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## English Language Learner Teacher Effectiveness and the Common Core

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**Abstract:** Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and teacher effectiveness are among the most contentious issues in education today. With an increase in English language learners (ELLs) and the rigorous requirements imposed by the CCSS, teachers are left unprepared and ELLs struggle to stay afloat. Using California as a case study, this research synthesis outlines the current problem, which includes the complexity of the CCSS, the achievement gap between ELLs and their peers, and ill-equipped teachers. In addition, present-day efforts to alleviate such difficulties like the revised World Language: English Language Development credential and multicultural training are outlined. Based on our review, we recommend targeted policy changes, which include preservice teachers' participation in extensive fieldwork with ELLs, in-service teachers' comprehensive professional development connected to practice, as well as a systematic evaluation process to measure ELL teacher effectiveness.

**Keywords:** English language learners; Common Core State Standards; teacher effectiveness; academic achievement; teacher education; multicultural education

### **La efectividad de los maestros de estudiantes de inglés y el Common Core (CCSS)**

**Resumen:** El Common Core (CCSS) y la efectividad de los maestros se encuentran entre los temas más polémicos de la educación hoy en día. Con un aumento en los estudiantes de inglés (ELLs) y los requisitos severos propuestos por la CCSS, los maestros se encuentran mal preparados y los ELLs luchan para sostenerse a flote. Usando California como estudio de caso, esta síntesis de investigación resume el problema actual, que incluye la complejidad de la CCSS, la diferencia de rendimiento entre los ELL y sus compañeros, y los maestros mal equipados. Además, se describen los esfuerzos actuales para aliviar dificultades, como la credencial revisada del Idioma Mundial: Desarrollo del Aprendizaje Inglés y entrenamiento multicultural. Basándonos en nuestro análisis, recomendamos cambios de pólizas específicas, que incluyen la participación de los maestros y profesores en el ámbito con ELLs, el desarrollo profesional integral de los maestros en servicio conectado con la práctica, así como un proceso sistemático de evaluación para medir la efectividad de los maestros.

**Palabras-clave:** Estudiantes del idioma inglés; CCSS; eficacia del profesor; logro académico; la formación del profesorado; educación multicultural

### **A eficácia de professores de inglês e da Common Core (CCSS)**

**Resumo:** O Common Core (CCSS) e a eficácia dos professores estão entre as questões mais controversas na educação hoje. Com um aumento de alunos línguas Inglês (ELL) e severas exigências propostas pela CCSS, os professores são mal preparados e ELLs luta para manter à tona. Usando a Califórnia como um estudo de caso, esta síntese pesquisa resume o problema actual, incluindo a complexidade da CCSS, a diferença de desempenho entre ELLs e seus companheiros, e professores mal equipadas. Além disso, os atuais esforços para aliviar as dificuldades são descritos como a revista credencial Mundo Idioma: Inglês Desenvolvimento Aprendizagem e formação multicultural. Com base em nossa análise, recomendamos alterações de políticas específicas, incluindo a participação de professores no campo com ELLs, desenvolvimento profissional abrangente de professores em serviço ligado com um processo de avaliação sistemática prática e medir eficácia do professor.

**Palavras-chave:** English language learners; CCSS; eficácia do professor; desempenho acadêmico; formação de professores; educação multicultural

## **Introduction**

The United States is facing an imminent two-fold opportunity: an increasing number of English language learners (ELLs) coupled with more rigorous literacy requirements set by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Gaps between ELLs and their English-speaking peers in graduation rates and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results indicate that ELL students are struggling to keep up with their peers (California Department of Education, n.d.; Gwynne, Lesnick, Hart, & Allensworth, 2009). Furthermore, many teachers claim to be unprepared for literacy demands connected to CCSS (Fenner, 2013). With the increased language and literacy demands across the curriculum required by the CCSS, the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) International Association advocates that teachers of ELL students will need both pre-service and in-service support to ensure ELL students achieve similar academic success with the CCSS as their peers. Without this kind of support, existing achievement gaps may continue to widen. The challenge, then, is to ensure that schools and teachers are prepared to support the

learning and literacy development of ELLs, so that ELLs will achieve the same academic success as their peers.

To analyze this challenge, we use California as a case study to examine the ways in which policy changes may address the needs of ELL students. California serves as an ideal location due to the high percentage of ELL students present throughout the state and its continuing commitment to the language acquisition needs of English language learners. Accordingly, we propose three policy options for adaptation: certification, professional development, and evaluation. We analyze each of these policy options and assess them in context of the current research. The first proposed policy option is to revise and intensify the certification required to teach ELLs. Such revision would include teacher preparation programs incorporating deliberate multicultural experiences into their curricula, such as extensive field experiences with ELLs. The second policy option is to concentrate on in-service professional development that enhances teachers' pedagogical language knowledge and multicultural sensitivity training. The third is to invest in systematic evaluation and appraisal systems to monitor effective professional development and to hold teachers and administration accountable for the achievement of ELLs.

Our recommendations include targeted policy changes for both pre-service and in-service training. Therefore, we recommend the following: a) pre-service teachers should participate in extensive and required fieldwork with ELLs, b) in-service teachers should receive comprehensive professional development connected to practice, and c) districts should develop systematic evaluation procedures to assess the effectiveness of in-service ELL teachers. In order for these policy changes to be effective, they need to be consistently adopted by teacher education programs and school districts.

## **Context and Importance of the Problem**

With the implementation of the CCSS, state departments of education, counties, school districts, sites, and individual teachers are tasked with preparing students to meet the literacy demands outlined in the new standards. The CCSS were developed through a partnership of educational experts, teachers, and other stakeholders with the goal of preparing students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010b). Within the CCSS, the focus on language and literacy has been described as “the most significant shift” that affects instruction (Duguay, Massoud, Tabaku, Himmel, & Sugarman, 2013, p. 2). These standards push for increased literacy demands across the curriculum, not just in the language arts (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010b; van Lier & Walqui, 2012). Built into Appendix A of the CCSS is a table of text complexity by grade band using multiple quantitative measures, including the Flesch-Kincaid and Lexile readability tests. In addition, there are qualitative measures assessing structure, language conventionality and clarity, knowledge demands, and levels of meaning or purpose. It is expected that teachers support students as they apply the reading standards of the CCSS to texts within the prescribed level of text complexity for their particular grade band. The previous California State Standards, as well as similar standards for many other states, did not align text complexity levels with the reading standards. As a result, this made it easy for teachers to use less demanding text with ELLs and other struggling readers rather than appropriate grade level texts. The Center for Education Policy's survey of deputy state superintendents of education found that the CCSS are more rigorous than the previous standards of most states surveyed (Kober & Rentner, 2012).

In addition to the increased text complexity, the standards for other disciplines include references to reading, writing, and speaking that prescribe both content and literacy practice within the standard. For example, Table 1 includes a sample of standards from both CCSS and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) to highlight the reading, writing, and speaking demands included in the content area standards. The NGSS, which were adopted by California as well as many other states, include listing of pre-requisite and co-requisite CCSS for language arts and mathematics that align to the NGSS performance expectations.

Table 1

*Examples of Literacy Demands Within the Standards*

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**Common Core: Language Arts**

- Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text

**Common Core: Mathematics**

- Solve word problems involving dollar bills, quarters, dimes, nickels, and pennies, using \$ and ¢ symbols appropriately. Example: If you have 2 dimes and 3 pennies, how many cents do you have?
- Describe situations in which opposite quantities combine to make 0

**Next Generation Science Standards**

- Construct and present arguments using evidence to support the claim that gravitational interactions are attractive and depend on the masses of interacting objects
- Integrate qualitative scientific and technical information to support the claim that digitized signals are a more reliable way to encode and transmit information than analog signals

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Source: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010b; NGSS Lead States, 2013.

These standards require that students explain reactions or interactions based on specific information in the text, solve word problems, describe situations, construct and present arguments using evidence to support a claim, and integrate qualitative information to support a claim. All these standards represent advanced and complex literacy skills that will challenge all students, especially ELLs working outside of their home language.

The increased literacy demands of the CCSS become clearer when examining the 1997 California Content Standards for Mathematics in concert with the CCSS. Table 2 includes a comparison of a fourth grade mathematics topic dealing with operations of whole numbers.

Table 2

*Same Grade Mathematics Content Standard for Operations of Whole Numbers*

Previous California State Standards:	Current CCSS:
<u>Mathematics Grade 4</u>	<u>Mathematics Grade 4</u>
<p>3.0 Students solve problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of whole numbers and understand the relationships among the operations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate an understanding of, and the ability to use, standard algorithms for the addition and subtraction of multidigit numbers.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate an understanding of, and the ability to use, standard algorithms for multiplying a multidigit number by a two-digit number and for dividing a multidigit number by a one-digit number; use relationships between them to simplify computations and to check results.</li> <li>3. Solve problems involving multiplication of multidigit numbers by two-digit numbers.</li> <li>4. Solve problems involving division of multidigit numbers by one-digit numbers.</li> </ol>	<p>Operations and Algebraic Thinking 4.OA Use the four operations with whole numbers to solve problems.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interpret a multiplication equation as a comparison, e.g., interpret <math>35 = 5 \times 7</math> as a statement that 35 is 5 times as many as 7 and 7 times as many as 5. Represent verbal statements of multiplicative comparisons as multiplication equations.</li> <li>2. Multiply or divide to solve word problems involving multiplicative comparison, e.g., by using drawings and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem, distinguishing multiplicative comparison from additive comparison.</li> <li>3. Solve multistep word problems posed with whole numbers and having whole-number answers using the four operations, including problems in which remainders must be interpreted. Represent these problems using equations with a letter standing for the unknown quantity. Assess the reasonableness of answers using mental computation and estimation strategies including rounding.</li> </ol>

Source: California State Board of Education, 1997; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010b.

In the previous California state standard, the emphasis is placed on solving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division problems. The verbs used in this standard include *solve*, *demonstrate*, and *use*, where mastery of the standard would involve the student demonstrating the ability to use a particular process; in this case, the mathematical algorithm in order to work with multidigit numbers. Literacy demands are entirely absent from this standard. When examining the standard on the right, the emphasis is also placed on solving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division problems. The verbs used in this standard include *interpret*, *represent*, *multiply or divide*, *solve*, *represent*, and *assess*, where mastery of the standard states that students should be able to work with word problems. The literacy demands of this standard include having students move linguistically between being able to take a sentence and translate it as a mathematical equation and, likewise, take

a mathematical equation and translate it into a sentence. In addition, this standard involves multistep word problems, which increases the complexity of the mathematics involved and the literacy involved. In this standard, students have to solve the multistep word problem, represent the multistep word problem using a mathematical equation, and then assess the reasonableness of their answers using two different strategies.

The major literacy shifts in practice here are that students have to flexibly interpret and translate a mathematical equation to prose and that students have to state a claim (their answer) and then provide evidence to support reasonableness of their claim via two different strategies. Teachers must specifically model the syntax involved in the four mathematical operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division as well as the reading comprehension strategies. This would include the structure, word signals and transitions involved when using evidence to support a claim (e.g. for example, in addition).

Though CCSS increases the literacy demands across the curriculum for all students, the negative effects they will have on ELLs may be severe (van Lier & Walqui, 2012). The cognitive load involved in learning both the language and content places additional strain on ELLs and may require additional instructional scaffolding for language and content when compared to the demands of the previous California state standards (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Furthermore, the CCSS standards document asserts, “all students should be held to the same high expectations outlined in the Common Core State Standards. This includes students who are English language learners (ELLs)” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a).

When considering language acquisition, many researchers have designated two categories to differentiate between social and academic language. For example, Cummins (Cummins, 1979, 1981) identifies Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Similar distinctions can be found in (Bruner, 1975) communicative and analytic competence theories, Olson’s (1977) utterance and text dichotomies, Donaldson’s (1978) embedded and disembedded languages, Gibbons’ (1991) delineation of playground and classroom languages, Halliday and Hassan’s (1976) exophoric and endophoric categorization, and Gee’s (2012) primary and secondary discourses. For ELLs basic conversational and contextual language can be acquired in two to three years of targeted English language instruction. However, decontextualized academic language proficiency, that which students will encounter through the Common Core, often requires five to seven years to acquire (Cummins, 1981). Due to the time commitment needed for language acquisition, ELLs will likely experience several years of struggle to keep pace with their native English speaking peers.

To examine the implementation of CCSS and how this might affect English Language Learners, we focus specifically on California as a case study. California has a significant population of ELLs and has a current commitment to “ensure that English learners, within a reasonable period of time, achieve the same rigorous grade-level academic standards that are expected of all students” (California Department of Education, 2015c). California’s history of commitment springs from landmark California court cases like *Alvarez vs. Lemon Grove* [1931] and *Mendez vs. Westminster* [1947], which set a precedent for practices and policy targeting language acquisition and ELLs (Trujilla, 2008). Furthermore, California has a history of commitment to developing and implementing successful ELL model programs and Academic Excellence award winning programs to meet the language acquisition needs of English learners across the state (C. L. Wilson, Shields, & Camille, 1994). Such programs, many of which were created over two decades ago, include Project BICOMP, the Bilingual Integrated Curriculum Project (Merino & Hammond, 1998), a bilingual and ESL program providing science and language arts instruction; Project GLAD, a bilingual and ESL

program providing science, language arts, and social studies instruction to students (Project GLAD, n.d.); Project SLICE, Systematic Linking and Integrating of Curricula for Excellence, a program developing solid language arts skills in one language that could transfer to English (C. L. Wilson et al., 1994); Project CELL, Computer Education for Language Learning, a program providing computer assisted instruction to improve English reading, language arts, and computer skills (C. L. Wilson et al., 1994); and Project PUENTE, a program providing teachers with training in primary language development through whole language approach, second language acquisition, cooperative learning, discovery science, and sheltered English (C. L. Wilson et al., 1994). The existence and success of these programs demonstrate California's past commitment to ELLs' literacy needs and the gains to be made through deliberate programming in addressing the needs of ELLs. Many of these programs were created for specific grade levels and subject areas. Moving forward, the opportunity is for California teachers of English Language Learners to support the language and literacy needs of their students of every grade and subject matter, while, at the same time, achieving the rigorous grade level standards adopted. This is no small task.

In 2014-2015 California's public schools served approximately 1.4 million ELL students, who constituted 22.3% of the total California public school enrollment (California Department of Education, 2015c). In addition, there are 1.2 million students designated as fluent English proficient who are still in need of academic language support due to the difficulty of communicating complex concepts in either written or oral form (Olsen, 2010). This population is largely concentrated in Southern California school districts (California Department of Education, 2015c). Among the language groups, Spanish is the most common, followed by Vietnamese, Mandarin, and Tagalog. Many of these ELLs are not thriving in this educational system. For example, the national graduation rate for language learners continues to be well below that of their peers (ED Data Express, 2016; Gwynne et al., 2009; Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). In addition, scores on international benchmark exams, like PISA, illustrate that language learners often do not perform as well as their peers (Martin, Liem, Mok, & Xu, 2012). When specifically examining California achievement data, California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) pass rates for ELL students were at 82.2% for the 2012-2013 school year, which is nearly 10% below the pass rate of other subgroups (Torlakson, 2013). Figure 1 illustrates the CAHSEE pass rates by subgroups of African Americans, ELLs, Whites, low socioeconomic status, and Hispanic/Latino students.

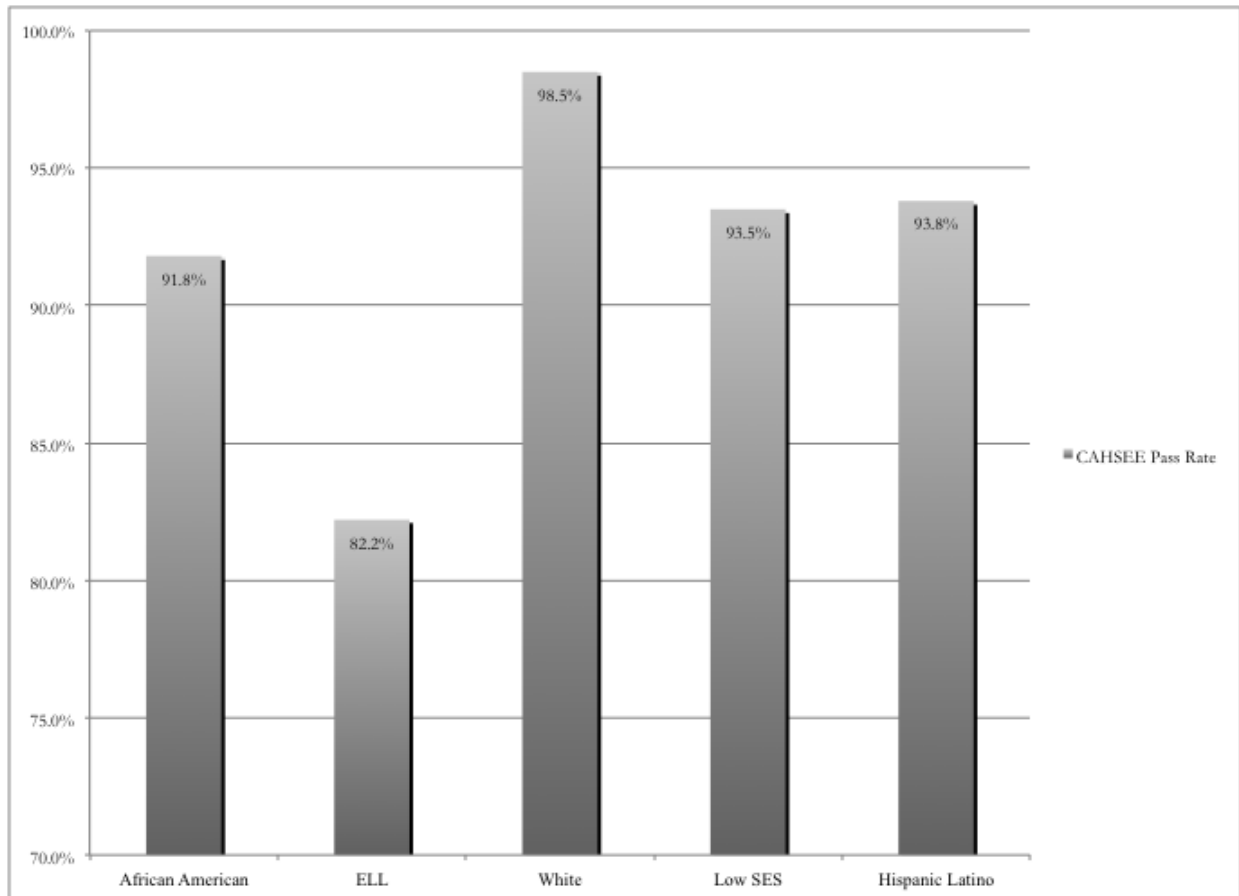


Figure 1. Pass Rate Percentages on CAHSEE

Furthermore, for the 2014-2015 school year, California's overall graduation rate was 82%; however, California's ELL graduation rate was 69%. This gap in graduation rates is similar to the gap in the nationwide graduation rate of 83% for all students and a 65.1% graduation rate for ELLs (ED Data Express, 2016). These achievement gaps suggest that schools and teachers are not prepared to help their students achieve academic success at the same level as that of their peers. More recently, the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress Results for 2015 revealed a significant gap in achievement for ELL students and English-only students for both English language arts and mathematics (California Department of Education, 2015a). Overall, across grades 3-11, only 3% of ELLs exceeded the standard for mathematics and 8% met the standard. However, 17% of English only students exceeded the standard for mathematics and 22% met the standard. For English language arts achievement, the gap widens even more. Only 2% of ELLs exceeded the standard and 9% met standard. However, 20% of English-only students exceeded the standard and 31% met standard.

Some research suggests that achievement gaps diminish for ELLs given enough time. For example, Thomas and Collier (2002) and Ramirez, Yuan and Ramey (1991) found that ELLs achieve parity with English only peers after seven to 10 years of targeted English language instruction and support. In fact, they found that late-exit ELLs may actually perform better than their English only peers if provided effective programming. Rather than diminishing the importance of attending to the language needs of ELLs, this research actually highlights the benefits of targeted supports as



ELLs attain the basic conversational language competency and decontextualized academic language competency they need to be academically successful.

Given these achievement gaps and the immense benefits provided through targeted language acquisition, a strategic effort to increase the effectiveness of ELL and mainstream teachers is required to ensure fair and appropriate access to the curriculum. Research shows that teacher effectiveness is a significant predictor of student achievement (Goldhaber & Anthony, 2007; Hanushek, 2011; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Some claim that teacher effectiveness is independent of the student population (Reardon & Raudenbush, 2009). However, additional studies found that teachers have varied effects on different student subgroups, including ELLs (Dee, 2005, 2007). For example, Wayne & Youngs (2003) found that ethnicity and gender of teachers influence effectiveness for same-ethnicity and/or same-gender students. Master, Loeb, Whitney, and Wyckoff (2012) discovered that prior experience teaching ELLs predict significantly higher gains in mathematics achievement for ELLs; this effect was much higher for ELLs than non-ELLs. Loeb, Soland, and Fox (2014) found that teachers who are effective with non-ELLs tend to be effective with ELLs as well; however, some teachers are more effective with ELLs than with non-ELLs. This increase in effectiveness seems to be associated with the teacher's fluency in the students' home language and possession of a bilingual teaching certificate. Overall, these differential effects may be problematic if one considers the current teaching force: a homogenous, mostly white teacher population (Ed-Data, 2015).

Teacher effectiveness is also connected to teachers' multicultural sensitivity, which is the ability to acknowledge and accept that cultures perceive the world differently. Sahin (2008) found that an international teaching experience facilitated the development of the pre-service teachers' cultural sensitivity and also assisted in strengthening their teaching abilities. Furthermore, research illustrates that students of culturally sensitive teachers are more likely to achieve in comparison to students with less culturally sensitive teachers (Moule, 2012). This is coupled with evidence that suggests diverse students have a better chance at success when teachers make culturally responsible decisions (Cushner & Mahon, 2009).

As a result, training teachers more effectively may help to address the challenges of implementing Common Core State Standards for ELLs. The growing ELL population and increased demand of the Common Core should receive attention from policy makers to ensure that effective teachers teach ELLs. In an effort to meet the needs of ELLs in California, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing mandated that all instructors receive specialized training on how to teach ELLs. Across the United States requirements for specific coursework or knowledge and skills targeted to ELL instruction vary widely. For example, some states dictate specific coursework requirements, while seventeen states simply contain generalized references to ELLs having special needs and fifteen states maintain no coursework requirements at all. Still other states, such as California, Florida, and New York require teachers to demonstrate credentialing exam knowledge of English language learners' culture/diversity and oral and academic language in addition to specific coursework requirements geared to supporting English language learners (Samson & Collins, 2012).

In California, content area and primary school teachers are given two options to acquire certification (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2012b). The first is to pass the California Teacher of English Learners test (CTEL), which includes language development, assessment, instruction, culture, and inclusion for English Language Learners. If a teacher passes this exam, he or she is not required to have any field experiences with language learners. The CTEL exam is designed for teachers who have obtained their teaching credential outside of California. The

second option is to enroll in CTEL coursework. Current credentialing programs embed CTEL coursework into their curricula. The CTEL exam mimics the content within the CTEL courses.

Furthermore, high school English language learners are required to have specialized English instruction entitled English Language Development (ELD), which focuses on language acquisition. Currently, ELD teachers must possess 32 college credits in English coursework or a single subject English credential, which focuses on English composition, literature, and drama. ELD teachers are not presently required to demonstrate applied linguistic knowledge, which is a hybrid skill set of language theory and language acquisition. This lack of content knowledge could help to explain the consistent low achievement rates of ELLs on the CAHSEE (ED Data Express, 2016; Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). Previous research indicates that teachers' subject matter knowledge directly influences student achievement (Luschei, 2012; S. M. Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). The connection between content knowledge and student achievement is further exemplified through examining achievement data and corresponding policy in Florida. More Florida fourth grade ELL students perform at basic or above in reading on the 2012 NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) when compared to any other state; in addition, 41 percent of ELLs in eighth grade scored at or above the basic level in reading. This could be linked to Florida's requirements for teachers to not only demonstrate knowledge of research-based best practices appropriate for teaching ELLs on a credential exam but also through coursework (Samson & Collins, 2012).

Low ELL achievement, combined with research identifying the importance of teachers' content knowledge, has persuaded the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) to develop the new single subject credential, titled "World Language: English Language Development" (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2012a). Future ELD teachers in California will be required to either complete a preparation program with an emphasis in applied linguistics or show ELD content proficiency by passing the ELD CSET (California Subject Examinations for Teachers) exam. The test includes knowledge of English learners, foundations of English language education, and ELD instruction and assessment (California Educator Credentialing Examinations, 2016). Due to the recent creation of the ELD credential, its effectiveness is unknown.

### **In-service Professional Development**

To meet the needs of ELLs, many school districts have embraced in-service professional development aimed at helping teachers improve their instruction of ELL students. Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly and Driscoll (2005) found teachers who participated in professional development targeted to ELL instruction rated themselves significantly more prepared to teach ELLs than other teachers who had not participated in such professional development. Additionally, Master et al. (2012) found that ELLs with teachers who receive nine or more hours of professional development focused on ELL strategies had higher mathematics achievement than those students with teachers who had not attended such training. Hill (2007) suggested that productive professional development must have a particular focus, such as content knowledge or techniques for ELL instruction. In addition, professional development must be linked to student goals, be tied to practice, and involve more than one-day workshops. Duguay et al. (2013) propose that professional development for CCSS implementation should include training so teachers can recognize language embedded in particular topics, select appropriate language features for further instruction, and identify strategies so students can acquire understanding and fluency with these features. Additionally, Santos, Darling-Hammond, and Cheuk (2012) argue that professional development for CCSS implementation should increase the knowledge, strategies, and skills of teachers of ELLs to integrate language development scaffolding. Furthermore, they advocate for professional development to include academic language and literacy training for all teachers in all disciplines, so teachers can learn

scaffolding techniques and strategies that align to language function and structure within their particular disciplines.

In addition, Manley and Hawkins (2012) argue that effective teachers need not only a thorough understanding of the CCSS and pedagogical content knowledge, but also knowledge of the “multicultural strengths of their students” (p. 197). This sentiment is echoed in the newly released ELA/ELD framework, which encourages teachers to “validat[e] and valu[e] students’ cultural and linguistic heritage—and all other aspects of students’ identities—while also ensuring their full development of academic English and their ability to engage meaningfully in a range of academic contexts across the disciplines” (California Department of Education, 2015b, p. 917). Therefore, professional development should build in learning experiences for teachers to deepen their understanding of CCSS, pedagogical language and content knowledge, and multicultural sensitivity. These learning experiences should include opportunities for teachers to be empowered decision-makers, engaged in close analysis of both their processes and student needs (Gay, 2010). This empowerment is necessary for teachers to modify their assumptions about students from an array of backgrounds and cultures in order to deliver culturally responsive pedagogy.

### **Evaluation and Feedback**

Prior to the passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), school sites were evaluated using the Academic Performance Index (API) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) scores. With the passage of ESSA, states still have to provide publically available data on student performance disaggregated by subgroup. In addition, they need to specifically report the performance of English language learners. Under ESSA, states are tasked with developing their own goals around a variety of factors to measure school performance, including three academic indicators and one indicator of school quality. Academic indicators include student academic achievement, which could possibly include student academic growth; English language proficiency; and high school graduation rates. Therefore, English language proficiency needs to be integrated into the system by which schools and districts are evaluated. School quality measures may include student engagement, educator engagement, school climate, among others. ESSA maintains and increases authorization levels to Title III funding, which is dedicated to the education of ELLs (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). For purposes of accountability measures, ESSA allows for the scores of ELLs to be excluded for the first year ELLs are enrolled in a US school, while a growth measure may be used the second year. In addition, ELLs who have been redesignated may be included in the ELL subgroup for accountability purposes for four years. TESOL (2015) approved ESSAs reporting policies for newly arrived students and for former ELLs up to four years. In addition, states will need to report on the academic performance of long term ELLs and ELLs with special needs. As states design and refine their evaluation systems, they have the opportunity to ensure that they create systems that reduce marginalization of ELLs and do not cast these students in positions of blame “as test-score increasers or suppressors” (Nichols & Berliner, 2008, p. 16); instead, systems should encourage teachers to view ELLs in terms of potential.

To be most effective, evaluation needs to occur at the teacher level as well. Under the newly created accountability systems, states and districts have the opportunity to develop teacher evaluation policies that align with the language and literacy practices of the CCSS, creating coherence among the reforms (Leo & Coggshall, 2013). Evidence suggests that standard teacher evaluation practices, when an administrator wields a checklist to assess teachers once a year, lack credibility (Cantrell, 2012). Instead, teacher evaluation systems should provide on-going guidance and feedback to teachers as they implement and refine their instruction of the language and literacy demands of the CCSS (Leo & Coggshall, 2013). The teacher feedback should ideally help teachers better

understand these demands and help them determine if their ELLs and other students are receiving the language and literacy instruction and scaffolding necessary to be successful. Research suggests that when teachers get explicit feedback about their implementation of CCSS and when CCSS aligned student outcomes are included in teacher evaluation, student achievement increases (Kane, Owens, Marinell, Thal, & Staiger, 2016).

Critics of alternative teacher evaluation systems which rely on student achievement test data claim that the information captured through standardized testing fails to account for the immeasurable aspects of effective instruction (Felch, Song, & Smith, 2010). Others have raised particular concerns related to the stability of value added-scores over time, nonrandom assignment of students, and the discrepancy between how constructs are measured from grade level to grade level (Youngs, 2013). In some instances, teachers of ELLs may have been penalized due to value added measure (Newton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, & Thomas, 2010). Nevertheless, accountability and evaluation can be helpful in ensuring that students have access to effective instruction and equitable educational opportunities. To measure the effectiveness of certification and professional development on teacher practice and student achievement, mixed measures of teacher quality and student learning should be collected, including student surveys, student work samples exhibiting growth, and observations conducted by both administrators and outside parties such as instructional coaches (Cantrell & Kane, 2013).

## **Analysis and Recommendations**

### **Key Actors**

Districts and schools have considerable autonomy in determining CCSS implementation, professional development planning, and the allocation of financial resources. As a result, these actors play the most substantial role in ensuring ELLs and teachers are prepared for the literacy demands of the CCSS. In addition, professional organizations, such as TESOL, the California Department of Education and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing are key players for setting policies that teacher preparation programs and districts adopt. To strengthen the new certification for ELD teachers and current professional development, we offer the following recommendations: a) pre-service teachers should be required to participate in fieldwork hours with ELLs, b) in-service professional development should focus on pedagogical language knowledge and multicultural sensitivity training, c) and the evaluation process should encompass a holistic, aligned approach. As recently as 2012, Sampson and Collins (2012) found that many states have no or only vague, general requirements for pre-service teacher knowledge and skills needed to effectively educate ELLs. Therefore, these recommendations for pre-service, in-service, and evaluation are not limited to those in California but rather should be universally applicable to much of the United States.

### **Extensive Training for Pre-service Teachers**

For a shift to occur for pre-service teachers, an extensive practicum component should coincide with the ELD Certificate and the CTEL Certificate or test. In a survey conducted with teacher education graduates, Coady, Harper, and de Jong (2011) reported direct field experience with ELLs to be the most helpful component of the teacher preparation program. Garcia, Arias, Harris Murri, and Serna (2010) further support this finding and propose that the preparation of ELD teachers should include “situated preparation” within EL communities in order for teachers to gain knowledge about the students’ lives and communities.

In addition to practicum hours, attention to multicultural sensitivity should be included throughout credentialing programs. Studies have sought to measure the effectiveness of multiculturally focused credentialing programs. To measure whether and to what degree 56 pre-service teachers gained cultural awareness through the completion of a 39-unit credentialing program, urban and suburban teacher candidates conducted a self-evaluation of their multicultural competence by completing a pre- and post-survey (Cho & Cicchelli, 2012). The pre-service teachers' self-evaluations indicated that they significantly increased their multicultural awareness from the beginning to the end of their two-year credential program. The urban and suburban participants had similar scores on the posttest. This statistic suggests that the rigorous multicultural course content and not the pre-service teacher's own experiences are the rationale for the improved post survey results. This study cites the evidence of an effective multicultural credentialing program. Burnham, Mantero, and Hooper's (2009) research further supports this rationale when they found that counselors can increase their multicultural sensitivity through a field experience with ELL teachers and students. However, researchers have also noted the importance of cultural experiences abroad (Malewski, Sharma, & Phillion, 2012; Willard-Holt, 2001). As a result, ELD credentialing programs need to incorporate a broader approach by including a practicum within ELL classrooms and multicultural sensitivity and cross-cultural experiences. To support these efforts, school districts also need to recruit teachers who exhibit these characteristics.

In addition, pre-service education should deepen future educators' knowledge of the demands of the CCSS, specifically the language demands, as well as their commitment to providing access to ELLs. In their observations in ESL and bilingual classrooms, Manley and Hawkins (2012) found that much of the rigor of the CCSS is either not addressed or is intentionally avoided. Teachers cited language deficits and challenging curriculum demands as reasons why they avoided the rigor of the CCSS. Targeted training for pre-service teachers can help develop the necessary attitudes and skills that will enhance their commitment to providing ELLs with access to challenging grade-level content.

### **Streamlined Professional Development**

Streamlined professional development is the second recommendation for teachers. The CCSS requires teachers to teach both content and language through a focus on language features like discourse, text complexity, argumentation, explanation, text structure, sentence structure, and vocabulary development (Fenner, 2013). This requires a focus on pedagogical language knowledge or "knowledge of language directly related to disciplinary teaching and learning and situated in the particular (and multiple) contexts in which teaching and learning take place" (Bunch, 2013, p. 307). Though the specific recommendations that follow are specifically important for teachers of ELLs, these policy recommendations could positively improve learning for all students if implemented universally, especially since all teachers are language teachers (Zwiers, 2015). The language and literacy demands of the CCSS and corresponding assessments do require skill and knowledge of language and literacy conventions that were, for many states, unassessed on the end of year high stakes assessment, especially in the areas of mathematics and science. Therefore, many students would likely benefit from focused instruction on pedagogical language knowledge, especially when interacting with challenging, complex text (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012).

There are three related approaches to pedagogical language knowledge. The first is the linguistic features of texts and tasks using systemic functional linguistics (Schleppegrell & de Oliveira, 2006). In this approach, teachers support students' language needs by focusing on grammatical features of text present in academic language. The second approach is integrating genre-based pedagogies with critical language awareness. Proponents of this methodology view it as

an extension of systemic functional linguistics, in that it delves into the linguistic features of content area texts, while at the same time paying attention to how power structures shape language and usage both in and out of the classroom (Bunch, 2013). The third is a sociocultural approach, which focuses on helping students engage language for the purpose of participating in academic discourse to improve comprehension and contextualize the content. Though these three approaches differ in their approach to language, all three approaches “can be situated broadly in sociolinguistic and sociocultural approaches to language, learning and the development of language and literacy” (Bunch, 2013, p. 316).

For the purpose of training content area teachers, a sociocultural approach would be more appropriate because it highlights the linguistic features and literacy demands across the CCSS. This type of language teaching is contextualized into a larger system of meaning and understanding, rather than limited to discrete skill practice (van Lier & Walqui, 2012). In addition, this approach is oriented toward helping students use language and its structures authentically. For example, if teaching a CCSS mathematics standard that requires students to compare two fractions with the same numerator or the same denominator by reasoning about their size, a mathematics teacher would not only teach the vocabulary terms, like *numerator* and *denominator*, but also teach the linguistic structures of *greater than*, *less than*, and *equal to*, which students would use while engaging in academic discourse through discussing and making meaning of the mathematics content (Duguay et al., 2013). To foster an effective sociocultural approach within a classroom context, it is important that classroom climate be addressed to ensure that all students are able to participate in the academic discourse necessary to improve literacy skills.

In addition to providing training in pedagogical language knowledge, professional development should include multicultural sensitivity given the diversity within immigrant youth (Banks, 2004; Sleeter, 2011). This training should foster an asset-based appreciation for diverse individuals, familiarity with a range of cultures, openness to learning, skills to interact with diverse individuals, and the self-awareness of one’s culture and beliefs. This training also needs to build teachers’ capacity to resolve cultural conflicts (Göbel & Helmke, 2010). Cultural sensitivity is clearly described in the California ELA/ELD framework, which advocates that teachers of ELLs adopt the following principles: an awareness of and positive attitude towards the cultural and linguistic heritage of students; an ability to make connections between student prior knowledge and experience, background, and interests; and an explicit appreciation of bilingualism. In particular, these approaches listed above are “particularly useful for supporting students’ linguistic development and positive language identity” (California Department of Education, 2014, p. 918). DeJaeghere and Cao (2009) explored the effectiveness of professional development to increase teachers’ multicultural awareness and found that school-based professional development can increase the multicultural sensitivity levels of teachers in the United States. Therefore, to better prepare teachers to meet the rigorous literacy demands of the CCSS, schools should embrace professional development approaches aimed at improving the multicultural sensitivity of all teachers.

To aid in implementation, ongoing support needs to be provided throughout teachers’ learning, experimentation, and refinement of knowledge and skills introduced through in-service professional development. Brezicha, Bergmark and Mitra (2015) suggest that providing teachers with differentiated supports, including horizontal supports such as teacher social networks, increases teachers’ knowledge and understanding of the particular reform and helps teachers develop the tools required for implementation. Such networks could be facilitated at state, county, district, or even school level, utilizing face-to-face and online opportunities for the purpose of building teacher social networks around best and promising practices for targeted language instruction and multicultural sensitivity.

## **Evaluation**

To ascertain the effectiveness of the professional development teachers are engaged in and the fidelity of programming, a systematic evaluation process should be adapted which should include observations by trained observers and outside evaluators (Cantrell & Kane, 2013). Along with these observations, students should evaluate their teachers, since student surveys have been found to provide cost effective and valid measures of teacher quality (Ripley, 2012). If possible, language accommodations should be available for ELLs, including surveys in their native language and/or further explanation of abstract constructs and other vocabulary.

Furthermore, administrators' evaluation of teachers should align with the language and literacy practices and multicultural sensitivity training outcomes and should provide teachers with helpful feedback on current performance and the appropriate steps for improvement. In addition, teachers and teacher groups should be empowered to regularly self-evaluate through examining student work samples to ensure that students are asked to perform the language and literacy practices espoused by the CCSS. This self-evaluation or group evaluation should result in appraisal of students' current needs and could result in the creation of scaffolding tools and the sharing of promising practices to increase students' achievement and performance on tasks requiring rigorous application of language and literacy practices.

The costs connected with professional development and evaluation could be offset by funds associated with California's new school funding formula, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Under the LCFF, districts are allocated a base funding per student and then are given additional percentage of funds for each ELL student (California Department of Education, 2016). These funds can be used at the discretion of local districts.

## **Conclusions**

The CCSS are based on the assumption that the independent reading of complex texts in a variety of genres is essential for college and career success (Bunch, 2013; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010b). Schools and districts, however, are left struggling to implement the Common Core given the increasingly diverse student population and the surge in ELLs within many American schools (Rampey, Dion, & Donahue, 2009). Implementing our recommendations may help to address this problem, but also raise the following implications: existing pre-service teacher curricula will need to be rewritten to incorporate the pedagogical language knowledge and teachers/unions may dissent due to the change in the evaluation process. The CCSS demands a profound shift in how all teachers, and in particular teachers of ELL students, operate and approach curricula. The time is right to better equip teachers with the skills and experiences they need to successfully implement this rigorous set of standards with their ELLs.

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