

About the California English Learner Roadmap Policy

FEBRUARY 2026

On July 12, 2017, The California State Board of Education unanimously adopted a historic new policy for English learners, the *California English Learner Roadmap Policy: Educational Programs and Services for English Learners*. This superseded the 1998 English learner policy stemming from Proposition 227, known as “English for the Children”. Prior to the CA EL Roadmap Policy, Prop 227 policy mandated that English learners (ELs) in public schools be taught primarily in English, through structured immersion, for no more than a year. This time-limited policy limited multilingual diversity, hindered academic progress, and presumed short-term transitions were enough to serve all students’ distinct needs. The CA EL Roadmap policy is a visionary policy that sets the stage for equitable education, including standards, instruction, access, assessment, and accountability.

The CA EL Roadmap policy is both aspirational and research-backed. The four principles of the roadmap work together to facilitate a web of support for multilingual learners, from system-wide infrastructure to quality instruction and meaningful access to coherent asset-oriented and needs-responsive schools. In 2023, Californians Together and **ELRISE!** highlighted five school districts who were successfully implementing the Roadmap policy. Across these districts, three major commonalities emerged.

First, leaders held strong visionary and advocacy-oriented stances that were steeped in their district culture. In some places, like Desert Sands Unified, this leadership was evidenced through the decision to rename English Learners to Multilingual Learners in their district documents to set the tone that their Master Plan strategies were about leveraging student and family assets, and explicitly partnering with district and site advisory committees in shared decision-making.

A second trend was that these districts invested in professional learning and capacity building like coaching, demonstration lessons, co-planning, and EL-specific training for all school site staff. At Elk Grove, this resulted in increased newcomer graduation rates, increases in newcomer attendance, increases in A-G course enrollment, and overall success for newcomers.

Last, district level systems developed their inter-departmental coherence which enabled goal clarity, alignment, accountability, and sustainability. Cutler Orosi Unified aligned the EL Roadmap with their GIFT (Great Instruction the First Time) framework for teaching and learning to explicitly include analysis of EL student talk and writing, and differentiated instruction for language proficiency.

It is clear that the principles of the EL Roadmap policy can be a powerful force in transforming schools. Early learnings from implementation stories show how the Roadmap policy implementation does not look any one particular way, but do need specific investments including committed leadership, professional learning, and strategic coherence that moves the EL Roadmap policy from “one more” strategy to “all our” strategy.

Additional Resources:

- VIDEO: [The Four Principles – California English Learner Roadmap Policy](#)
- CDE: [English Learner Roadmap Policy](#)

