

Exploring Case Studies in Reading

2010

# How Well Are English Learners Achieving in Reading First?

BASED ON THE CALIFORNIA READING FIRST YEAR 5 EVALUATION REPORT  
2006–07

NATIONAL READING  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER





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## Introduction

This case study has been prepared for individual readers, study groups, or school-site teams interested in and committed to teaching English language learners (ELLs) to read proficiently. Featured in this case study are educators' perceptions of how well the Reading First program has accommodated English learners (ELs), accompanied by data to highlight the program's impact on the achievement of ELs in high-implementing schools.

This introduction defines the term "case study," outlines the intent of this study, reviews current research on primary language instruction in beginning reading, and provides background on the setting of the study. Guiding questions are included for both individual readers and for study groups interested in follow-up discussion. The appendix contains an optional activity school-site teams can use to explore perceptions and achievements of English learners in their schools.

### **Definition of "case study"**

A case study is a form of qualitative, descriptive research to examine the interplay of factors that explain how and why things happen within a context under study. A case study aims to offer a holistic understanding about a program or activity and may suggest possible new factors or questions for further study or application.

### **Why read a case study on how well English learners are achieving in the Reading First program?**

The evaluators in this case study sought to gather educators' perceptions on the relative importance of numerous factors that affect English learners in Reading First schools. In recent years, states and districts have renewed emphasis on improving instructional strategies for teaching English learners and assessing their progress in academic areas and in English language development. For example, new initiatives have spun off in Arizona, due in part to the study *Why Some Schools With Latino Children Beat the Odds...and Others Don't*, adapting Jim Collin's *Good to Great* quantitative methodology (Morrison, 2006). Based on third-grade reading test scores and school demographics (comparable to Reading First schools), the researchers found four elementary schools that were demonstrating a steady trend of academic achievement improvement over a sustained period of eight years. All four schools had ELs ranging from 60 to 95 percent of the population; and levels of students in the Free and Reduced-Priced Lunch Program (as proxy for poverty) ranging from 52 to 87 percent between 1997–2004. The bottom-line factors that mattered in these schools, focused on ELs, were summarized as follows:

- Achievement of every student in every classroom mattered.
- Ongoing assessment rather than assigned blame drove improvement.
- Strong and steady principals focused on things that truly improved schools.
- Collaborative solutions and responsibility for school improvement were shared among teachers and staff members.
- Knowledge, ingenuity, and focus caused staff to stick with the chosen program (relentlessly).

- Customized instruction and intervention were suited to each student’s needs. (Morrison, 2006, pp. 25–42)

The research on improving instruction in reading for ELs remains insufficient; however, of the seventeen research studies examined by the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth, several findings are relevant to the present case study:

- Teaching specific elements of reading and writing can be beneficial to second language learners.
- The potential value of building greater knowledge of oral English simultaneously with providing literacy instruction can be used to maximum advantage.
- While instruction in the components of literacy benefits English language learners, it does not mitigate the need to adjust instructional approaches for these students.
- Teaching English vocabulary is effective, but progress may be most rapid when such instruction is connected to the students’ home language, as in providing a home-language equivalent or synonym for new words or focusing on shared cognates when available. (August & Shanahan, 2006, p. 436)

In a journal review of the above research findings, Goldenberg (2008, pp. 17, 22) emphasized that all learners, including ELs in English-only, bilingual, or primary language programs, need to acquire facility with the sounds and symbols of English to learn to read in English. Furthermore, all learners need to become automatic enough with word recognition to build speed and accuracy in decoding, and they need to build increasingly mature vocabularies to comprehend complex text. The scientific reading research findings of the National Reading Panel in 2000 are consistent with the 2006 National Literacy Panel report on how language-minority children learn to read.

This present case study on the impact of reading instruction on EL achievement offers readers an opportunity to analyze perceptions of California’s Reading First teachers, coaches, and principals on what works, what doesn’t work, and what is challenging in instructing ELs. After reading the study, guidance questions may prompt further discussion. Although some questions may emerge and remain unanswered by the study, it is hoped that the reader will discover some new or refined perspectives based on the evaluators’ findings.

### **What is known about this case study’s English learners?**

This case study comes from California, a state with high concentrations of state-classified ELs in Reading First schools. According to 2007 demographics, the 869 Reading First schools in 120 districts share many features compared with the state as a whole: (Haager, Dhar, Moulton, & McMillan, 2008, p. 10):

	<b>Reading First schools</b>	<b>CA Elementary schools</b>
Number of ELs	53.7 to 58.5 percent	29.5 percent
Socio-economic disadvantaged	73.4 to 92.2 percent	54.0 percent
Hispanic/speak Spanish	50.5 to 79.7 percent	44.1 percent

The case study includes an open-ended question on the required Reading First annual survey for teachers, coaches, and principals: *In what ways has your school’s participation in Reading First impacted the learning of English learners in your school? Explain your response.* Of the 17,261 K–3 teachers, 11,466 or 66.4 percent offered comments; of 1,028 coaches, 884 or 86 percent commented; and of 1,073 principal surveys, 989 or 92.2 percent principals commented (Haager, et. al. 2008, p. 114). Their responses were grouped into sixteen categories and rank-ordered according to frequency of responses for each group of respondents. Brief “characterizations” of the information accompany representative comments by group of respondents.

## Setting for this case study

*The California Reading First Year 5 Evaluation Report* (Haager et al., 2008) explores whether reading instruction for English learners increased achievement and was perceived as successful and in what ways instruction could be improved. The evaluators compared achievement gains of ELs in Reading First schools to the gains of ELs in non-Reading First schools and compared the achievement gains of ELs in high- and low-implementation Reading First schools (an important comparison because the implementation index metric is obtained from the annual Reading First survey). Based on the outcome measure of the California Standards Test (CST) for English/Language Arts, data are displayed for grades two through four, across all years in the program (YIP), and by the cohort with the greatest longevity in the program (five years). It is important to note that recommended instructional time for California Reading First schools and all elementary schools is 2.5 hours in grades one through three and 2.0 hours in grade four, five days a week, for 180 days a year.

The evaluators concluded (Haager et al., 2008, p.124):

(A)chievement gains for English learners in Reading First schools are positive for grades two, three, and four. Achievement gains are higher for ELs in high-implementing Reading First schools than for ELs in low-implementing Reading First schools and non-Reading First schools.

(T)eachers, coaches, and principals noted evident and significant improvement in vocabulary, language development and reading achievement of ELs as a result of their schools' participation in Reading First.

## **Key questions for individual readers**

### ***What achievement findings, priority areas, and key practices are identified in this case study on English learners?***

Readers may wish to focus on the evaluators' findings in the following categories that describe California's practices for English learners:

#### ***Research on reading instruction for English learners***

*What is really known about effective reading instruction for ELs?*

#### ***English learner student achievement***

*How do ELs in high-implementation schools in grades two, three, and four compare to all non-Reading First elementary schools? [See pages 11, 13, 16, 18] Note: How do the evaluators explain the variation in percentage of students at proficiency and above across the grade levels?*

#### ***Perceptions of the impact of Reading First on English learners & relative importance of factors associated with the impact of Reading First on English learners***

*Understanding that the respondents elected to write about certain factors, what may explain the differences between respondent groups' first three rankings?*

#### ***Features of English learner (EL) supports:***

*Focus on each code description and representative comments to determine how respondents judge "what works?," "what doesn't work?," and "what's challenging?"*

- Instruction
- Materials
- Vocabulary/language
- Achievement
- Specific needs of English learners
- Professional development
- Assessment
- Early intervention
- Bilingual waivers
- Transition to English
- Accountability

## **Key questions for group discussion**

### ***What connections exist between practices in your school and the California case study on English learner instruction practices? What practices could be applied in your school?***

Groups of readers may wish to discuss the evaluators' findings by answering the questions posed below for each finding.

#### ***Instructional practices***

*What constitutes effective reading instruction in the primary grades?*

In a series of observational studies in first grade California EL classrooms, some specific instructional practices correlated significantly with EL reading gains (Baker, Gersten, Haager & Dingle, 2006; Haager, Gersten, Baker & Graves, 2003; Gersten, Baker, Haager & Graves, 2005; Graves, Gersten & Haager, 2004). These practices included modeling, making instruction explicit, prompting students, gearing instruction toward low performers, explicit phonemic awareness and decoding instruction, monitoring student performance, extensive vocabulary development, and sheltered English techniques (Haager et al., 2008, p. 101).

Think about a recent grade-level team meeting at your school. *How are these strategies evident in the meeting agenda, the dialogue among team members, and the resulting changes in instruction for students?*

#### ***Special attention to the needs of English learners***

The California evaluators found that ELs were disproportionately penalized by attending a low-implementing Reading First school and concluded that ELs need the highest quality instruction with specific attention to their language needs, as found in high-implementing schools.

*What issues does your school's leadership team need to address to ensure high-quality instruction and careful attention to the language needs of ELs?*

#### ***Impact of Reading First on your English learners***

In the California case study, teachers, coaches and principals were asked to respond to the question, "In what ways has your school's participation in Reading First impacted the learning of English learners in your school?"

Think about this question. *What is the response in your school?*

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## Featured Case Study

### **How Well Are English Learners Achieving in Reading First?**

Based on the California Reading First Year 5 Evaluation Report  
2006–07

This study examines the impact of the Reading First program on English learners (ELs), examining the reading achievement of this subgroup of students. We also examine the responses of participants to an open-ended question that gave teachers, coaches, and principals opportunities to express their views of the impact of the Reading First program on ELs. It is important to note that in California (and in the Reading First program), the instructional model is not uniform for ELs. These students may receive instruction in English, with an emphasis on immersion into the English language, or in a bilingual setting (waivered classrooms), with the transition from Spanish to English occurring during the primary grades.

The key findings are:

- Achievement gains for English learners in Reading First schools are positive for grades two, three and four.
- Achievement gains are higher for English learners in Reading First schools than for English learners in non-Reading First schools for grades two and three.
- Achievement gains are higher for English learners in high implementing Reading First schools than ELs in low implementing Reading First schools and non-Reading First schools.
- The EL subgroup is more sensitive to differences in Reading First implementation than the student population as a whole. The EL subgroup in low implementing Reading First schools is particularly at-risk for low growth, whereas ELs in high implementing Reading First schools often grow more than the student population as a whole.
- The effect of Reading First implementation on EL achievement is reproduced for ELs in grade four. However, the non-Reading First EL subgroup shows higher growth than the EL subgroup in Reading First schools. We hypothesize that this may be a statistical artifact of EL reclassification criteria that reclassify ELs to English-fluent based on grade three California Standards Tests (CST) results.
- In open-ended survey comments, teachers, coaches and principals reported overall positive regard for the Reading First program and its appropriateness and support for ELs.

- In open-ended survey comments, teachers, coaches, and principals reported significant improvement in the curriculum and instruction for EL students due to their schools' participation in Reading First.
- In open-ended survey comments, teachers, coaches, and principals noted evident and significant improvement in the vocabulary, language development, and reading achievement of ELs as a result of their schools' participation in Reading First.
- Though there was generally a positive perception of the impact of Reading First on EL students, some participants expressed concerns regarding the amount of time needed to effectively teach ELs, specific aspects of the curriculum and materials, the pacing of instruction for ELs, and the need for more systematic English language development to better meet the needs of ELs.

### Research on reading instruction for English learners

There has been a significant rise in the number of EL students in schools during the past decade in California. More than 25 percent of the state's K–12 students are considered ELs, but the percentages range from 30 percent to 40 percent in the primary grades. In the Reading First program, the percentage of ELs was 53.7 percent for cohort one, 54.7 percent for cohort two, 58.5 percent for cohort three, and 31.2 percent for cohort four. Studies and databases continually demonstrate the pervasive academic difficulties of ELs. Many students who enter school with a primary language other than English score below competency markers on academic achievement; more than 50 percent score in the bottom third in reading or mathematics with a continued gap between EL and non-EL reading achievement (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007).

There are important questions that remain to be fully addressed in the research literature regarding effective instruction for ELs. What do we really know about effective reading instruction for ELs? Are the same curricula, practices, and assessments used with non-ELs as effective with ELs? We are left with discerning the best of what we know from a limited research base.

In the most comprehensive effort to date to examine the research on EL literacy development, Snow (2006) summarized the work of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth:

*The literature we reviewed reveals remarkably little about the effectiveness of different aspects of instruction, and provides only limited guidance about how good instruction for second-language speakers might differ from that for first language speakers (p. 638)... Most discouraging, the research we reviewed provides little basis for deciding whether or what kinds of accommodations or adaptations are most helpful to second-language learners (p. 639).*

Additionally, constraints imposed by the politics of educational policy, most notably arguments over bilingual versus English-only instruction, draw attention to the lack of definitive answers from research (Gersten, 2006; Gersten & Baker, 2000). However, there is some evidence that word-level instructional components prevalent in Reading First are effective with ELs, such as explicitly teaching phonological awareness, letter-sound relationships and decoding, especially when taught along with meaningful experiences in engaging text (Chiappe & Siegel, 2006; Chiappe, Siegel, & Wade-Wooley, 2002; Snow, 2006). Not only do we need to know what practices are effective, but as Klingner and colleagues state, we need to know what works "with whom, in what contexts, and under what circumstances (Klingner, Sorrells & Barrera, 2006. P. 223)." The Reading First program is the first comprehensive effort to date in California to provide instruction that relies on the best of what we know from research.

What constitutes effective reading instruction in the primary grades? In a series of observational studies in first grade California EL classrooms, specific instructional practices correlated significantly with EL reading gains (Baker,

Gersten, Haager & Dingle, 2006; Haager, Gersten, Baker & Graves, 2003; Gersten, Baker, Haager & Graves, 2005; Graves, Gersten & Haager, 2004). These included such practices as modeling, making instruction explicit, and prompting students, instruction geared toward low performers, explicit phonemic awareness and decoding instruction, monitoring student performance, extensive vocabulary development, and sheltered English techniques.

A recent report, *Similar English Learner Students, Different Results: Why Do Some Schools Do Better?*, examined school and instructional factors related to positive outcomes for EL students (Williams, Hakuta, Haertel, et al., 2007). Using schools' Academic Performance Index (API) and students' California Standards Tests (CSTs) and California English Language Development Test (CELDT) scores, the report found several practices similar to those in Reading First that strongly correlated to improved outcomes for ELs. One factor, the extensive use of assessment data, is a cornerstone of the Reading First initiative. The coherence and consistency of the curriculum and instruction, and the focus of a school on achievement gains were two additional strong correlates of EL achievement. These factors would also be considered to characterize the Reading First initiative.

### **Data sources**

For this section of the evaluation report, we extract relevant student achievement results and examine them to determine the extent to which Reading First has differentially impacted ELs in California.

To gather additional information about the impact of Reading First on ELs, teachers, coaches, and principals had the opportunity to answer an open-ended question, *"In what ways has your school's participation in Reading First impacted the learning of English learners in your school? Explain your response."* The responses were compiled by respondent group in a text file and used in a qualitative analysis, described later in this chapter.

### **EL student achievement**

In this section, we use two of the previously described achievement metrics to measure school progress or growth (achievement gains) for the English learner (EL) subgroup of students as classified using the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and recorded in the California STAR file. The two achievement metrics are the percentage of EL students in a school that are in the "proficient" or "advanced" CST performance categories ("percent proficient and above") and the average CST English language arts scale score of EL students in the grade (mean scale score). Because percentages of EL students in the below basic and far below basic proficiency levels were not available for the 2006–2007 school year in the STAR research file, we are not able to address questions regarding the extent to which ELs in Reading First schools migrate out of the bottom CST performance categories. However, migrations into or out of the bottom categories do have an effect on the mean scale score.

The number of schools reported is lower than that reported earlier because some schools do not have CST data for the English learner subgroup. This is especially noticeable for the group of non-Reading First schools. The number of schools reported for grade four is much less than for other grades because they are confined only to schools that have been in the program for five years.

We report achievement gain scores as our indicator of EL progress. The CST gain score is the 2007 percentage of students in a specified category minus the corresponding percentage in the year immediately preceding the first year of Reading First funding. The change in EL scale scores is calculated using the same time frame. The gain scores are averaged across a specified population of schools to produce the statistics presented here.

To provide context for studying the EL Reading First gains, we compare the achievement gains of ELs in Reading First schools to the gains of ELs in non-Reading First schools. The upward trend seen for the Reading First schools is mirrored in the rest of the state, but we reiterate that the non-Reading First group of schools is demographically dissimilar to the Reading First group, and caution should be exercised when comparing them. In the trend-line charts presented later, the "All Non-Reading First Elementary Schools" group (which has a starting

point significantly higher than the Reading First schools) is adjusted to have the same starting point as the Reading First schools so that their trend-lines can more conveniently be compared. It should also be noted that when comparing schools using the English learner subgroup, the count of non-Reading First schools is about half the count obtained when using the entire student population. This is because schools with fewer than 11 English learners are not included in the STAR file for purposes of EL subgroup analysis. This substantially complicates the interpretability of the non-Reading First population.

We also compare the achievement gains of ELs in high and low implementation Reading First schools. This report describes how the Reading First Implementation Index (RFII) was computed in order to measure the degree to which the Reading First program is being implemented in each school. The RFII was used to divide Reading First schools into two groups labeled High Implementation Schools and Low Implementation Schools. We define a high implementation school as one whose average yearly RFII is greater than one standard deviation above the original 36.0 cut-point, approximately 41.4. A low implementation school is one with an average yearly RFII less than 36.0.<sup>1</sup> This classification scheme leaves out schools between 36.0 and 41.4 from the high and low groups, but they continue to be represented in the "All Reading First schools" category.

The following tables and charts provide starting scores, ending scores (2007), and gains on each of the two achievement metrics available for the EL subgroup. They are the basis for our conclusion that Reading First is an effective program for English learners. Before presenting the achievement results, we repeat two points useful in interpreting the tables:

- **Interpreting significance tests.** The statistics in the achievement tables provided in this chapter are sometimes accompanied by superscripts "a," and "b." These refer to tests for statistical significance. Significance tests answer the question, "How likely is it that the observed difference would have occurred by chance?" As noted below each table, the superscript "a" means that the group in question (the one with the superscript) has a gain score that is "significantly" higher than that of the ELs in the non-Reading First schools at the 95 percent confidence level, which means that the probability of the difference occurring by chance is less than 0.05 (i.e.,  $p < 0.05$ ). The "b" means that the new group average (ending year, 2007) is significantly higher than where it started, i.e., that the change is significantly larger than zero. Three pieces of information go into a significance test: the difference between groups, the amount of variation within each group, and the number of schools within each group. A large difference between groups with little variation within each group and a large number of schools within each group will be more likely to yield a "statistically significant" difference.
- **Rounding errors.** Sometimes we report a gain score that does not appear to equal the difference between the starting score and the ending score for a given metric. The explanation is that the reported starting and ending scores have been rounded to one decimal place, whereas the reported difference or gain was computed at more than eight decimal places. Thus the reported gain is (slightly) more accurate than the difference between the reported starting and ending scores.
- **Trend-lines of non-Reading First schools.** When graphing the trend-lines for ELs in non-Reading First schools, we continue the convention of adjusting their trend-lines downward to have the same starting point as the ELs in Reading First schools.

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<sup>1</sup> An EAG recommendation to define "low implementing" schools as those with an RFII more than one standard deviation below the mean was not implemented because it was found that this yielded a very small number of low implementing schools, not sufficient for statistical comparisons.

### Summary gains

The next table reports the achievement gains of English learners across all Reading First schools (all YIPs) in terms of average yearly gain in the mean “percent proficient and above” achievement metric and the mean CST scale score metric. In other words, it reports the difference between a school’s starting score (in the year previous to entry into Reading First) and its ending year (2007) score, divided by the number of years it has been in the program. This difference is averaged across all applicable schools. There is no trend-line chart because the starting point is different for each YIP. The gains in the four columns headed “English Learner students,” including the “All non-Reading First elementary schools” column, are computed using only data for the EL subgroup. The first column is computed using data for both EL and non-EL students.

### Summary gains for English learners, all YIPs combined, all grades, mean yearly gain

All schools, all grades, avg. change per year	Reading First schools				
	All RF schools all students	English Learner students			All non-RF elementary schools
		All RF schools	High implementation schools	Low implementation schools	
Grade two, CSTs N= percent proficient and above gains in scale score	831 3.8 4.5	786 3.3 <sup>b</sup> 4.2 <sup>b</sup>	132 3.8 <sup>b</sup> 5.1 <sup>ab</sup>	284 3.1 <sup>b</sup> 3.8 <sup>b</sup>	2,103 3.2 3.9
Grade three, CSTs N= percent proficient and above gains in scale score	832 1.6 2.9	779 1.2 <sup>ab</sup> 2.9 <sup>ab</sup>	127 1.5 <sup>ab</sup> 3.3 <sup>ab</sup>	283 0.9 <sup>ab</sup> 2.5 <sup>ab</sup>	2,026 0.3 1.2
Grade four, CSTs N= percent proficient and above gains in scale score	255 <sup>1</sup> 3.2 4.1	235 2.2 <sup>ab</sup> 3.7 <sup>b</sup>	25 2.6 <sup>b</sup> 4.8 <sup>b</sup>	96 1.8 <sup>ab</sup> 3.0 <sup>b</sup>	1,869 3.0 3.8

<sup>a</sup>Significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) relative to English learners in “All Non-Reading First Elementary Schools.”

<sup>b</sup>Significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) relative to the starting year, i.e., significantly different from a gain of zero.

<sup>1</sup>The grade four sample includes only YIP 5 and 6 schools, thus the smaller N.

A casual examination shows that achievement growth for English learners is substantial for grades two and three, and more modest for grade four but still significantly greater than zero. The grade two and three English learners in Reading First schools show higher gains than ELs in non-Reading First schools. The English learners in high implementation Reading First schools have higher achievement gains than ELs in either low implementation Reading First schools or non-Reading First schools. High Reading First implementation greatly affects school growth rates, both for ELs and the student population as a whole.

However, a more complex story emerges. Non-Reading First schools post stronger gains on the two achievement metrics when we focus on the EL subgroup alone than when we look at the student population as a whole (though the relationship is complicated by the lower number of non-Reading First schools, since schools with less than 11 EL students are dropped from the STAR file). EL instruction appears to be improving more rapidly than instruction for the student population as a whole. However, the Reading First schools do not repeat this pattern. For example, the non-Reading First EL subgroup in grade three grew 1.2 scale score points versus 0.5 scale score points for the “all” non-Reading First student group (which is 0.7 scale score points more), whereas the Reading First EL subgroup grew 2.9 scale score points, which is the same as the growth rate for the all students group in Reading First schools. We do not know definitely why the “EL versus all students” difference should be higher in non-Reading First schools than in Reading First schools, but note that the Reading First schools have much higher concentrations of predominantly Hispanic EL students and related demographic groups. In a context where non-Reading First schools are showing achievement growth for all students, the relatively small EL student populations in those schools might experience stronger pressure to “keep up” with the rest of the school population and thus post higher total gain rates, as compared to the EL student population in Reading First schools where the EL population generally exceeds 50 percent of the total student population.

Grade four growth rates for the EL subgroups in Reading First schools are substantially lower than for the population as a whole. While the relationship between implementation and achievement continues for the EL population, the absolute growth rates are much less impressive. This is supported by the fact that while grades two and three show somewhat lower growth rates for Reading First EL students relative to all students (e.g., in grade two a 3.8 percentage point gain for all students versus a 3.3 percentage point gain for ELs), grade four shows much lower growth rates (3.2 percentage points versus 2.2 percentage points). This observation is tempered by the finding that the grade four drop in growth rates is much more pronounced in the “percent proficient and above” achievement metric than in the mean scale score metric. In grade two the mean scale score gain is 4.5 scale score points for all students versus 4.2 scale score points for ELs, whereas in grade four the mean scale score gain is 4.1 scale score points for all students versus 3.7 scale score points for ELs—not as striking a discrepancy as that found for the “percent proficient and above” achievement metric.

One hypothesis that could explain the grade four anomaly (relative to other grades, and relative to all students) is the possibility that in a substantial number of districts high performing ELs are being reclassified as fluent in English based on their grade three CST scores. This would substantially lower the performance of the EL subgroup in grade four relative to earlier grades since the grade four EL subgroup no longer includes the high performing ELs from grade three. It would also lower the EL subgroup performance relative to non-ELs. The artifact would be more pronounced in grade four since it has been reported (anecdotally) that many districts prefer not to reclassify their students until CST scores have been obtained from both grades two and three. The artifact would be more pronounced in the “percent proficient and above” achievement metric than in the mean scale score metric because scoring “proficient” on the grade three CSTs is often used as a prerequisite for reclassifying ELs. The mean scale score metric, on the other hand, counts students at all ability levels, including the great majority of students at the lower performance levels who are not reclassified.

EL reclassification criteria differ substantially across LEAs. Without data regarding the reclassification criteria used in Reading First LEAs, our proposed explanation can be no more than a hypothesis. Other hypotheses are possible, but they are harder to reconcile with all the facts.

The contrast in growth rates between high and low implementation schools is more pronounced for the EL subgroup than for the “all students” group. For “all students” the high implementing schools growth rate was 5.1 scale score points versus 4.1 points for the low implementing schools. For EL students the high implementing

schools growth rate was 5.1 scale score points versus 3.8 points for low implementing schools—0.3 scale score points lower than for “all students.” In other words, the EL subgroup is disproportionately penalized in low implementing Reading First schools. This finding is reproduced in grade three, less so in grade four. The lesson is plain. The EL subgroup responds well when Reading First is well implemented but is vulnerable to lower growth rates when Reading First is poorly implemented. It is imperative that Reading First schools with high concentrations of ELs faithfully implement the program.

In general, taking into account differences that pertain to ELs in non-Reading First elementary schools and to performance in grade four, we see that ELs have shown remarkable growth as a subgroup since 2002 statewide, and that this growth is magnified when Reading First is implemented rigorously. However, ELs are especially vulnerable when Reading First schools do not faithfully implement the program, a vulnerability that is less pronounced in non-Reading First schools due presumably to the demographic advantage of having much fewer ELs per school.

**CST results for grade two**

The following illustrations show the CST results for grade two, YIP = 5, Reading First schools. The table includes the starting and ending mean scores for grade two in schools that have been in the program for five years. The first column of achievement gains duplicates the “all Reading First schools” data. The gains in the four columns headed “English Learner students” were computed using only data for the EL subgroup. English learners in high implementation schools show the strongest achievement gains.

**CST metric, YIP = 5, grade = 2**

All schools, all grades, avg. change per year	Reading First schools				
	All RF schools all students	English Learner students			All non-RF elementary schools
		All RF schools	High implementation schools	Low implementation schools	
Number of schools	259	244	27	98	2,103
percent proficient and above					
2002	15.4	11.1	9.7	11.6	17.9
2007	34.2	26.8	32.7	24.4	33.7
Change since Starting year	18.9	15.7 <sup>b</sup>	23.0 <sup>ab</sup>	12.8 <sup>ab</sup>	15.8
Mean scale score (per student)					
2002	299.8	292.7	290.2	293.3	304.8
2007	324.7	314.6	324.3	310.3	324.4
Change since Starting year	25.0	22.0 <sup>b</sup>	34.1 <sup>ab</sup>	17.0 <sup>b</sup>	19.6

<sup>a</sup>Significantly different (p <0.05) relative to English learners in “All Non-Reading First Elementary Schools”.

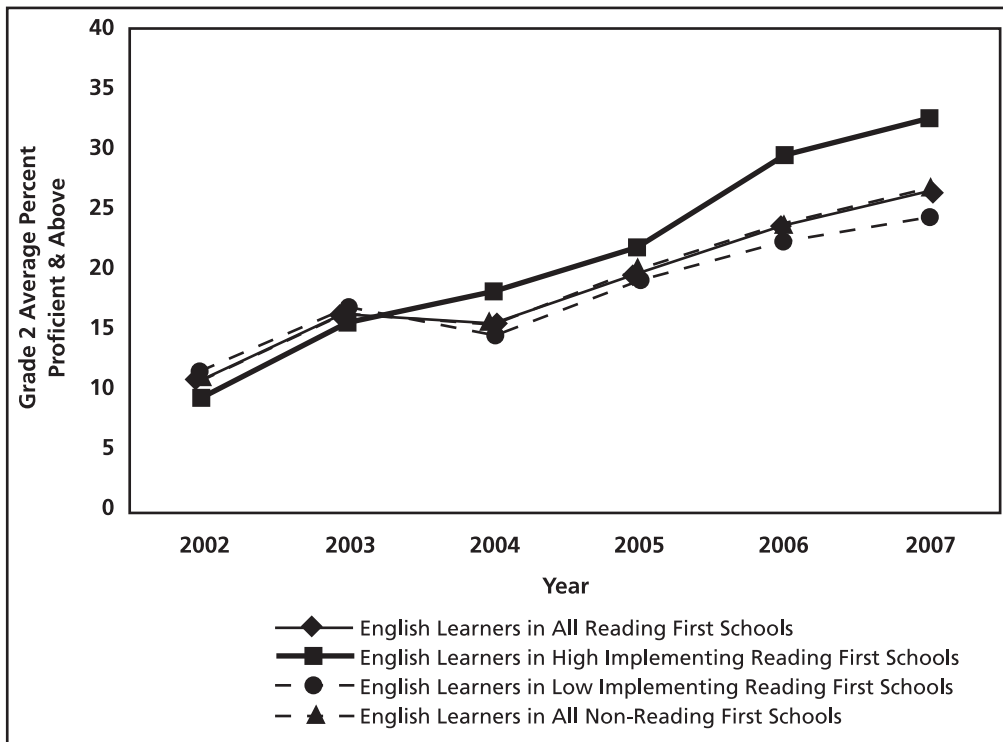
<sup>b</sup>Significantly different (p <0.05) relative to the starting year, i.e., significantly different from a gain of zero.

We see that EL gains are smaller than for “all students” (e.g., 22.0 scale score points versus 25.0 scale score points). However, the ELs actually grew more in high implementation schools than the “all students” population in high implementation schools. The lower EL gains across the Reading First population are thus a result of very low EL gains in low implementation schools. Reading First works for ELs so long as the program is strongly implemented. ELs are much more vulnerable to low growth than the “all students” population when the schools are low implementers of Reading First.

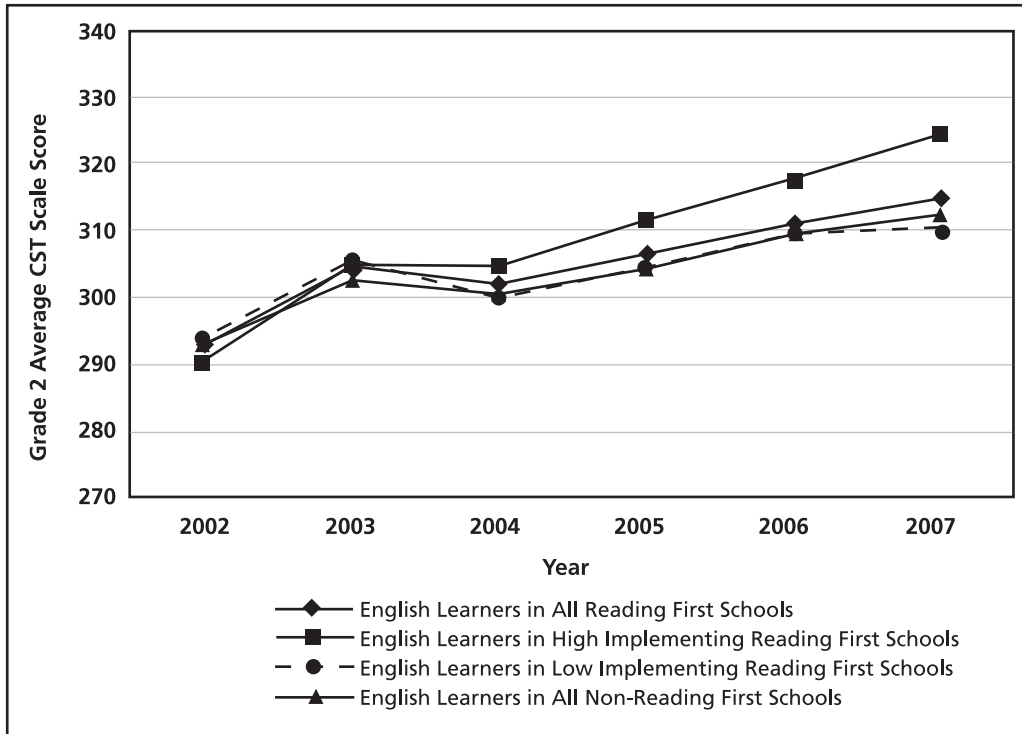
ELs in non-Reading First schools experienced higher gains than the “all students” population but this pattern is not reproduced in Reading First schools. This is probably due to the fact that Reading First schools are composed primarily of ELs whereas ELs are a relatively small minority in non-Reading First schools. In addition, because ELs are particularly sensitive to low Reading First implementation, when there are a large number of low implementing Reading First schools this drags down the overall growth of the Reading First population.

These figures show the trend lines for the EL subgroup for grade two in the YIP 5 schools, on the “percent proficient” and “mean scale score” achievement metrics. The trend-lines for non-Reading First schools have been adjusted downward to have the same starting point as “all Reading First schools.”

**English learner CST percent proficient and above, YIP = 5, grade = 2**



*English learner CST mean scale score, YIP = 5, grade = 2*



The relative steepness of the high implementing trend-lines emphasize how important high implementation is for the EL subgroup. Without high implementation, Reading First schools are not much more effective than non-Reading First schools for the EL subgroup. When the program is faithfully implemented, schools show remarkable gains in their ability to serve their populations of English learners.

***CST results for grade three***

The next table contains the CST achievement gains for grade three English learners in Reading First schools which have been in the program for five years. The gains in the four columns headed "English Learner students" were computed using only data for the EL subgroup.

**CST metric, YIP = 5, grade = 3**

All schools, all grades, avg. change per year	Reading First schools				
	All RF schools all students	English Learner students			All non-RF elementary schools
		All RF schools	High implementation schools	Low implementation schools	
Number of schools	259	239	27	97	2,026
percent proficient and above					
2002	14.8	8.3	6.0	8.8	15.6
2007	20.8	10.0	12.1	9.6	16.9
Change since Starting year	6.0	1.7 <sup>b</sup>	6.1 <sup>b</sup>	0.8	1.4
Mean scale score (per student)					
2002	294.5	283.3	279.9	284.4	297.2
2007	307.4	291.8	295.9	290.3	303.3
Change since Starting year	12.9	8.5 <sup>b</sup>	16.0 <sup>ab</sup>	6.0 <sup>b</sup>	6.2

<sup>a</sup>Significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) relative to English learners in "All Non-Reading First Elementary Schools."

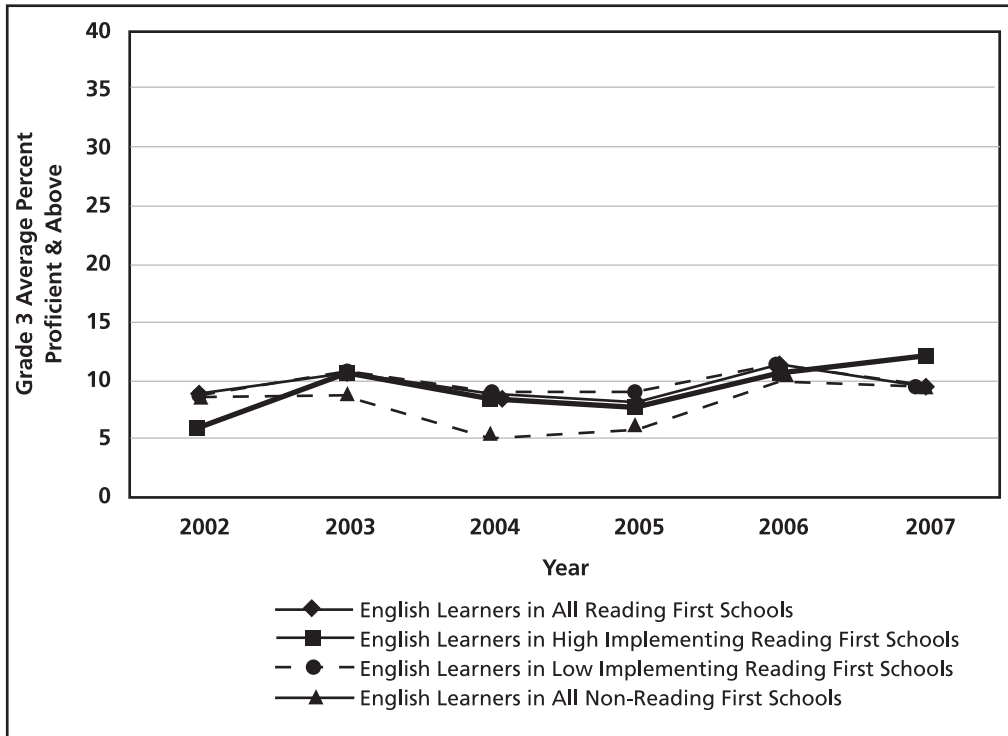
<sup>b</sup>Significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) relative to the starting year, i.e., significantly different from a gain of zero.

The difference between the "all student" population and the EL subgroup is quite dramatic—a 6.0 gain in "percent proficient" for all students versus only a 1.7 percentage point gain for the EL subgroup. Because the corresponding difference is not nearly so pronounced when considering schools from all YIPs, it appears that the large difference is peculiar to the YIP 5 schools. YIP 5 includes Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), noted for its extremely high concentration of ELs. Therefore, it is possible that the demographic consequences of high EL concentrations are more pronounced in the YIP 5 schools. It is also possible that EL reclassification starts in grade three rather than grade four for LEAs in this cohort.

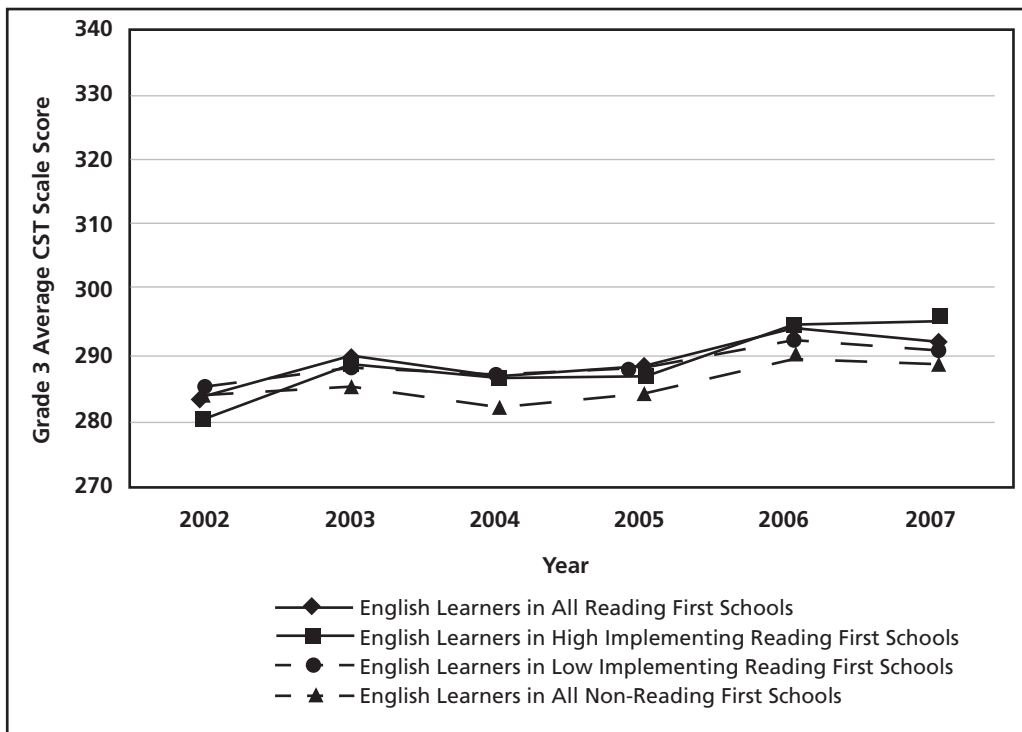
Such anomalies aside, however, we find that the implementation effect is prominent in grade three and that EL students are well served by Reading First.

These figures present the corresponding trend-lines on the "percent proficient" and "mean scale score" achievement metrics. As usual, non-Reading First schools have been adjusted downward.

*English learner percent proficient and above, YIP = 5, grade = 3*



*English learner CST mean scale score, YIP = 5, grade = 3*



While the trend-lines do not show as dramatic an implementation effect as the other grades, we see a reiteration of the basic finding that high implementation Reading First schools are much more effective with the EL subgroup over time than low implementation Reading First schools and non-Reading First schools.

### CST results for grade four

The next table reports the CST achievement results for grade four English learners in Reading First schools that have been in the program for five years. The gains in the four columns headed “English learner students” were computed using only data for the EL subgroup.

#### CST metric, YIP = 5, grade = 4

All schools, all grades, avg. change per year	Reading First schools				
	All RF schools all students	English learner students			
		All RF schools	High implementation schools	Low implementation schools	All non-RF elementary schools
Number of schools	255	235	25	96	1,869
percent proficient and above					
2002	15.2	6.3	4.6	7.0	11.9
2007	31.3	17.2	17.4	16.1	26.6
Change since Starting year	16.1	10.9 <sup>ab</sup>	12.8 <sup>b</sup>	9.1 <sup>ab</sup>	14.8
Mean scale score (per student)					
2002	306.8	292.8	287.3	294.7	303.7
2007	327.3	311.1	311.1	309.6	322.5
Change since Starting year	20.5	18.2 <sup>b</sup>	23.8 <sup>b</sup>	14.9 <sup>ab</sup>	18.8

<sup>a</sup>Significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) relative to English learners in “All Non-Reading First Elementary Schools.”

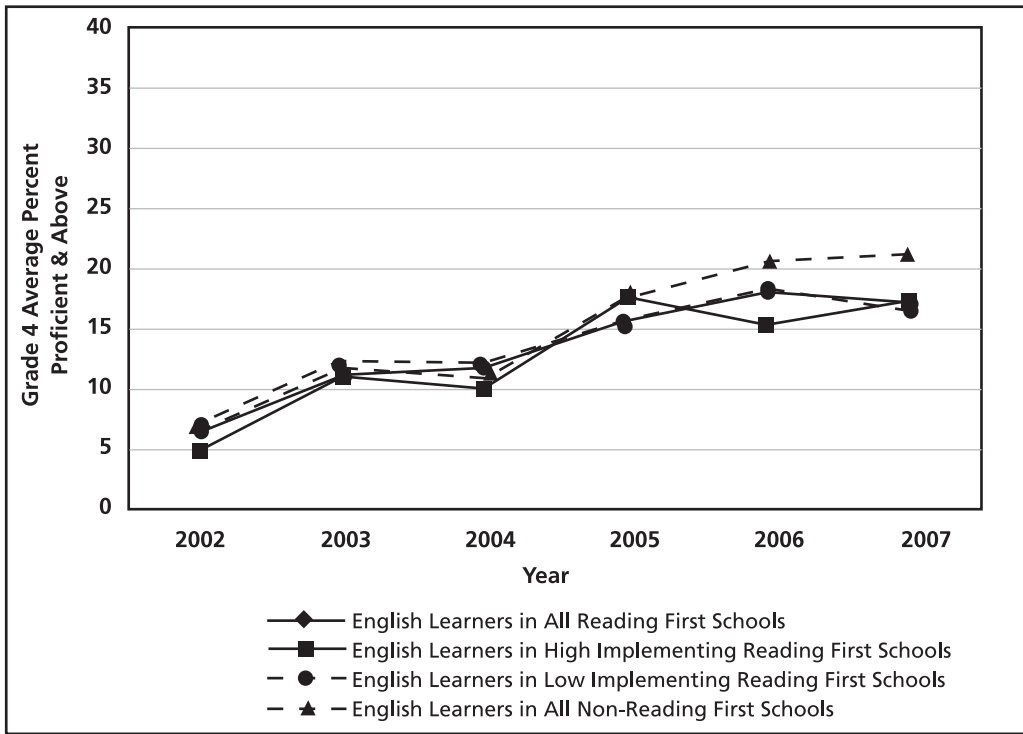
<sup>b</sup>Significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) relative to the starting year, i.e., significantly different from a gain of zero.

In contrast to all Reading First students, the ELs in Reading First schools—even those in high implementation schools—show lower gains in the “percent proficient and above” metric than their EL counterparts at non-Reading First schools. The gains in mean scale score show a similar pattern, with the exception that the ELs in high implementation schools have higher gains than their non-Reading First counterparts. It would thus appear that Reading First ELs in grade four are substantially lagging their counterparts in non-Reading First schools.

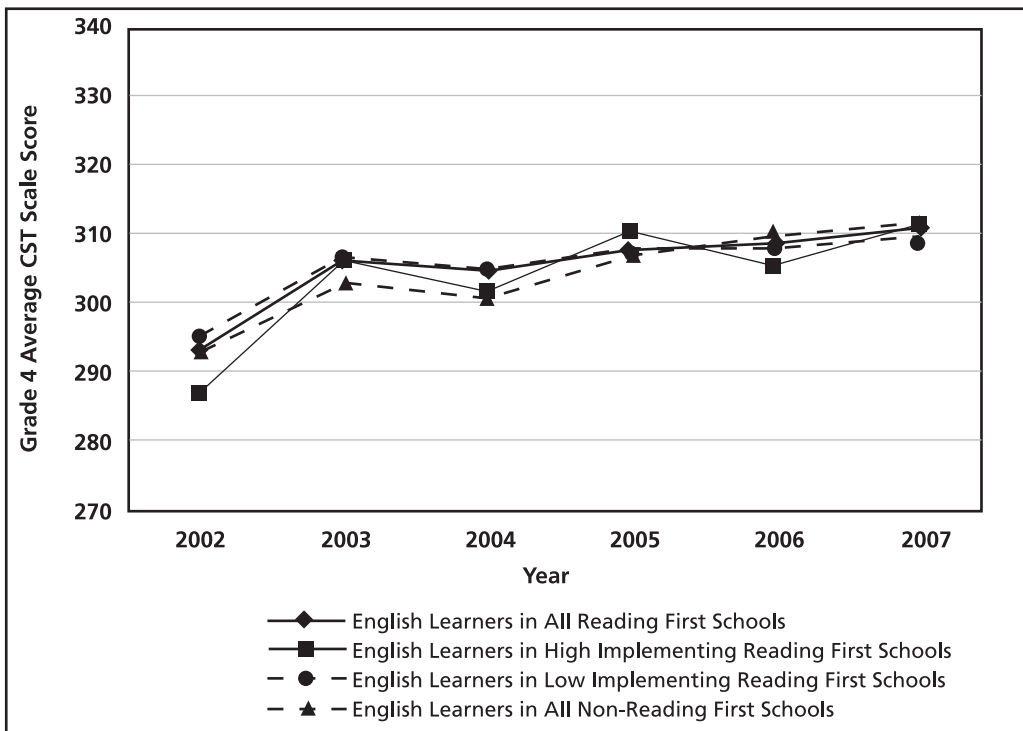
While we do not yet know why the grade four ELs grow so much less than the “all students” population, we hypothesize that it is at least in part an artifact of LEA reclassification policies that reclassify high performing ELs as English-fluent based on their grade two and Reading First year 5 grade three CST results. Thus, high-performing ELs may be systematically under-represented in these grade four statistics. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the anomaly is much more pronounced for the “percent proficient and above” achievement metric than for the “mean scale score” metric. Students are often reclassified based on whether they scored “proficient” or above in the previous grade, so this achievement metric would be much more sensitive to reclassification effects. Because the mean scale score metric averages scale scores from all performance levels, including ELs who score basic or below, reclassification effects would be somewhat dampened. However, without data regarding the reclassification policies of Reading First LEAs, such theories are conjectural.

The following figures display these anomalies graphically for ELs.

**English learner percent proficient and above, YIP = 5, grade = 4**



**English learner CST mean scale score, YIP = 5, grade = 4**



## **Participants' perceptions of the impact of Reading First on English learners**

Teachers, coaches and principals responded to the question, "In what ways has your school's participation in Reading First impacted the learning of English learners in your school? We use qualitative research methodology to examine findings from the open-ended question regarding ELs. This analysis yields the perspectives of school personnel who are most directly involved with implementing Reading First.

In this analysis, we first examine the perceptions of teachers, coaches and principals as reported in the open-ended question. We compare the relative perceived importance of resulting categories of responses across respondent groups.

Of the 17,261 teacher surveys collected, 11,466 wrote narrative responses to this question, or 66.4 percent. Of the 1,028 coach surveys collected, there were 884 narrative comments submitted, or 86.0 percent. Of the 1,073 principal surveys collected, there were 989 comments submitted, or 92.2 percent.

### **Relative importance of factors associated with the impact of Reading First on ELs**

*"Time and again I have heard teachers claim that at first they thought the reading program was way beyond the capabilities of our EL learners. Yet, as the teachers' implementation and sophistication and refinement of practice increased, they have seen remarkable results in their students' abilities. Reading First provided the focus for reading instruction via the teacher dialogue, content and skills training, and continued self-monitoring of grade-level instruction. It is an excellent opportunity (Response from a Reading First principal)."*

This response from a principal reflects the change in thinking evident in the open-ended survey responses regarding reading instruction for ELs. Many of the comments submitted by teachers, coaches and principals expressed the general positive regard for the support provided by Reading First for teaching ELs. This section describes categories of responses and their relative importance.

Rankings are listed below for all respondents, teachers, coaches, and principals.

### Rank order and percentages of responses for categories

Response category	All (11,134)		Teachers (9,646)		Coaches (652)		Principals (559)	
	Rank	percent	Rank	percent	Rank	percent	Rank	percent
<b>Instruction improved for ELs</b>	1	9.9	4	10.9	1	50.9	1	37.9
<b>Curriculum or materials for ELs</b>	2	7.2	1	15.1	5	18.0	5	13.9
<b>Vocabulary or lang. improvement</b>	3	6.8	2	12.7	7	15.7	2	18.7
<b>Achievement gains or improvement</b>	4	6.6	3	12.2	4	18.6	3	15.9
<b>Negative comment</b>	5	5.9	5	10.7	6	17.4	4	14.4
<b>Awareness of EL needs</b>	6	3.9	7	4.6	2	23.9	6	10.4
<b>Professional development</b>	7	3.3	8	3.4	3	20.9	7	9.9
<b>EL guidelines or handbook</b>	8	3.1	7	4.6	9	11.5	8	9.8
<b>Small group instruction</b>	9	2.1	9	2.6	11	8.5	10	8.3
<b>No impact</b>	10	2.1	6	5.1	12	3.2	12	1.4
<b>Assessment practices W/ELs</b>	11	1.7	12	1.2	10	10.2	9	8.4
<b>Early intervention prog. for ELs</b>	12	1.5	7	3.7	13	1.2	11	2.4
<b>Bilingual/waiver classroom impact</b>	13	1.2	14	0.3	7	15.7	13	1.3
<b>Transition to English</b>	14	0.7	10	2.2	8	14.7	15	0.0
<b>Collaboration/lesson study</b>	15	0.7	11	2.0	14	0.0	15	0.0
<b>Accountability</b>	16	0.4	13	0.9	13	1.2	14	0.3

The highest-ranking responses focused on the positive changes that occurred in Reading First classrooms as a result of Reading First. The first two categories focused on improvements in instruction and curriculum. Improving the curriculum and instruction is the central focus of the Reading First initiative. In this dataset, we see evidence that the most important changes occurring as a result of Reading First are carrying over to the EL population. In an unprompted, open-ended question, the largest proportion of spontaneous responses of participants focused on the impact on curriculum and instruction. Some of these comments focused on access issues; that Reading First had made the core curriculum and standards accessible and available for ELs. There was a widespread feeling that, prior to Reading First, schools could not expect ELs to achieve success with grade-level curriculum and standards, and that Reading First had provided the strategies and materials to move in this direction. Some comments indicated that only when they fully implemented the program did they see substantial improvement. Other comments focused on the quality and importance of research-based instruction and curriculum materials. Additionally, the next two highest occurring categories focused on the improvement of vocabulary and language development or overall academic improvement of ELs. Comments in these two categories indicated that Reading First participants saw noticeable improvement in the students' day-to-day classroom performance as well as in their assessment outcomes.

There are some inconsistencies in the rankings across respondent groups. The category, Instruction Improved for ELs, occurred with highest frequency for the all, coach, and principal categories, but was fourth highest for teachers. The teacher response category that occurred with highest frequency was curriculum/materials for ELs, ranked fifth for coaches and principals. Second highest for teachers and principals, was the improvement of vocabulary and language skills for ELs, but seventh highest for coaches. All groups commented on notable achievement gains for ELs as a result of Reading First. Improved Awareness of EL Needs was ranked second in the coach group, but seventh and sixth for teachers and principals. For other categories, perceptions occurred with the same relative frequency. The following response categories were considered of high importance across rating groups: instruction improved for ELs, curriculum/materials for ELs, vocabulary/language development, achievement

gains/improvement, negative comments, awareness of EL needs, and professional development. The other categories occurred with fairly low frequency and should not be considered to represent a significant finding among participant groups.

**Code characterization**

Responses are listed in the next table in the order of frequency occurring within all respondent groups combined.

**Response category descriptions and representative comments**

<b>Response category description</b>	<b>Representative comments</b>
<p><b>Instruction improved for ELs</b> Indicates that Reading First has helped improve instruction and led to better instructional strategies for ELs.</p>	<p>“Front loading sentence frames give Ells great opportunities for oral practice and reading comprehension skills (Teacher)”                      “We have found that English Learners benefit from research based instructional practice. ELs are improving in their academic achievement because teachers fully implement the instructional program and provide appropriate scaffolds (Coach)”                      “It has positively impacted the students because Reading First has helped with guiding my instruction and helped me to re-teach concepts that are missed (Teacher)”                      “Teachers are more aware that differentiated instruction must be included into their lessons and each lesson must accommodate the ELL (Principal)”                      “It has provided teachers with the tools necessary to improve their teaching strategies which in turn helps with student progress (Teacher)”</p>
<p><b>Curriculum/materials for ELs</b> Responses show that Reading First has provided curriculum and materials specifically designed to meet the needs of ELs. May mention the Spanish language reading programs.</p>	<p>“Reading First has provided us with additional tools and materials to build and develop learning styles as well as become more sensitive to the cultural differences among our EL students. This helps to ensure the creation of an environment wherein they can be successful (Coach)”                      “The materials provided by Reading First have given the students tools needed to learn the English language (Teacher)”                      “Reading First has allowed our English Learners to have access to the core curriculum (Principal)”                      “All students are getting the same material. Also EL students are learning more because there is specific intervention for them in the program and teachers do not have to go outside to get materials specific for them (Coach)”                      “The additional funding has made possible the purchase of materials to enhance our students’ learning (Teacher)”</p>
<p><b>Vocabulary/language improvement</b> States that the Reading First Program has helped ELs to develop vocabulary and oral language skills sometimes referring to English language development</p>	<p>“They have expanded their vocabulary as they are explicitly taught the words, meanings and usage of it (Teacher)”                      “For those students who started in kindergarten, they have been able to reach benchmark and continue to be successful in future grades. They have been able to move up in ELD levels and re-classify by third grade (Principal)”                      “One area English Learners have difficulty with is vocabulary. Since participating in the Reading First Program I feel English Learners have improved in this area (Coach)”                      “Being immersed in the heavy phonics emphasis and vocabulary instruction correlated with the reading gives our English Learners a rich language experience (Teacher)”</p>
<p><b>Achievement gains or improvement</b> Results report that Reading First has improved reading achievement for ELs more so than before implementing the Reading First Program.</p>	<p>“In my opinion, my school’s participation in Reading First has significantly impacted our ELL students. Ell students are learning to read more quickly and gaining more vocabulary because their need for assistance is being targeted (Coach)”                      “For ELL specifically, we are seeing better skills in reading and comprehension than when we were trying to teach Spanish and transitioning slowly into English. They are learning English skills and maintaining them with this effort (Teacher)”                      “Standardized testing results have shown an increase in proficiency for EL students (Principal)”                      “We have seen language arts skills improve across the board. All students have improved their reading and writing since Reading First was implemented (Coach)”                      “Our English Learners have improved and made great progress in reading as a result of the excellent reading program (Teacher)”</p>

**Response category descriptions and representative comments (continued)**

<b>Response category description</b>	<b>Representative comments</b>
<p><b>Awareness of EL needs</b> States that Reading First has led to increased teacher awareness of the needs of ELs and how to address them. May also include increased awareness of state standards for ELs</p>	<p>"We have a high number of Ells at our site and Reading First has provided increased attention to the needs of Ells (Coach)"                      "We're aware of the needs of our EL students and try to adapt our teaching to help those students (Teacher)"                      "Reading First has impacted our English Learners because our level of conversation has changed as to how we are going to meet this particular subgroup's needs. Reading First keeps the struggling readers in the forefront so our staff is directed in providing effective strategies and interventions to meet their needs. We are seeing positive results (Principal)"                      "Reading First has impacted the ELL learners because we can focus on them and see where their strengths and weaknesses are based upon the SCOES (assessments) (Teacher)"                      "Certainly the tiering has brought the struggle of ELL to the forefront. Teachers are more aware of the difficulty facing these students and are working together to help meet their needs in a more focused way (Coach)"</p>
<p><b>Professional development</b> Indicates that professional development for teachers, coaches and principals has focused on EL needs and has helped personnel to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to address such needs.</p>	<p>"We have had more extensive training in meeting the needs of our English Learners. Through lesson studies we have targeted our areas of need and have received professional development to help us reach our teaching goals (Teacher)"                      "We have provided some staff development with in-class follow up addressing the vocabulary needs and reading comprehension of English language learners. This year our goal is to provide this training to all our teachers (Coach)"                      "We have been provided with knowledge and strategies to help us work with English Learners. The principal, coaches and teachers have been given staff development and all have worked to implement what they have learned (Principal)"                      "It has provided teachers with much-needed professional development opportunities that have increased their knowledge of research-based practices that benefit all students including English language learners (Coach)"</p>
<p><b>EL guidelines or handbook</b> Indicates that Reading First has provided schools with guidelines or a handbook that provides strategies and ideas for meeting the needs of ELs.</p>	<p>"The implementation of the ELL handbook has helped most EL students grasp the material in a way that is easier than I would have been able to do it (Teacher)"                      "The materials such as the English Learner Support Guide, Reteach, Intervention, etc. have been a ... great assistance to our English Learners (Teacher)"                      "English Learners' needs are taken into consideration more because of the availability of the ELL handbook and giving students access to the core program (Coach)"                      "The English Learner Support Guide was very useful for providing specific, detailed vocabulary support for EL students (Principal)"</p>
<p><b>Small group instruction</b> States that ELs receive support with reading or language development through opportunities for small group instruction or intervention.</p>	<p>"Our first grade team has agreed to divide children by CELDT (language proficiency) level and offer differentiated, small group instruction based on those levels for the next school year (Teacher)"                      "I feel the EL students are comprehending more when they are put in smaller groups during Universal Access time (Coach)"                      "In small groups, teachers focus on ELs during Universal Access time, which provides more structured and focused access to the core curriculum by using targeted EL strategies (Principal)"                      "Teachers have allotted time to work with EL students in small groups on specific language development skills that will help them more successfully access the content (Principal)"</p>
<p><b>No impact</b> Indicates that Reading First has not had an impact on or changed the instruction provided for ELs.</p>	<p>"I am not sure Reading First has made an impact on English Learners. We have always differentiated instruction for ELs and have always had an English language period of 45 minutes (Teacher)"                      "The English Learners are not being addressed any differently than the English only students are. No consistent differentiation is taking place (Teacher)"                      "I don't think Reading First has made an impact on EL learners because the pacing plan remains the same regardless of whether the students are English only or English Learners (Coach)"                      "Reading First has not greatly impacted our English Learners. Whether we have Reading First or not, we would be using Open Court, our district adoption (Principal)"                      "Our participation has not changed our approach to English Learners (Principal)"</p>

**Response category descriptions and representative comments (continued)**

<b>Response category description</b>	<b>Representative comments</b>
<p><b>Assessment practices W/ ELs</b> States that Reading First assessment practices or tools are beneficial for teaching EL students, the data provide meaningful information, or the assessments allow schools to track progress.</p>	<p>"We keep the ELL students in focus and discuss them whenever we have collaborative meetings. We study their data carefully and provide lessons to meet their specific needs (Principal)"                      "ELL students are learning to read more quickly and gaining more vocabulary because they are being targeted for assistance and their assessment results are checked to assure they are on track (Coach)"                      "Using data on a regular basis and setting performance goals for all students has caused teachers to better focus and cognitively plan for ELLs (Coach)"                      "We have created an assessment-driven program that helps identify the needs of our EL students so we can target and address areas of improvement (Teacher)"</p>
<p><b>Early intervention for ELs</b> States that Reading First has provided impetus for catching reading difficulties early and providing appropriate intervention for ELs.</p>	<p>"EL students have received extra support and early in their development (Teacher)"                      "Reading First has provided early intervention opportunities for our EL students (Teacher)"                      "Teachers are focused on how to do immediate corrective intervention to close the gaps in English skills for EL students. The principles of 'teach, practice, apply' and universal access have been the keys to upward movement of our EL students (Principal)"</p>
<p><b>Bilingual/waiver classroom impact</b> Though the question asked about ELs in general, some comments specifically mentioned the impact on bilingual teachers or instruction in bilingual or waived classrooms.</p>	<p>"Our teachers are teaching their Language Arts in Spanish, but beginning in first grade, we have implemented the parallel English instruction in the area of phonics (Coach)"                      "The instruction in waived classrooms is as top-notch as in non-waived classrooms (Coach)"                      "Reading First has supported the bilingual instruction as well as the English (Teacher)"</p>
<p><b>Transition to English</b> Indicates that the Reading First Program has improved the process of transitioning EL students from their primary language into English instruction</p>	<p>"There are fewer EL students because they transition out of the ELD program more quickly (Teacher)"                      "The evidence of the impact of Reading First is the increased numbers of students who FEP (transition to Fluent English Proficient) out of our ELD program (Coach)"                      "Reading First has provided English Learners the opportunity to learn the basics of English better than any other program we have implemented before (Principal)"</p>
<p><b>Collaboration/lesson study</b> States that the process of collaboration and collaborative planning has improved the instruction specifically for ELs.</p>	<p>"Reading First has provided collaboration time with our Reading First meetings to discuss ways to help our second language learners achieve. In these meetings, we have been able to decide on a focus or target area and implement plans made together to accomplish the goals. We then can revisit and assess the results to help guide us further or modify our plans. Through these meetings and the professional development, we have been able to really understand the program components on a deeper level and raise our EL achievement (Teacher)"</p>
<p><b>Accountability</b> States that the Reading First Program has led to an increased sense of accountability or holding the students to high standards</p>	<p>"Reading First makes us all more accountable and schedule more time to meet the needs of our EL learners (Teacher)"                      "Our EL students and their parents have become more accountable for reading success (Teacher)"                      "In the past, I think teachers had somewhat given up the responsibility of helping EL students in their classrooms. Now, many teachers are doing in-class 30 minutes of universal access in addition to a district-mandated 30-minute support block which moves EL students to different groups. The in-class universal access time is helping teachers take more responsibility for those students (Coach)"</p>

**Response category descriptions and representative comments (continued)**

Response category description	Representative comments
<p><b>Negative comment</b> Any negative comment or criticism regarding Reading First and ELs is indicated here.</p>	<p><b>More instructional time</b> "They also need more time in the morning to work on transferring skills into English. This is a tall order and many students are capable but simply need more instructional time. If anyone is listening we need more time in the instructional day. That is the biggest complaint amongst our staff. They feel that they can do this but need more time in the day. Yes, a longer day."</p> <p><b>Curriculum</b> "The reading writing connection is not strong enough (Coach)" "The program comes with supplemental support but the teachers still have to sort through it to find appropriate material with the help of the coach (Coach)" "There is not a lot of ELD support written within the program (Teacher)"</p> <p><b>Concern for struggling ELs</b> "Early on in our implementation of OCR, not enough attention was given by program professional development to the unique needs of ELs. This was true especially in regard to lesson pacing and whole group instruction. However, now the experiences of EL learners involved in this program have been more intensely considered (Coach)" "The same expectations for all sometimes backfires. We need a better intervention program for k-3 ELs (Coach)" "It is difficult in the beginning for ELs. They do not have the oral language to be successful in the program (Principal)"</p> <p><b>Pacing plan</b> "We are in our second year. I don't think Reading First has made a difference for ELs because the pacing plan remains the same regardless of whether the students are English-only or ELs. There is no differentiation. I believe it is best to teach with quality in mind rather than quantity (Teacher)" "For the majority of ELL students the program goes way too fast for them. I find it very frustrating both for the teachers and the students (Teacher)"</p> <p><b>Lack of systematic English language development</b> "The lack of rigorous ELD tied to the core curriculum is the primary obstacle to student success in meeting English Language Arts Standards (Coach)" "Overall I feel like RF has not adequately addressed the needs of ELs. There needs to be more talk of frontloading vocabulary and language for ELs and more of an understanding of the separation between content area teaching (ELA) and language teaching (ELD)(Principal)" "I have to supplement the ELD section. It is more work for me (Teacher)"</p>

## Conclusions

In conclusion, achievement gains for English learners in Reading First schools are positive for grades two, three and four. Additionally, achievement gains are higher for English learners (ELs) in Reading First schools than for English learners in non-Reading First schools for grades two and three.

Implementation is an important factor for ELs as it is in general for Reading First schools. Achievement gains are higher for ELs in high implementing Reading First schools than ELs in low implementing Reading First schools and non-Reading First schools. The EL subgroup is more impacted by differences in Reading First implementation than the student population as a whole.

The EL subgroup in low implementing Reading First schools is particularly at risk for low growth, whereas ELs in high implementing Reading First schools often grow more than the student population as a whole. The effect of Reading First implementation on EL achievement in grades K through three is reproduced for ELs in grade four. However, the non-Reading First EL subgroup shows higher growth than the EL subgroup in Reading First schools. This may be a statistical artifact of EL reclassification criteria that reclassify ELs to English-fluent status based on grade three CST results.

In open-ended survey comments, teachers, coaches, and principals reported overall positive regard for the Reading First program and its appropriateness and support for ELs. Teachers, coaches and principals reported significant improvement in the curriculum and instruction for EL students due to their schools' participation in Reading First. Specifically, teachers, coaches and principals noted evident and significant improvement in the vocabulary, language development and reading achievement of ELs as a result of their schools' participation in Reading First.

Though there was generally a positive perception of the impact of Reading First on EL students, some participants expressed concerns regarding the amount of time needed to effectively teach ELs, specific aspects of the curriculum and materials, the pacing of instruction for ELs and the need for more systematic English language development to better meet the needs of ELs.

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## Appendix

### **Optional activity**

#### **Action planning to strengthen programs for English learners**



## **Activity: Prioritizing practices for English learners at your school site**

### **Scenario**

Following a reading and a discussion of the case study, a school team can use this Activity to build consensus on practices it deems most beneficial. There are three steps:

- Review *What Works?, What Doesn't Work?, What's Challenging?*
- Conduct a school team self-assessment
- Draft an Action Plan to strengthen support for English learners

### **Preparation**

Have the following materials ready for the one- to two-hour activity:

- Copies of *What Works?, What Doesn't Work? What's Challenging?* One copy for each participant [use Form 1]
- Copy of School Self-Assessment: One copy for each participant [use Form 2]
- Copy of Action Plan—Strengthening English Learner Supports: One copy for each participant [use Form 3] and supply chart paper to develop the plan

### **Directions**

**Step 1/Activity form 1:** Participants review *What Works?, What Doesn't Work? What's Challenging?* under the categories of instruction, materials, vocabulary and language, achievement, specific EL needs, professional development, assessment, early intervention, bilingual waiver, transition to English, and accountability. Conduct a dialogue on each category to find consensus on the evidence in the case study.

**Step 2/Activity form 2:** As a whole or in small groups, participants use the *School Self-Assessment* as the basis of a dialogue on each key practice by category, focusing on Things We Have in Place that are rated "strong" or "adequate" and Things We Need to Do that are rated "weak/missing."

**Step 3/Activity form 3:** As a whole group, participants review and discuss ratings by categories, focusing on subcategories of two or three practices that are considered "Things We Need to Do." Using the Action Plan form, chart the following:

- Two or three Need to Do subcategories in the priority column
- Brief description of the strategy to be used for each priority
- Action steps to be taken to implement the strategy
- External/district support needed for each strategy
- Statement of expected outcome and identification of measures of success
- Implementation timeline for each strategy
- Rationale for the selected Need to Do action plan

**Activity form 1: What works? What doesn't work? What's challenging?**

Identify *What Works* (positives), *What Doesn't Work* (negatives), and *What's Challenging* (challenges, suggestions, or needs). [Note: T = teacher; C = coach; and P = principal.]

Description	What works?	What doesn't work?	What's challenging?
Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of front-loading sentence frames (T)</li> <li>• Scaffold instruction (C)</li> <li>• Re-teaching (T)</li> <li>• Differentiated instruction (P)</li> <li>• Multiple tools (T)</li> <li>• Valid use of small-group instruction [language development &amp; CELDT levels] (T)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always had (pre-RF) differentiated instruction (T)</li> <li>• No consistent differentiation is evident (T)</li> <li>• Pacing schedules remain the same as English only students (C)</li> <li>• No obvious impact: adopted program would have been used with or without RF (P)</li> <li>• No change in approach to ELs (P)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacks systemic and rigorous English Language Development Program (T)</li> </ul>
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional tools and materials to address sensitive cultural differences (C)</li> <li>• Student tools for learning the English language (T)</li> <li>• Full access to the core curriculum (P)</li> <li>• Specific intervention materials for ELs (C)</li> <li>• Extra funding to purchase materials (T)</li> <li>• Guides and handbooks for considering ways to access the core (C)</li> <li>• Guides' detailed vocabulary support (P)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading—writing connection materials weak (C)</li> <li>• Too much supplemental material—difficult to sort out appropriate materials (C)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a lot of ELD support materials in the program (T)</li> <li>• Need better intervention programs for K–3 ELs (C)</li> </ul>
Vocabulary/ language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit teaching of vocabulary: words, meanings, and use (T)</li> <li>• Progress observed in ELD levels and reclassification by third grade (P)</li> <li>• Inclusion of phonics and vocabulary instruction makes a difference (T)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not adequately addressed—need more front-loading of vocabulary and language (P)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher must supplement ELD sections of program—too much work (T)</li> </ul>
Achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are learning more quickly and gaining more vocabulary (C)</li> <li>• Improved reading comprehension skills (T)</li> <li>• Increasing proficiency (P)</li> <li>• Improved language skills and reading and writing skills (C)</li> <li>• Excellent reading program for ELs (T)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students lack language skills in order to be successful (C)</li> </ul>	

**Activity form 1: What works? What doesn't work? What's challenging? (continued)**

Description	What works?	What doesn't work?	What's challenging?
EL needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased attention to the needs of ELs (C)</li> <li>• Adapting teaching to help ELs (T)</li> <li>• Level of teacher conversation changed to address how to meet needs of ELs (P)</li> <li>• Struggling readers in the forefront of teaching—effective strategies and interventions (P)</li> <li>• Use assessments to identify strengths and weaknesses to focus EL instruction (T)</li> <li>• Tiered instruction addresses individual needs in a more focused way (C)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PD slow to address lesson pacing and whole-group instruction (C)</li> <li>• Pace of program too fast and frustrating for teachers and students (T)</li> </ul>	
Professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More PD focused on meeting the needs of ELs (T)</li> <li>• Lesson study training focuses on teaching objectives (C)</li> <li>• In-class follow-up training helpful to address vocabulary and comprehension instruction (C)</li> <li>• Provided knowledge, strategies, and research-based practices geared for ELs (P)</li> <li>• Time to collaborate through lesson study—increased understanding of program components and effects on EL achievement (C)</li> </ul>		
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data in collaborative teacher meetings to plan lessons (P)</li> <li>• Use data to monitor ELs on track (C)</li> <li>• Use data to set performance goals and target areas for improvement (C)</li> </ul>		

**Activity form 1: What works? What doesn't work? What's challenging? (continued)**

Description	What works?	What doesn't work?	What's challenging?
Early intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision for extra support during first years in primary grades (T)</li> <li>• Intervention opportunities (T)</li> <li>• Focus on immediate corrective intervention “teach, practice, apply” (P)</li> </ul>		
Bilingual waiver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modified instruction for language arts in Spanish beginning in grade 1 with parallel English instruction in phonics (C)</li> <li>• Top-notch approach to reading equal to non-waivered approach (C)</li> <li>• Support for both bilingual instruction and English instruction (T)</li> </ul>		
Transition to English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition from ELD quicker, therefore fewer ELs (T)</li> <li>• Increased number of FEPs [Fluent English Proficient] (C)</li> <li>• Opportunity to learn basic English better than any other program used (P)</li> </ul>		
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to be more accountable and schedule more time to meet needs of ELs (T)</li> <li>• EL students and parents more accountable for reading success (T)</li> <li>• More teachers spending additional 30 minutes daily to work with EL students (C)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need more time in the morning to transfer skills to English (P)</li> <li>• Need additional minutes in the instructional day for EL support and practice (P)</li> </ul>

## Activity form 2: School self-assessment

**Directions:** Compare the instruction practices in your schools with those described in the case study. Rate your school's Things We Have in Place and identify Things We Need to Do to strengthen English Learner instructional practices.

	Priority areas	Things we have in place	Our rating	Things we need to do
Features of English learner support	Instruction		<input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> Adequate <input type="radio"/> Weak/Missing	
	Materials		<input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> Adequate <input type="radio"/> Weak/Missing	
	Vocabulary/ language		<input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> Adequate <input type="radio"/> Weak/Missing	
	Achievement		<input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> Adequate <input type="radio"/> Weak/Missing	
	Specific needs of English learners		<input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> Adequate <input type="radio"/> Weak/Missing	
	Professional development assessment		<input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> Adequate <input type="radio"/> Weak/Missing	
	Early intervention		<input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> Adequate <input type="radio"/> Weak/Missing	
	Bilingual services		<input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> Adequate <input type="radio"/> Weak/Missing	
	Transition to English		<input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> Adequate <input type="radio"/> Weak/Missing	
	Accountability		<input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> Adequate <input type="radio"/> Weak/Missing	
			<input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> Adequate <input type="radio"/> Weak/Missing	

**Activity form 3: Action plan | strengthening English learner supports**

*Directions:* Develop an action plan to address your identified priorities for the school year.

Priority	Strategy (general statement)	Action step(s)	External/district supports needed	Expected outcome (measurement of success)	Implementation timeline
1.					
2.					
3.					





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