on federal and state requirements. RSIGs are funds that originate from the federal Office of Health and Human Services. State programs, as well as state-alternative programs, can apply for federal RSIG funding. The receiving agency is able to award those funds to various LEAs or other outside community organizations, such as resettlement agencies, based on state-developed qualifications. In some cases, the state Title III director works in supporting the funding allocation and monitoring; other times RSIG funds are granted to other agencies in the state. One state director described these RSIG funds as more flexible than Title III funds in how organizations could use them to support students and families with refugee status.

Strong models of action and key limitations. As with compliance, the state’s role in providing and monitoring funding for RAIEL education was described as both inhibiting and enhancing the ability to impact RAIEL education. Limitations were most notably tied to the availability of funds — almost all interviewees expressed that there were simply not enough funds at the federal or state level for RAIEL education. Two state directors expressed dissatisfaction with the current state funding formulas, noting that it is difficult for districts with smaller EL and RAIEL populations to qualify for sufficient funding to start promising or innovative programs.

In contrast, some directors expressed that they had agency within their state role to shape funding channels. These directors explained that part of their role was to determine how funds for ELs were distributed to LEAs. This allowed them to actively adjust funding based on significant increases in immigrant student populations, or to support smaller districts that may not have large enough EL or immigrant populations to qualify for refugee or immigrant grants. This was seen as a way to support rapid influx districts that were struggling to appropriately provide programs and staff to meet changing student population needs.

Technical assistance.

What work is being done? As with both compliance and funding, all 18 states reported engaging in functions regarding the provision of RAIEL-focused guidance and technical assistance to LEAs. While guidance and technical assistance were terms used somewhat interchangeably in the interviews, we broadly associate guidance with informal supports the SEA provides to LEAs and regional education agencies (such as responding to phone calls or emails) while we use the term technical assistance to refer to more formal supports including professional development, handbooks, and curricula. All state directors discussed providing formal technical assistance and most also talked about the informal guidance they provide.

Informal guidance was frequently described in the context of responding to immediate and specific situations arising in schools or districts. Directors described these calls for support as

single-case phone calls or emails from district personnel, school administrators, teachers, or even families. One director described the process as “problem-solving” (State 9), given that many districts do not have RAIEL programming in place. As an example, one director described, “We get these calls from districts.... ‘I’ve just got a newcomer who is 18-years-old, what do I do?’ or, ‘Do I have to accept these students?’ or, ‘How do I graduate them?’” (State 1). Specific topics of RAIEL guidance included data collection requirements and limitations, service provision requirements, credential or certification requirements, examples of models for effective intake processes and educational supports, and interpretations of federal regulations and legislation.

In addition to providing informal responses to pressing issues that arise in districts and schools, SEAs also supported the education of RAIELs through more formalized technical assistance. Technical assistance often included professional development as well as printed or online resources. Professional development was described by all directors as something their agencies provide as part of their support for LEAs and intermediary agencies regarding RAIEL education. State directors described conferences around EL education that had components focused on RAIELs and SLIFEs, webinars on RAIEL services, and ongoing work with regional agencies to develop teacher training around supporting RAIELs. Technology was often seen as a way to reach a wide audience of practitioners around these issues, through websites as well as recorded webinars. Multiple directors spoke of bringing in outside experts to support this work.

Nine directors described internally developing technical assistance documents and resources for LEA support, with three more reporting that they were in the process of doing so. These documents addressed a variety of issues, including allowable uses of Title III funds, legal requirements for student supports and services, intake processes, and other more general information on RAIELs and RAIEL education. Others saw their role more as disseminating technical assistance documents developed by outside educational research organizations. These internally developed and externally sourced assistance documents were often handbooks on newcomers or SLIFEs, but also included non-handbook documents such as sample intake questions to help identify RAIELs or SLIFEs, transcript processing support, and curricula for SLIFEs specifically.

Specific outside resources that SEAs reported using to provide guidance and inform technical assistance include WIDA (www.wida.us), Colorín Colorado (www.colorincolorado.org), the National Education Association (www.nea.org), and the federal Dear Colleague letter (U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Additionally, outside experts from education research agencies or higher education institutions were cited as resources, often being pulled in to help facilitate professional development focusing on EL- or RAIEL-specific issues.

Strong models of action and key limitations. Guidance and technical assistance was an area where SEAs appeared to be very active, yet state Title III directors expressed mixed views on their ability to provide accurate and sufficient guidance. Some expressed a sense of not having enough knowledge themselves to be able to support LEAs, while others saw this area as one in which they were able to devote resources to building up expertise to help LEAs.

One challenge in the provision of guidance was ensuring that the information was context-responsive. Directors described that community and/or school capacity in low-incidence or rural communities may be very different from larger, urban areas. As a consequence, the type of guidance and technical assistance that may be appropriate for one district may not be appropriate for another. This was an area in which the disconnect between local understanding and the SEA's resources limited the role the SEA could take to address LEA needs.

One example of an SEA action to address context-specific needs of LEAs was the inclusion of low-incidence specific strategies in internally-developed technical assistance documents. Another example was the use of regional education agencies to help deliver more targeted guidance than the SEA was able to give. Regional education agencies were often identified as key mediators between the state and local levels in transmitting guidance and technical assistance, especially for small districts that may not have embedded Title III directors. Some directors primarily provided professional development to these intermediary agencies, employing what one director described as a "trainer of trainer models" (State 6) where the intermediaries at the regional level were trained by the SEA to deliver professional development to LEAs around RAIEL-specific issues.

Directors described internally-developed technical assistance regarding RAIELs as an important resource for LEAs. One state Title III director described a current SEA-driven effort to develop a handbook focused on RAIEL needs. The development process was collaborative, drawing on personnel from districts across the state to synthesize diverse knowledge and experiences. The eventual handbook focused on explicit questions such as, "What are the requirements teachers need? What are age and diploma requirements? How can I reach out to them [RAIELs]? What kind of documentation can I ask for?" as well as broad questions such as, "What is the pathway to graduation?" (director, State 1). The resource will also include a focus on small districts with low-incidence populations, especially at the secondary level. This effort was described as a direct response to requests from statewide stakeholders who felt there were not enough concrete supports in place regarding RAIEL education.

Partnerships/Networks.

What work is being done? Education is collaborative work, and many of the state Title III directors interviewed talked extensively about their participation in, or facilitation of, partnerships and networks. Some were very structured and formal, while others were informal and reliant on personal relationships. While the makeup and purpose of collaborative work varied, many described these networks and partnerships as promoting both resource and information sharing.

Nine directors mentioned being part of formal statewide networks that were focused on immigrant and/or refugee needs. These often existed between state education departments and other state agencies, such as health and human services. One director described an especially extensive network in the form of a state task force initiated from the governor's office

that focused broadly on immigrant needs. Another director described a statewide network developed specifically to focus on students and individuals with refugee status. Members of both statewide networks included state health and education-focused agencies, as well as nonprofit agencies and private foundations.

In addition to formal networks, eight directors described their engagement as members of informal networks and/or partnerships. Informal networks and partnerships were often described as personal relationships involving phone calls, meetings, and sharing of information without any formalized agreement. Some of these partnerships lived within the state agencies, as multiple interviewees described cross-departmental collaboration with offices such as migrant education, health and human services, special education, and more. Several informal networks involved community experts and advocacy groups.

Aside from these larger networks, state Title III directors also frequently spoke about partnerships with individual organizations. The most common partnerships related to RAIELs, described by eight directors, were those with refugee resettlement agencies. Other examples of partnerships included those with higher education organizations around SLIFE career paths, collaboration with an online institution to provide alternative schooling for students that had “aged out” of high school, and partnering with outside organizations for professional development opportunities for teachers. Three states, in particular, identified higher education institutions as partners in teacher training as well as sourcing input on resource development.

State Title III directors also spoke about the central role of the SEA in establishing and coordinating networks between regional and local education agencies within the state. Directors described the objectives of these networks as sharing information on RAIEL needs, resources, promising practices, and support. These partnerships were described as creating opportunities for districts (often smaller districts) to learn from one another’s experiences. One of the case study districts discussed in Section II (District 1), for example, drew upon trainings and resources offered by the regional education office.

Strong models of action and key limitations. Directors most often described their role in partnerships and networks (formal or informal) as one that facilitated more meaningful engagement in RAIEL-specific work. One director, for example, described how the SEA’s relationship with outside groups increased awareness and strengthened their work:

We also have relationships with advocacy groups [and] immigration coalitions.... They bring to [our] attention when the regulations have been broken, or services are not being provided. We meet with them frequently, often, and work throughout the year together to resolve the issues in the community. (State 15)

Additionally, partnerships with higher education institutions for secondary school-aged RAIELs, as described above, were designed to respond to the challenges LEAs face in supporting high school completion and postsecondary opportunities.

The facilitation of networks was also described as an SEA role that positively supported LEA work with RAIELs. One strong practice identified was pairing districts with one-another. This “teaming” process was done to provide support and a model for districts that were in an earlier stage of developing supports and programs for RAIELs.

Networking and partnerships were rarely spoken of as hindering or impeding SEAs’ work for RAIEL education. One exception was the observation that informal partnerships tended to be vulnerable to changes in personnel. A strong but informal relationship between individuals in two organizations could be lost if one or the other had a change in leadership or staffing. In this sense, formal partnerships and networks were described as more sustainable.

The current descriptions of formal partnerships and networks as a strong support, as well as expressed desire from interviewees for continued expansion in this area, speak to the promising nature of this approach. This aligns with current research that explores how networked improvement communities can leverage diverse experiences and sources of knowledge across agencies to focus on a specified area for improvement (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011; Coburn, Penuel, & Geil, 2013). This is an area for continued work and research, where emerging methods of improvement science can be applied and extended to support all levels of educational agencies in strengthening their work regarding RAIEL education.

The SEA role in participating in or facilitating formal partnerships and networks was seen as a strong support for RAIEL education. This is a promising area for continued work and research.

Policymaking.

What work is being done? Sixteen out of 18 state Title III directors reported that they do not have specific state-level policies regarding RAIEL education (aside from the aforementioned RAEL assessment policies). For this analysis, RAIEL policy is interpreted to be an SEA-initiated requirement specific to RAIELs, such as a state mandate or regulation. When asked about RAIEL policies, a typical director response was, “We really don’t have a real state policy that lays out the minimum requirements or criteria for transitioning newly arrived students” (State 12). Often, these directors referred instead to policies designed to serve EL and immigrant students more broadly, noting that the unique needs of RAIELs were often conceptualized as under the umbrella of EL policies. Commonly described policies included program definitions for bilingual/bicultural programs, instructional time requirements, intake processes, requirements for coursework, and the state-specific requirements for teachers, aides, and staff who work with EL students.

Strong models of action and key limitations. State Title III directors most often described the agency’s policymaking role as limited by the structure of the state’s education system. Authority and role structures shaped the SEA role such that the majority of RAIEL-specific policy

and practice decisions were made at the local LEA level, with SEA actions to support RAIELs generally taking non-policy forms.

Eight directors explicitly identified their state education system as organized through a local control framework. Within the local control structure, a majority of decisions regarding RAIEL education were seen as LEA responsibilities, with the state agency more removed from the decisionmaking process. Directors articulated both benefits to and drawbacks of operating within a strong local control framework. A described benefit of placing RAIEL education decisionmaking at the local level was that LEAs are better equipped to respond to the unique and diverse needs of the specific RAIEL population that they serve. One director described,

I've been learning that the cultures and the context of our schools vary so much I don't think the same approach would work in all settings.... the experiences and the cultures that the kids come from vary so much that the kinds of support that you can provide for them should be in that context. (State 1)

Multiple directors provided a different perspective, expressing that certain RAIELs may not have their individual needs appropriately met because services differ so greatly by LEA. As one director expressed,

In my observation, we are polarized. We either have like a [district name removed], it's on the tip of their tongue, they see it [i.e., how to support RAIEL students], they know it, they feel it, they touch it, and they support it with a lot of attention, a lot of very focused plans. They have community centers, they have the newcomer program, they have specialized personnel. And in the same county you can have someone who [says] 'no we don't have anyone like that [i.e., RAIELs].' So we're very polarized in what would be typical depending on the [RAIEL] concentration at the school district. (State 14)

A key limitation often described was general state-level education policies, primarily for adolescent RAIELs. These echo challenges described by the districts in Section II, and include age-out policies, high school graduation requirements, and whether or not ELD courses provided credits toward graduation. One director described, "We need to rethink our graduation and accountability policy, because it works at a great disadvantage for high schools that have newcomers, and newcomer centers" (State 12).

While 16 of the 18 directors did not have RAIEL-specific policies, two did. Both states had a relatively large immigrant population and a history of refugee resettlement in their respective states. One of the states, State 16, is located in the Midwest, the other, State 17, is in the Northeast. Both noted that RAIELs, and SLIFE more specifically, are student populations that the state is increasingly focused on supporting.

In State 17, the described RAIEL-specific policy dealt with intake, with particular attention on students with limited or interrupted formal education. This mandated intake process, described as state-level regulations, included a state-level definition of SLIFE, a survey developed at the state

level to identify SLIFEs, an assessment tool to assess home language literacy, a video for parents to inform them of resources and rights at the state level, a requirement that a qualified staff member complete the interview, and a regulation that allows for revisited placements to ensure proper student placement.

The identified RAIEL-specific policy in State 16 was an inclusion of RAIEL-specific needs within larger EL reform legislation. The director described a focus on capacity-building to support RAIELs, stating, “Teachers and administrators now have to be prepared and evaluated, concerning their support for ELs, which would include...SLIFE and recent refugees, long-term learners, [and] unaccompanied minors” (State 16). As another policy piece, the state included a requirement for LEAs to develop individualized learning plans for SLIFEs and report on the academic progress of SLIFEs. As with the first state, the director mentioned that the state had developed resources to support this policy implementation.

Of note, in follow-up with participating states prior to the finalization of this report, a third state (State 3), a state in the South, informed us that they, too, have drafted policy specific to RAIEL students. While this policy is yet to be approved by their state board of education, the draft policy includes definitions of recently arrived immigrant students and students with limited or interrupted formal schooling. It also requires that schools develop individualized learning plans for all ELs, including recently arrived ELs. In this case, the impetus for the policy changes came from the state EL director as well as from a state board member and was instigated by an interest in focusing increased attention on EL subgroups, including RAIELs and long-term English learners. This development is indicative of growing interest and movement on the part of states to recognize and serve RAIEL students.

Few states have RAIEL-specific policies. Only two of the 18 states we interviewed reported having RAIEL policies in place. These policies dealt with RAIEL intake, SLIFEs and professional development.

KEY THEMES

Three key takeaways emerged from synthesizing the challenges, functions, and areas of successful intervention reported by state Title III directors. While each SEA experiences a unique state context shaped by organizational, political, and social factors, these takeaways can help to inform future state work across the U.S. regarding RAIEL education.

- Identify current policies (or the absence of policy) that may be creating barriers for RAIELs.** The overlap in challenges identified by directors demonstrates that there are key policy arenas in which RAIELs are not provided with equitable educational opportunities. In order to begin to address these challenges, we advocate that policymakers think about RAIEL educational experiences as a pathway from intake to post-

Current education policies – or the absence of policy – may be creating barriers for RAIELs.

secondary. Doing so may support a better understanding of (a) where along the trajectory state-level policies may be in place that limit RAIEL opportunities, and (b) where key points for policy intervention may allow for state-level involvement. This report, in particular Sections II and III, highlights policies that are often not thought about specifically in relation to RAIELs or RAIEL subgroups, such as graduation requirements or aging-out policies, that we suggest be examined through an equity lens for their impact on RAIEL experiences.

- Identify areas where intervention is feasible and effective.** Across different SEA functions, specific areas emerged where state Title III directors reported strong action in supporting LEA work with RAIELs, or actions that addressed common challenges across states. These examples demonstrate how, within structures that may limit the SEA role, agencies were able to leverage their sphere of influence to create meaningful action. Four examples where state Title III directors report feasible and effective intervention are (1) the development of technical assistance documents; (2) taking advantage of changes in federal law and regulation to improve RAIEL data collection requirements; (3) building partnerships between districts; and (4) creating and mandating standardized intake procedures. The role of the state is limited in many ways by the organization of education systems — these examples illuminate how SEAs found ways to impact RAIEL education practices within the boundaries of their authority.
- We advocate that policymakers think about RAIEL educational experiences as a pathway from intake to post-secondary.**
- Seek balance between local knowledge and a state-supported minimum level of service.** There was a recognition across interviews that LEAs held a more nuanced understanding of their unique RAIEL population. Given that the needs of RAIELs vary widely, this localized knowledge was a key strength in creating appropriate systems of support. However, directors also noted that the provision of supports varied widely across districts in a potentially problematic way. This dynamic illustrates the importance of finding a balance between allowing LEAs to design their own programs and policies in response to student needs, but also requiring that LEAs meet a minimum level of service to promote equitable education opportunities. One director’s description of their approach summarizes this well, “We made the frame, but we don’t want to prohibit them from being creative. We [require and] approve the plans.... We want people to kind of push the envelope and really figure out what the kids need” (State 15).

CONCLUSION

This report explores an important, but often overlooked and poorly understood, need in U.S. schools — the education of recently arrived immigrant English learner students (RAIELs). In response to a call from the English Learner State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (EL SCASS) of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), this report synthesizes findings from three interrelated studies.

Section I reported quantitative descriptive data from two state datasets exploring questions of who RAIEL students are, how they are doing in school, and how they are being served in school.

Section II provided a comparative look at the supports that school districts are establishing for RAIEL students, presenting findings from six district case studies from across the country. In that section, we described how these districts have created and implemented supports at five critical points on a continuum of K-12 supports for RAIELs.

Section III turned from the district to the state education agency (SEA) perspective. In that section, we presented findings from interviews with Title III/EL directors from 18 different states across all regions of the U.S. In that section, we also discussed both the commonalities and the differences in the challenges they face and the roles they have taken on to support RAIEL education at the state level.

Our overarching goal for this report is to provide education leaders and stakeholders at the state and local levels with tools and information that can improve their understanding and ability to build strong and thriving educational opportunities for RAIEL students.

We close with a summary of themes that emerged across the studies conducted for this report and areas for future research.

- **We do not yet have sufficient systems in place to learn about our RAIEL students, however, we do know they are an extraordinarily diverse set of students.** Most schools, districts, and states lack systems with which to learn about RAIEL students and respond to their needs. Most locales are limited to basic information on home language and English proficiency level. Building data collection systems and creating knowledge-sharing arrangements can help education agencies better understand and serve their students. From what we do collect, we know that RAIEL students come from all over the world; they arrive at all different ages; they enter schools in all different types of locations; and each has unique and individual needs, such as having experienced gaps in formal schooling or having fled dangerous situations. Collecting and sharing key data about RAIEL students is a first, and crucial, step to a future goal of building a body of evidence about the effectiveness of distinct services for diverse groups of RAIELs.

- **Most RAIELs make rapid progress both academically and in terms of English acquisition, but these students likely need targeted supports for more than the one or three years identified in current federal definitions.** Very few RAIELs are proficient in English after three years in the U.S. and most remain at beginning levels of academic performance after this same time period. Thus, RAIELs need ongoing supports for a number of years. This is not surprising given that the same is true for ELs more broadly. The additional hurdles that RAIELs face are likely to mean RAIELs need even more time. This, however, is an important area for future research given that existing research has examined growth patterns for ELs broadly but not for RAIELs specifically.
- **RAIELs benefit from a continuum of supports that extends both vertically and horizontally.** By vertical supports we refer to supports that support students over time, as they progress from the time they arrive until (or beyond when) they leave the K-12 system. By horizontal supports we refer to the breadth of supports for RAIELs at any given point in time, including supports for academic, linguistic, social, emotional, physical, familial, or psychological needs. Key supports along the vertical/time continuum include intake, newcomer programs, course placement policies, prepared teachers with training to work with RAIELs, and feasible pathways to graduation. Key horizontal or wraparound supports – often led by district partners – include medical care services, psychological counseling, buddy programs, safe spaces and allies in school, food pantry programs, transportation vouchers, lunches that meet dietary restrictions, and timely and appropriate special education identification services, among others. Similar to school improvement plans, or district EL plans, a holistic plan for RAIEL supports that addresses both the vertical and horizontal continuum of supports may be a promising way of envisioning RAIEL supports at the district level. More research is needed on each of these key supports as well as on the characteristics and costs of effective supports.
- **There is no ‘one size fits all’ in supporting RAIEL students.** Throughout this report in addition to seeing that individual RAIEL students have unique needs, we also found that individual schools, districts, and states have unique contexts from which to support those needs. Large districts often have varied and diverse services in place and can plug students into to existing supports, while smaller school districts are often adaptive and flexible, even when faced with rapid changes in student populations. Traditional immigrant destinations build off of strong communities, grounded knowledge of the immigrant experience, and established programs and resources, while new immigrant destinations plug into existing assets such as faith-based organizations, community colleges, and local businesses. This diversity means that districts’ strengths — and the needs of RAIEL populations — differ and cannot be addressed nor mandated with a ‘one size fits all’ approach. However, there is abundant room for districts and schools to learn from one another. Existing research, which documents benefits of partnership-based work (e.g., Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011; Coburn, Penuel, & Geil, 2013), should be expanded into the area of RAIEL education.

- **For the most part, policies have not been created with RAIELs in mind. In some cases, there is an absence of policy where policy is needed. In other cases, existing policy creates barriers for RAIELs.** One of the threads that runs throughout this report is that current education policy often conflicts with the needs and opportunities of RAIEL students. In other words, some policies were designed in ways that didn't consider the unique needs and experiences of these students, and unintentionally, create barriers and obstacles for this vulnerable group of students. Examples include graduation requirements, age-out policies, and school accountability policies linked to 4-year graduation rates. In other cases, there is a lack of policy where policy may be needed to support RAIEL students. Examples of this include intake procedures, staffing requirements, and transcript translation and credit allocation, to name a few. Looking across states for innovative policy adaptations, as well as consulting with LEAs to identify where flexibility in policy implementation may better support RAIEL students, can help to inform future policy work regarding ELs and RAIELs more specifically.
- **Despite these challenges, states and districts are innovating and adapting to support RAIELs.** At the state level, leaders are establishing networks, developing technical guidance, evaluating the unintended consequences of current policies, and identifying needed data. At the district and school levels, leaders are welcoming students with robust intake systems, engaging families with new staffing positions like community liaisons, and balancing students' linguistic, academic, economic, and social needs with diverse and individualized instructional programs. This report, and, we hope, more research to come, can document these innovations and begin to measure their impacts on RAIEL students and the school systems that support them.

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GLOSSARY

Age-out policy: State-level policies determining the maximum age at which a student is guaranteed access to a free public education.

Bilingual instruction: An instructional approach in which instruction is provided in two languages. In the U.S., one language is typically English while the second language is often the home language of English learner or immigrant students in the class. In these models (bilingual, two-way immersion), instruction in students' home language aims to facilitate content comprehension and second language development or continued proficiency. In other bilingual models (one-way immersion) all students may be English speakers and the second language of instruction may be a target language that is not the home language of students in the class.

English learner (EL): A classification given to students, based on federal, state, and at times local law and policy, that identifies a student as having a proficiency level in English that requires them to be provided with specific supports, rights, and/or services in order to have full and equitable access to instruction.

English language (EL) certification: A generic term indicating that a teacher or staff member has completed the requirements (typically set at the state level) to be considered a qualified teacher for students classified as English learners.

English language development (ELD): A content area designed to support students in acquiring English language proficiency. There are two common ways of describing ELD, as either “**push-in**” or “**pull-out**.” Push-in generally refers to a support staff member or teacher coming into a general education classroom to work with EL-classified students on English acquisition. Sometimes the general education teacher him/herself provides the ELD instruction. Pull-out ELD generally refers to when EL-classified students leave the general, non-ELD classroom for either individual or small group ELD instruction.

Immigrant student: As per ESSA (2015) an immigrant student is an individual aged 3-21 who was born outside of the U.S. and who has not been in U.S. schools for more than three full academic years.

Individualized learning plan (ILP): A learning plan developed specifically for an individual student, often developed by a team of teachers, parents, and other support staff to address specialized or individualized student needs in an academic setting.

Local education agency (LEA): A public authority legally in charge of one, or a group of, public elementary and/or secondary schools. This often refers to a school district or other defined combinations of schools in a geographic area.

Newcomer: This is a generic term used in different ways in different locales. Broadly speaking, it refers to students who have immigrated from another country and are relatively new to the U.S. school system. Some locales attach a specific time period to this term, while others only include EL-classified students or EL-classified students with particular levels of English proficiency (typically early/beginning).

Newcomer program: An educational program for recently arrived students (typically just recently arrived EL-classified students). Programs often include a sequence of newcomer-specific classes separate from the courses taken by the general student population. Most often newcomer programs are designed for students to rapidly acquire English language skills and cultural information for a defined timeframe (typically one semester, one year, or two years), then transition to non-newcomer classrooms. A **newcomer center** is distinct in that it may deliver a newcomer program, but generally is a separate location or set of classrooms separated from the rest of a school site where newcomer students interact predominantly with one set of newcomer teachers and other newcomer students.

Recently arrived English learner (RAEL): As per ESSA (2015), this term refers to English learners who have been enrolled in schools in the U.S. for less than 12 months.

Recently arrived immigrant English learner (RAIEL): This is the term we use in this report. By RAIEL, we refer to foreign-born students who have been in U.S. schools for up to 3 academic years and who, upon entry into U.S. schools, were classified as English learners.

Refugee School Impact Grant: Funds that originate from the federal Office of Health and Human Services' Division of Refugee Assistance specifically to support the effective integration and education of refugee children. Both states and state-alternative programs can receive grants to support school districts' services for refugees.

Sheltered content instruction: An instructional approach that emphasizes facilitating access to academic content for English learners when providing instruction in English.

State education agency (SEA): The state-level agency responsible for the supervision of public elementary and secondary schools in a state.

Student with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE/SIFE): The U.S. federal government does not provide a standard definition for states, however recent ESEA guidance provided an example definition: "All ELs who enter U.S. schools after grade 2; have at least two fewer years of schooling than peers; function at least two years below expected grade level; and may be preliterate in their native language" (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Title III: Part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (now Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015) that focuses on the provision of funding and guidance for English learners and immigrant students in U.S. education systems. Title III is the source of multiple grant programs that make funding available to state and local education agencies to support academic outcomes for EL and immigrant youth.

Title III Immigrant Children and Youth Grants: U.S. Department of Education funds that state education agencies grant to qualified districts with immigrant students based on federal and state requirements.

Wraparound services: Services that go beyond the academic and linguistic. Wraparound services typically encompass services for RAIELs such as basic needs (food, housing, clothes, etc.), physical or mental health services, and translation services.

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

This methodological Appendix is organized in three sections. Each section describes the data collection, preparation, and analysis for the corresponding section of the report.

SECTION I

Data collection and preparation. Through a voluntary sampling approach, two states were selected for participation in this section of this study. During EL SCASS meetings, state education officers were invited to participate during project updates. While several states expressed interest, due to technical and legal reasons, only two states were able to provide their data for these analyses. Both states provided access to statewide de-identified student-level data including data on student characteristics such as home language, gender, and free/reduced price lunch status, enrollment information such as grade and school, and educational outcomes including English language proficiency and academic outcomes. Importantly, both states had systems in place that enabled the identification of recently arrived immigrant English learner (RAIEL) students. State 1 provided this data for the academic years 2013/14-2015/16 and State 2 provided the years 2011/12-2014/15.

Once access was secured, data were cleaned and prepared for state level analyses. RAIELs and other student subgroups were defined, and subsequently identified. Specifically, we set up the data in both datasets to be able to observe RAIEL students in their first, second, and third years in each state. We also identified and flagged other English learner students (OELs), recently arrived immigrant non-EL students (RAINELs), and other English proficient students (OEPs).

Data analysis. We conducted descriptive, quantitative analyses exploring student characteristics, growth, outcomes, distribution, and services. All analyses and resulting tables and figures were completed using Stata, Version 15. We used all data available for each particular analysis. For example, if we had only two years of consecutive English proficiency data from a given state because of changes in tests taken, then we used only those two years of data. We did not constrain data use except in these cases of appropriate comparable data. We did not impute missing data.

SECTION II

Data collection and preparation. For this study, we conducted case studies in six school districts. A purposive sampling technique was employed, as districts were selected to achieve variation in size, concentration of ELs and geographic region. Districts were often selected either due to (a) experiencing rapid changes in RAIEL populations, or (b) having in place new and/or innovative approaches to RAIEL education. Districts were often identified through suggestions from various practitioners and state policymakers. Once districts were identified, we contacted district officials and requested permission to conduct research. We followed each individual district's research application protocol and often had preliminary phone conversations to discuss what the district participation would entail. All six school districts that we initially contacted agreed to participate in

the study. Prior to visiting each district for primary data collection, a research assistant conducted a web search to gather information on publicly available demographic information and district policies regarding immigrant and EL students.

The research team developed seven interview protocols for (a) superintendents, (b) EL district administrators, (c) school administrators, (d) EL teachers or coaches, (e) general education teachers, (f) community partners, and (g) an open position (for other interviewees who did not fall into one of the preceding categories). By creating seven protocols, we sought to ask questions relevant to individual roles to elicit more nuanced responses about the unique and varied perspectives of interviewees. The primary purpose of the interviews was to understand what role the interviewee played in relation to RAIELs, and their perspective on how RAIELs were being served. Interviews were semi-structured in nature, allowing for interviewee responses to guide probing questions. It is important to note that, due to logistical limitations and confidentiality concerns, we did not conduct interviews with students or parents; thus, our findings are limited in the extent to which we can make claims about whether and how district policies and practices for RAIELs actually served their beneficiaries.

We worked closely with lead district contacts (typically the EL director for the district) to plan our visits. In most cases the EL directors went as far as to schedule our visits and interviews. In each district, we asked to talk with the superintendent as well as all district level individuals who were closely involved with RAIEL programs, EL programs, EL or RAIEL intake and enrollment procedures, and EL/RAIEL family engagement. In each district (with the exception of Districts 2 and 4), the school district selected an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school for school site interviews. In District 4, the district requested that we conduct interviews at a middle school and a high school, but not at an elementary school. They did, however, facilitate interviews with elementary EL teachers. In District 2, the EL director recommended that two high schools be the interview sites in order to capture the variation of two very different high school situations within a singular district. In some schools, teachers and administrators invited us to observe in classes serving RAIEL students. We did so, but only to help contextualize our interview data. District leaders also helped identify influential community organizations, and we interviewed leaders from those organizations when possible regarding their work with RAIELs and their partnerships with the school district.

We sought variation in interviewees, interviewing staff whose interactions with RAIELs varied from those who led full RAIEL classrooms to those who had singular RAIELs in their mainstream classes. In most cases the district EL director directly invited interviewees to participate in a voluntary interview. In District 6, due to scheduling constraints, a number of participants elected to be interviewed in pairs. In all other interviews, the participants were interviewed singularly. All but one interview across districts were recorded. One interviewee in one district declined to be recorded, but notes detailed the conversation for analysis.

Interviews ranged in length across districts from approximately 15 to 90 minutes. Because of differences in size and staffing in each district, as well as researcher time constraints, there was a range in the number of interviews conducted in each district (from a low of 16 to a high of 34). In total, we conducted 136 interviews across the six case studies.

Data analysis. After audio recording, interviews were transcribed via a third-party service. We then anonymized and uploaded the transcriptions to a qualitative analysis software, Dedoose. We engaged initially in a deductive coding approach (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) that drew on the conceptual framework and research questions driving the study to define a primary set of codes. As analysis began, we engaged in a more iterative, inductive approach, adapting the codes and their definitions in relation to the data. The final codebook had seven parent codes, with 27 sub-codes. Each interview was coded by a research team member. After an interview was coded, researchers generated an analytic memo. After all interviews in a district case study were coded and memos produced, findings from all of the analytic memos in each district were analyzed in synthesis to report on each district experience as a whole. Similarly, we reviewed and analyzed specific codes across interviewees and districts in order to analyze specific supports or challenges across districts.

SECTION III

Data collection and preparation. For this study, we conducted phone interviews with state-level employees from 18 states identified for their role in managing or directing state-level activities related to English learners and immigrant students. Position titles varied by state, however all participants were actively involved in activities related to federal and state Title III programs.

All interviewees volunteered to participate in the study under conditions of anonymity. State Title III directors were recruited for participation through presentations at EL SCASS meetings that invited interested states to contact the research team. Additional states were recruited via email that were not members of the EL SCASS. Eighteen states participated in the study, including states in the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and West. The sample included traditional as well as new immigrant destinations and states with both large and small EL and RAIEL populations. In most cases, interviews were conducted with one representative. In a few cases, the relevant state employees decided to include more than one individual directing Title III activities.

We developed a 14-question interview protocol designed for semi-structured interviews, with open-ended questions. The protocol asks about directors' perceptions on what actions were being taken regarding RAIELs by the state education agency (SEA), as well as areas of challenge and success at both the state and local levels regarding RAIEL education. Interviews lasted between 30 and 75 minutes and were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Data analysis. We analyzed interviews using an inductive coding process, developing broad codes iteratively to categorize major themes for cross-interview analysis. After initial coding we conducted a more refined pattern coding process across interviews to identify themes and explore variation within the more tightly bound categories (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). In addition to this qualitative coding process, we tallied interviewee responses in a master table organized by overarching topics including data collection, types of technical assistance, policy, context, and challenges.

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Dr. Ilana Umansky is an Assistant Professor in the Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership department of the College of Education at the University of Oregon. Her work focuses on quantitative and longitudinal analyses of the educational opportunities and outcomes of immigrant students, emerging bilingual students, and students classified in school as English learners (ELs). She studies EL course-taking and access to core academic content, the effects of the EL classification system, policies that support newly-arrived EL students, and how educational outcomes vary for students in different linguistic instructional environments. Prior to getting her Ph.D. at Stanford University in Sociology of Education, Umansky worked in educational equity and quality research in Latin America. Her work has been awarded by the American Educational Research Association, the National Academy of Education, the Spencer Foundation, the Jacobs Foundation, and the Fulbright Foundation, among others, and appears in prominent education journals and policy outlets including the *American Educational Research Journal*, *Educational Leadership*, *Policy Analysis for California Education*, and *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

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Dr. Megan Hopkins is Assistant Professor of Education Studies at the University of California, San Diego. Her research explores policy implementation and systems change, with a particular focus on supporting teacher learning and development in bilingual and multilingual contexts. Her current work, funded by the Spencer Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the William T. Grant Foundation, uses mixed methods to examine how various organizational and demographic contexts enable or constrain educational opportunity for English learners. She completed her doctorate at University of California, Los Angeles, a postdoctoral fellowship at Northwestern University, and has held appointments at the Pennsylvania State University and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her scholarship has appeared in several top-tier journals, including *Educational Researcher*, *Educational Policy*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, and *American Educational Research Journal*. She is co-editor of the volumes *Forbidden Language: English Learners and Restrictive Language Policies* (with P. Gándara, Teachers College Press, 2010) and *School Integration Matters: Research-Based Strategies to Advance Equity* (with E. Frankenberg and L. M. Garces, Teachers College Press, 2016). In 2012, Hopkins received the Outstanding Dissertation Award from the Bilingual Education Research Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association, and she was the recipient of a 2016 National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship.

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