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The High Schools English Learners Need

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The High Schools English Learners Need

Policy paper for

**The University of California
Linguistic Minority Research Institute (UC LMRI)**

By

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With Introduction by

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June, 2006

INTRODUCTION

Julie Maxwell-Jolly

Despite the best efforts of thousands of dedicated people, California's secondary schools are failing to adequately educate the majority of the state's English language learners (ELs). The purpose of this paper is to present a vision for high schools that will promote greater success for these students. This vision is based on Norm Gold's 30 years of experience in the field with teachers and administrators responsible for educating English learners and immigrant students.¹ In his words, "This experience leaves me with a growing sense that the problems in EL education are escalating. High schools do not work well for most of these students, and California must take definitive, comprehensive, and long-term action to change this situation now".

English Learners in California Schools

Improving the quality of high school for English learners is everyone's issue: all Californians will benefit or suffer with these students as they mature and become a significant force in the state's economy, culture, and society. Currently English learners make up about 25 percent of California's public school population, 1.6 million, out of 6.3 million students, and that percentage is expected to increase as the proportion of the state's Latino population overall (many of whom are English learners) grows. According to projections from the California Department of Finance (2004), by the year 2040 Latinos will make up more than 50 percent of the state's population, compared to 33 percent in 2000.

Of the 1.6 million English learners attending California schools in 2004-2005, over 300,000—or 16 percent—were enrolled in the state's public high schools, and 83 percent of these students were Spanish speakers (Table 1).

¹ Norm was a consultant and manager at the California Department of Education from 1979 to 2000; for the last five years, he has worked as an independent education consultant to schools and school district leaders on improving systems for fostering optimal language and academic outcomes for English learners.

Table 1
ELs in California High Schools Grades 9-12, 2004-05

Grade	9	10	11	12	Total	
Spanish-Speaking ELs	89,303	68,835	52,051	39,913	250,102	83%
ELs speaking other languages	14,649	12,045	12,423	10,806	49,923	17%
All ELs	103,952	80,880	64,474	50,719	300,025	100 %
All students	549,463	497,197	459,125	409,576	1,915,361	100 %

SOURCE: California Department of Education, *Dataquest*. Retrieved May 20, 2006, from <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

Like most adolescents, these 300,000 English learners are the sons and daughters of parents who wish for them the very best in life, and like other young people, have their own dreams and aspirations for careers and families. They have the normal fears and anxieties of their age group, concerns that are often accentuated by experiences of discrimination, of difficult immigration journeys, and by language barriers. They share the English learner designation based on their language status but they arrive in our high schools via diverse paths, and with a wide range of skills and experiences. Most are long-term English learners, often born in the U.S.. They have attended California schools since kindergarten or first grade and though some of these students are doing well, many are not. Others have recently emigrated. Some of these students had limited or interrupted schooling before leaving their countries and still others had successful school experiences at or above the level of rigor of California education standards.

Overall, far too many of these students are faring poorly in California schools (Callahan, 2003a; Gándara et al., 2003). Even when balanced by the relative successes of their peers who entered school as English learners and who are now proficient in English (R-FEPs)², most language minority students are not successfully negotiating the current system (Gándara et al., 2003; Grissom, 2004).³ Although the majority learn to speak English—almost 70 percent of 10th grade English learners in 2004 scored “proficient” on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), the statewide assessment of English for second language learners—many do not have the level of English that adequately facilitates their learning of school subjects.⁴ This is evident in their scores on tests

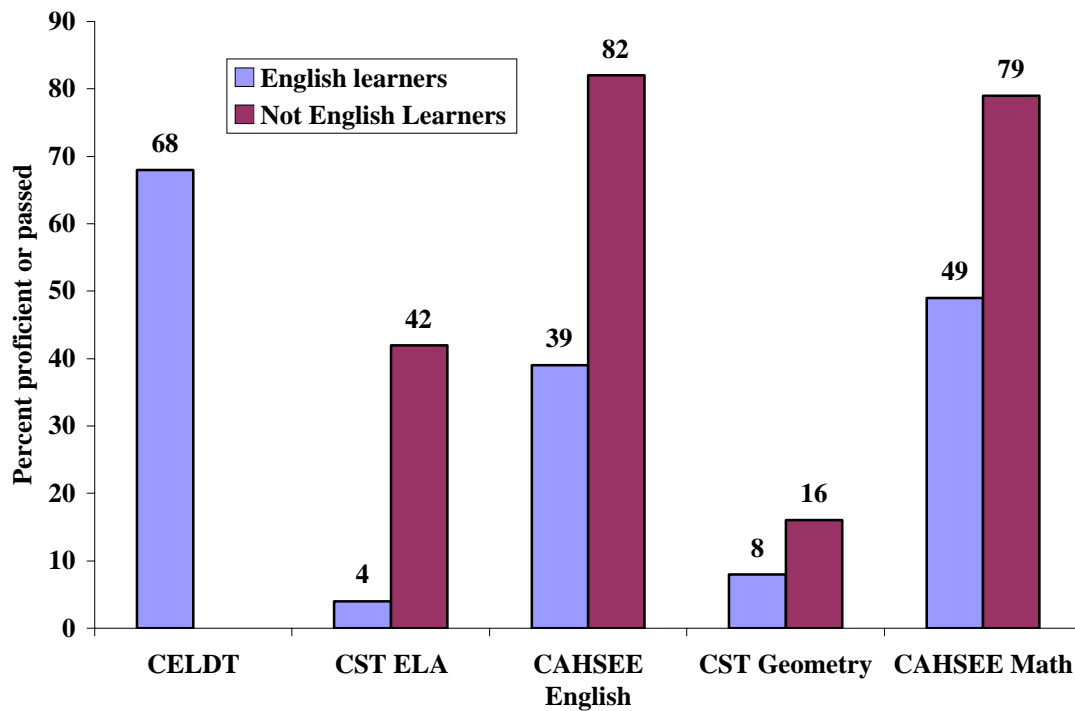
² English learners who reach full proficiency in speaking, understanding, reading and writing English are reclassified as Fluent English Proficient (R-FEP).

³ The key indicators of EL performance (CST exams, CAHSEE, etc.) comprise the current state and federal assessment system. They are, however, flawed and of questionable validity and reliability for high stakes accountability purposes, since they can be administered only in English without modifications and were not developed with appropriate consideration of the unique characteristics of English learners.

⁴ California English Language Development Test, CELDT. See Appendix.

designed to assess the academic skills of all California students. For example, very few English learners in the 10th grade were able to pass the California Standards Test (CST): only 4 percent scored proficient in English or math, and only 8 percent were proficient in Geometry. On the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)⁵, the test that all students must pass to receive a high school diploma, fewer than half of English learners passed the math section, and fewer than 40 percent passed the English portion of the test (Figure 1, see Appendix for test descriptions).

Figure 1
2004 Performance of Grade 10 English Learners on State Tests



Source: Rumberger and Gándara, 2005.

English learners also receive more failing grades in high school, and they are less likely to take and pass rigorous courses that might qualify them for college admissions (Callahan, 2005). It is not surprising then, that these students leave high school before acquiring a diploma far more often than other students. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) one of the few places that gathers drop-out data for English learners and the California district with the greatest share of these students,

⁵ California High School Exit Exam, CAHSEE. See Appendix.

found that of the English learners who enrolled in the 9th grade in 2000, only 27 percent graduated four years later⁶. This is particularly unsettling given the high hopes of California's younger students. Although most 8th grade students have high aspirations (U.S. Department of Education, 2002; Venezia, et al., 2004) to attend college, the majority of California students do not currently reach that goal. Only a third of the state's graduates from the class of 2003 completed the requirements to enter a University of California or California State University (California Post-secondary Education Commission, 2005).

When so many students who start with high hopes fail to fulfill their aspirations, it is time to reconsider our approach to high school. The message of "college for all" is contradicted by many education policies. For example, the very low emphasis and investment in school counseling is evidence that those making funding decisions for schools don't consider widespread support for college preparation as their goal. Moreover, some research indicates that high school personnel believe their job is to prepare students to graduate, not to be college-ready, and that this contributes to students who are unprepared for college, including community college (Kirst et al., 2004; Venezia et al., 2004).

Over a decade ago researchers studying the schooling of English learners in California concluded that due to a number of factors, English learners are particularly inadequately served in California's secondary schools (Minicucci & Olsen 1991; 1992). They identified factors such as a lack of support services to meet complex student needs; a shortage of teachers trained to work with English learners; inadequate assessment of students' native language and content area skills; lack of cohesive, comprehensive programs; insufficient content courses that are accessible to English learners; and a lack of materials. Moreover, recent research provides evidence that this lack of services persists statewide (Gándara et al, 2000; Merickel et al, 2003; Gándara et al, 2005), and that the limitations of the programs we offer is a critical factor in students' lowered achievement.

(ELs) lack of preparation for higher education results not so much from their limited English skills, although there is an indirect correlation, as from inherent barriers in the structure of their schooling: poorly trained teachers, a mismatch between the academic literacy needs of ELs and the didactic nature of most language learning environments, low track placement, insufficient time to achieve their academic goals, and perhaps most importantly, the absence of any clear focus on postsecondary opportunities for them (Callahan & Gándara 2004, p. 9)

This is the status quo addressed in this paper. The ideas presented by the author serve not only as possible solutions but also as a catalyst for thinking about approaches to solving the problems inherent in California's current approach to secondary education for English language learners.

⁶ Unpublished data from the LAUSD

A VISION OF CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Norm Gold

The high schools envisioned in this report would ensure that the best information on effective secondary instruction for English learners was more available and comprehensible to teachers, principals, and others than is currently the case. In my work with school and district personnel I find that the specific guidance provided by the research is either not well known or ignored. Many schools that enroll hundreds of English learners have only one or two teachers with any training or background to address English learner needs and rarely is a school principal knowledgeable enough to provide guidance to staff or to bring new resources to their attention⁷.

This paper envisions high schools with staff members who recognize the capacity and hopes of students who want to attend a four-year college, and who can make sure that they are well prepared to do so. At the same time, school plans would address the reality that many students do not want to attend a four-year college. In these cases, high school programs would provide students with the skills and knowledge they need in order to find satisfying and gainful employment in a productive future career—whether or not that career requires immediate entry into college.

The high schools envisioned here would include schooling that is open to and provides for a wide range of approaches and strategies to address the equally wide range of students and their needs. Instruction would use the students' primary languages and recognize their bi-cultural identity as a reality and an asset. They would provide the best of what California education has to offer with regard to teachers, materials, and facilities to support these students, rather than the fewest such resources (Gándara et al, 2003). These schools would exhibit a dedication to success for every student, and would recognize the unique needs and strengths that English learners bring to school.

In this vision, schools would break free from time constraints linked to the clock and the calendar and from the traditional approach to hours of seat-time. Teachers would use a performance-based system for recording students' mastery of knowledge and recognize that preparation for a productive life means more than lip service to "college prep" for all. Educators would expand their view of English language proficiency and recognize that a successful high school education can be achieved via many pathways. Schools would work with students and their families to develop

individual plans of action to take into account students' skills, knowledge, and talents along with their needs. An individual plan could include apprenticeship, distance learning (including video and audio courses, as well as interactive on-line instruction), and other effective modes of teaching and learning beyond traditional classroom formats.

Finally, the high schools envisioned here might make use of options beyond the physical building: venues and schedules that radically differ from today's practices. In some cases, virtual schools could make use of learning locations at home, in libraries, at business sites, or anywhere with computer access. No matter where students might be physically located, these schools would maintain the essential human support that can only come from face-to-face contact between students and teachers, and between students and their peers.

Although there remains much to learn⁸ regarding how to provide the best high school education for English learners, there is much that we do know that can provide guidance in a redesign of high schools for English learners. Research stresses the importance and effectiveness of maintaining a strong, long-term commitment to the following features:⁹

- Valuing the students' home culture, experience, and language and using this language and experience for instruction;
- Explicitly communicating high expectations and language strategies, as well as academic and socio-cultural norms;
- Hiring staff at all levels who have the commitment, preparation and knowledge to work with English learners;
- Encouraging and teaching families how to participate in their children's schooling;
- Providing English learners with access to a strong, varied and adequately advanced curriculum; and,
- Designing all school activities and programs to include English learners in ways that are meaningful, engaging and varied;
- Eliminating structural obstacles found to inhibit English learners' success, including fragmented school days, departmentalized schools, tracked courses, and age-grade inflexibility; and,
- Implementing assessments that allow teachers to diagnose and meet the academic needs of English learners.

⁷ A recent study by Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll (2005) supports my experience. They found that among more than 4,500 classroom teachers of EL students, almost half had only one professional development experience with an EL focus in the last five years—or had had none at all.

⁸ We have few scientifically rigorous studies investigating the effectiveness of particular programs or procedures for EL secondary education (Center for School and District Improvement, 2004). In California, this challenge should be eased by a new state data system that will provide each student in the state with a unique identifier so that we can follow student growth over time.

⁹ See for example, Gándara and Merino (1993); Figueroa and Hernandez (1999); Lucas (1993, 1997); Walqui (2000); and Meltzer and Hamaan (2005).

Five Myths that Limit English Learner Success

This paper proposes that high school is—if not entirely broken—in major disrepair with regard to most of the state’s English learners. Fixing it will require significant commitment, resources and a willingness to think—and act—creatively. As others have noted¹⁰, reformers have not been audacious enough in rethinking and redesigning high schools, and this is particularly true with regard to English learners. Schools need to make more comprehensive changes than “just the bell schedule or the shift from overhead projector to multi-media projector hooked to the teacher’s laptop...” (Elmore, 2003, p. 1). Major instructional improvement is essential in order to provide relevant learning opportunities in a comprehensible manner. But even if such improvements in the quality of instruction were to occur, it would not be sufficient to create pathways of likely success for most English learners.

Major changes are needed in two areas in order to achieve any progress: information and assessment. If California high schools are to equitably provide a wide range of worthwhile opportunities for English learners, full and comprehensible information on student options must be made available to both parents and students via a number of currently untapped media and activities in a range of languages. The other critical piece is assessment. Teachers and administrators must understand what students already know and focus on areas of academic need, in order for students to continue the educational progress they began in another country and prepare them to lead productive adult lives. Moreover, this information must be communicated and explained to all concerned. The following are some myths that stand in the way of the educational changes needed for secondary English learners to thrive in California’s high schools.

MYTH #1: English learners bring nothing to the table except *need*.

English learners come to secondary schools with strengths that often go unrecognized in our schools. When English learners are viewed only in terms of their needs, the assets that form the foundation on which schools can help them build additional knowledge and skills are overlooked. These assets include prior schooling, skills in non-English languages, life experiences, their cultural heritage, and bilingual and bicultural capacities. In addition, many students have immigration experiences that have tested their skills and stamina in ways that their high school peers can’t even imagine. Although these experiences are most often defined in terms of student need, they also demonstrate strength in the face of adversity. Thus, whether English learners are refugees, long-term immigrants, or U.S.-born, they have a wealth of experience, skills, and knowledge that often go

untapped. Following are a few ways to build on what they bring:

- 1.1 Inventory prior education**, including elementary, secondary and non-formal education. Ensure that students receive full credit for any traditional high school courses and seek to recognize competencies and standards students may have met through non-traditional means.
- 1.2 Assess competence in the student’s primary language**, noting the extent of academic proficiency in oral skills as well as in reading and writing. Validate this competence as meeting second language (“foreign” language) high school graduation and “a-g” college entrance requirements (See Walqui, 2000).¹¹
- 1.3 Establish early school-to-home connections** by speaking directly with parents (through an interpreter when necessary), and assigning a specific staff member (teacher, counselor, administrator or aide) the responsibility of maintaining personal contact with the family.
- 1.4 Establish an ongoing, twice-a-year process to assess the knowledge, experience, dual language skills, goals, interests, and needs** of each student. This could be part of advisory or homeroom activities for groups of students, or included in one-on-one sessions with counselors.
- 1.5 Build upon students’ learning assets by providing educational programs that take advantage of** students’ language and culture competencies. Include programs that recognize the leadership skills that so many English learners develop as they assume the role of liaison for their family between their home and culture in the United States.

MYTH #2: English language development (ELD) is all ELs need.

Although learning English is only part of what English learners need, I have found nearly universal the practice of referring to the program and students solely in terms of their need to learn English. Currently school administrators schedule ELD classes and assign teachers to teach them. They consider those courses as “the program” for English learners. Missing are opportunities for 1) building knowledge and skill in areas to help students toward a productive professional/work life, 2) ensuring that students gain the social capital necessary to take full advantage of opportunities in education and society, 3) building on the strength of their bi-cultural and bilingual skills and capacity, and 4) providing students with a foundation of habits, competencies, and attitudes that will allow them to meet the broad educational goals stated above (Cummins, 2000; Nieto, 2003; Trumbull et al., 2001; Walqui, 2000, p.18-22). Following are some suggestions for meeting the critical needs of English learners beyond those of learning English:

¹⁰ Many point to the near impossibility of really transforming high schools because they are structured in a way that circumvents change (Goodlad, 1984; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Noguera, 2002; Elmore, 2002, 2004; Sarason, 1982).

¹¹ The UC guide to a-g requirements does provide for alternatives to certify *Competence in Language Other than English* (Requirement “e”). But these are not widely publicized or understood. See: http://pathstat1.ucop.edu/ag/a-g/language_reqs.html

2.1 Articulate a comprehensive program for English learners at the state, district, and school levels that includes diagnosing both language and academic needs, followed by instruction to meet those needs. Design programs and services that include ongoing relationships with adults at the school who are able to communicate with students, and become aware of key elements of their family, community, work, and social lives that affect school success. While students must learn to function and thrive in the United States, they need to maintain the ability to communicate with and fully participate in their home communities to avoid the negative consequences of culture and language loss (Fishman, 1991; Wong Fillmore 1991). This includes providing coherent, sustained use of the primary language for instruction, whenever possible.

There is ample evidence of the cognitive and social advantages of using the students' primary language for some instruction (August & Hakuta, 1998; Greene, 1998; Rolstad, Mahoney & Glass, 2005; Slavin & Cheung, 2003). No matter what the instructional program, it is beneficial to use students' language and academic strengths. Many English learners could accelerate their studies with advanced academic courses if such courses were provided in a language they could understand (Walqui, 2000). Rather than repeating content already mastered in their home country, they could spend time on other learning—including additional ELD or advanced math or science. One example of a program that seeks to minimize differences in school experience is that of the U.C. Davis School of Education. The pilot program in collaboration with the Mexican government provides the rigorous national Mexican curriculum to its citizens in the United States via distance learning, and offers simultaneous credit toward a California and Mexico high school diploma, as well as college preparation where appropriate. The program offers students greater mobility, flexibility, and reason to stay in school.¹²

- 2.2. Plan for full integration of English learners with all other students** and establish daily and weekly routines to ensure that this happens. Schools might accomplish this using specific homeroom activities, team projects, and cross-cultural academic mentors. This is a two-way street: many English learners can mentor foreign language students or provide important resources on history, geography, culture and language of their country of origin.
- 2.3. Organize ELD classes to facilitate improved instruction.** Often English learners are grouped into English language development (ELD) classes without reference to their specific language, literacy, and academic content needs, which results in ineffective instruction. Educators need to pay close attention to matching instruction to need.
- 2.4. Make strategic, long-term professional development for all personnel a component of any English learner program.** Professional development must be built upon research of the elements of successful professional change: demonstration, practice, coaching and follow-up (Joyce & Showers, 2002; Killion, 2001; Echevarria et al. 2000; Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Gándara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2000; 2005). This does not have to be funded completely with new money. There are currently a number of initiatives—both state and federal—for providing

¹² EDUSAT provides secondary courses via satellite for remote communities that could not support a comprehensive faculty with all courses required for graduation. Selected schools in the U.S. have received equipment and permission from the Mexican government to use these resources for educating Mexican nationals in the U.S. (SEP, Boletín de Julio 2004, www.sep.gob.mx).

professional development to new teachers, experienced teachers, and principals. Some of this money should be explicitly earmarked for providing training that will change and improve instruction for California's more than 300,000 English learners in high schools.

- 2.5. Hire educators with the best skills to teach English learners.** In addition to providing professional development for both new and experienced teachers, those with appropriate credentials and authorizations to teach English learners must be hired, as prescribed by law, whenever possible. This means providing incentives (not necessarily monetary) for authorized teachers to work with English learners, for new teachers to pursue these authorizations, and for experienced teachers to add them to their existing credentials.
- 2.6. Establish a school-wide focus on languages (both the primary language and English)** as important tools for learning. The vocabulary, grammar, and use of language in each content area must be taught in a comprehensive, explicit, and disciplined way (Meltzer & Hamaan, 2005). This means an expanded knowledge of language development and literacy instruction, as well as greater teaching responsibility for teachers of all subjects.
- 2.7. Place students in classes where they have a good chance of success.** There are many students who lack the academic language skills for high school work in English. While they are gaining those skills, it is counterproductive to place them in classes where they do not understand the language of instruction and can be predicted to do poorly. My experience in dozens of high schools over the last twenty years has made it clear to me that English learners are often placed in situations where they cannot understand what is being taught because they lack sufficient English, and this brands them (to themselves and others) as failures. Schools often do this in the name of providing students "equal access" to the curriculum. However, it has long been established by the courts (*Lau v. Nichols*), education researchers (Snow, 1990), and cognitive scientists (Bialystok, 1999), that students who do not understand the language of instruction do not have equal access.

Part of the problem lies in teachers' inability to employ instructional methods that include scaffolding, differentiated materials, or supportive use of the students' primary language (Echevarria et al., 2000; Freeman & Freeman, 2002; Gibbons, 2002; Walqui, 2000). But often students are placed prematurely in content instruction for which they have no background and, for the time being, absolutely no hope of comprehending—even when taught by excellent teachers proficient in the use of the best strategies (Walqui, 2000). This is a complex problem with many pitfalls. We must avoid placing students in situations in which they are bound to fail, but we must just as assiduously refrain from the pernicious tracking of students into classes that keep them from challenging, high-status knowledge.

The measures noted above can help alleviate these problems by: 1) assessing what students already know in order to assign them to content classes appropriate for their background knowledge and skills, 2) providing primary language instruction when necessary to facilitate comprehension, 3) preparing teachers in all content areas and all levels (including AP teachers) with strategies to work with English learners effectively, 4) discovering and taking advantage of alternate means of course delivery such as distance learning, and 5) making sure that English learners and their English fluent peers have opportunities to interact on an equal footing on a regular basis.

- 2.8. Create cohorts of students and provide them with comprehensive support systems with**

counseling, tutoring, childcare, financial aid, and relationships with staff and peers. Programs with these elements, such as AVID, Puente, Mesa, and EOPs,¹³ have been shown to make a significant difference in student retention and achievement (Gándara & Bial, 1999).

MYTH #3: The current approach to the calendar and clock are sacred

What's the rush? The facts of failure should caution us to be more thoughtful and patient. English learners need time to learn English, master grade level content, reconcile differences between national schooling systems, and for many, manage a complex life with school, work, and family responsibilities (Olsen, 1997; Olsen & Jaramillo, 1999). Some students need additional time to prepare for citizenship, for productive work, and for a life of continued learning. The time is well worth the delay and has proven successful in some high school programs serving significant numbers of immigrant students (Olsen et al., 1999; Olsen & Jaramillo, 2000; Minicucci, 2000). Today's students will live longer, work a greater number of years, and face more complex challenges in society than those of past generations. Students differ in their needs and maturity levels. High school may be the proper institution for many, but not all, to continue their schooling. The extra time we allow students to spend mastering the skills they will need later is likely to enhance their lifetime earnings, personal satisfaction, and benefit to society. Many will go on to four-year colleges, adult schools, community colleges, and universities.

The importance of additional time is well supported in the literature. Gándara (2000) makes a compelling argument that time is the most precious resource and the greatest lever we can apply to improving schools. Moreover, most of the major reports on educational reform urge greater flexibility with time (CDE 1992: 42; & 43-45; CDE 2002: Ch 7; NASSP 2004). As commentator Frank Smith (2001) reminds us, *time to learn* must not be finite if we really intend *all* students to learn. Following are some suggestions for changing the current approach to time in high school that would benefit English language learners.

3.1. For those who need and want it, expand high school to five years or more. Learning English and academics takes time. Tutoring and after-school lessons help, but are insufficient for English learners who enter high school without the language and academic base necessary

¹³ Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID) is a high school program designed to ensure that all students, and most especially the least served students, have the opportunity to succeed on a college path (See: Gándara & Bial, 1999). The Puente Project is an academic preparation program whose mission is to increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students who attend and complete college, and return to the community as mentors and leaders of future generations. Math, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) is a nationwide college and high school program designed to increase the achievement of underrepresented students in these fields. Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) is a state-funded counseling and special services program designed to assist low income at risk students by providing services to promote their success in California's two and four year colleges.

for high school work. Many students have jobs to help support their families. If we adjust our system of credit accrual and course work beyond four years and allow for a combination of part-time and full-time study, we increase the opportunity for English learners to complete requirements. Expanding the four-year program may mean doing away with freshman, sophomore, junior and senior class designations for English learners—classifications that define how we currently view high school students. As an alternative, we can minimize the focus on time by organizing students into small learning communities, content area interest groups, or groups that share an affinity for a certain learning-modality.

Being out of step with one's age cohort can be a major contributor to dropping out of school. Designing proactive programs to allow students greater time to complete their studies could replace the stigma and attrition of failure with success. There should be multiple opportunities and encouragement for acceleration, but no label of failure for a student who sets a five-year goal and works diligently to meet it. With appropriate initial diagnostic assessment, and individual counseling and monitoring, such extended programs, including opportunities for internships and career and community engagement, may be exactly what is needed both for newer immigrants and for many long-term English learners whose earlier school experience was colored by frustration and failure.

There are several examples of such expanded programs. Beginning with spring counseling sessions for eighth graders, the staff of Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento endeavors to develop an individualized plan of action for each student. This plan allows students to extend high school to five years, or be accelerated as appropriate. In response to examination of the needs of English learners, the Newport-Mesa USD in Orange County has developed a template for an EL High School Course of Study that includes a five-year option and acceleration whenever advisable. The program couples this with periodic updates of intervention plans for all English learners, and ensures that they receive the support they need.

- 3.2. Expand the school day and be more responsive to the personal and economic realities of students' lives.** A campus could be scheduled for classes and independent study for hours well beyond those currently available. Extended hours for academic classes would better meet work, internship and apprentice schedules. Some teachers might prefer to work an afternoon or evening schedule. Others might want to extend their workload for increased pay. Expanded hours would allow alternatives to traditional classes and would be particularly responsive to the needs of English learners. An example of such flexibility can be found in the Sweetwater High School District where students can take evening classes to earn credit in ELD and other content areas in increments as short as twenty hours at a time (60 hours equals one unit of credit). Although such changes require teacher adjustments, some teachers favor a shift of calendar or workday, and welcome the opportunity to teach an online or evening course.
- 3.3. Modify the calendar to match needs of the local community.** In some communities it may be possible for school schedules to be aligned with migrant cycles. For example, one school calendar (9 weeks on, and 4 weeks off) could run from October to mid-December, from mid-January to mid-March, from mid-April to mid-June, and mid-July to early September. Intersession could be staffed to provide extended learning time for some students, not as remedial classes, but as a planned part of their program. Some schools have successfully implemented such approaches (Gándara & Fish, 1993).

3.4. We should encourage any student who is making progress to remain in school. I have already discussed the advantages of a five-year program. While there is a widespread belief that youths older than 18 years must leave high school, in fact there is no statutory basis for removing a student (up to age 22) from high school, as long as s/he is making progress toward graduation.¹⁴ Walqui (2000) describes a program in Iowa with flexible time arrangements where students making progress can continue until they are 21. We should certainly develop formal connections with adult education programs, community colleges and other colleges and universities, so that older learners can finish high school requirements, and—as appropriate—move into postsecondary programs. While students currently have the option of taking the GED examination route to high school equivalency, there is little compelling evidence that the GED is equivalent in function to a high school diploma (Greene & Forster, 2003; Greene, 2002; Wilensky, 2003).

3.5. In order to establish time flexibility for completion of high school, California policy should:

- Remove barriers to modifications in timelines for high school through a change of guidelines and funding for the administration of and sanctions associated with CAHSEE, and any other dis-incentives to keeping students in high school more than four years.¹⁵
- Publicize and expand the alternative routes to validate English learners' competence in non-English languages as meeting second language ("foreign" language) high school graduation and "a-g" (UC & CSU) college entrance requirements.
- Recognize ELD courses for "foreign language" or second language credit, and Spanish language arts courses as meeting the language and literature requirements, as long as these rigorously match the content standards for those content areas.

MYTH #4: High school must take place in a building called "High School".

High school may be the most appropriate place for the majority of adolescents to receive their education, in part because students, especially newcomers, need a place where they feel comfortable and a school community with peers with whom they can communicate. Yet different students have different needs. Many immigrants in secondary schools are already "over-age" for their grade level for any number of reasons, including interrupted schooling and the need for time to learn English before being able to access other subjects. There are ways to provide a learning community beyond the traditional high school environment: all learning does not have to take place in the school building

¹⁴ Mandatory attendance stops at age 18, but if you have not graduated by 18, you are not automatically dismissed (Ed. Code Sec. 48200). Under special education law, a student who was eligible up to age 19 can continue to receive services until age 22, if he or she does not graduate. (Sec. 56026(c)(4).) SOURCE: Personal communication, Deputy General Counsel, CDE, 11/18/2003.

¹⁵ California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell recently issued a letter detailing his decision to keep the CAHSEE diploma sanction requirement in place for the class of 2006, and beyond. There is much controversy surrounding this sanction, especially for those English learners, students with disabilities, and others who have not had adequate opportunities to learn or to demonstrate their high school skills via valid and reliable assessments. Nevertheless, the O'Connell letter states: *I am committed to breaking down any possible barriers in order to guarantee that every child who wants to continue his or her education will find a place to do so in California's educational system.* The letter

itself. The Met schools¹⁶ have found ways to break out of the schoolhouse, and extend learning environments into businesses and public agencies. In the Sacramento area Met school, all student learning revolves around internships: one student works in an architect's office, another at the zoo. Another way to be responsive to student needs is to look to the community colleges. Following are some of the actions that could free schooling from the limits of traditional school buildings:

- 4.1. Design course delivery that is flexible** around the needs of a community—a system that accommodates part time enrollment for students needing to work and provides them the opportunity to earn credits as they can, including one at a time if need be. This could include evening classes, classes in the community, televised classes, online coursework, etc.
- 4.2. Explore how English learners might take advantage of the California Community College (CCC) System** while they are still in high school. Currently the CCCs provide open access that is absolutely essential for the immigrant population due to the inability to complete high school requirements within the four-year time frame. CCCs are especially important for providing vocational pathways. They model a combination of vocational and academic goals—demonstrating that one does not have to choose between vocational or academic preparation. In order to explore how CCCs might serve English learners better, we need to develop stronger data system coordination, better connections between the K-12 and the CCC systems, and must address the under-funding of CCCs. They are funded at less than half of any other level of public education, yet 75 percent of all students of color and immigrants in higher education start in community colleges (Woodlief et al., 2003). (See also Myth 5.2, below).
- 4.3. Allow and even encourage students to challenge entry into a course** that they may have completed in their home country, even if they have not met language or academic prerequisites. If students have the knowledge, then let them demonstrate that knowledge through a valid test or performance measures.

Myth 5: Secondary education has only one worthwhile goal and a single “best” path to completion.

As stated earlier, this paper supports the goal of an equal opportunity for all students to pursue a college preparation path if they desire, as well as broadening the kinds of opportunities California schools offer students and an expansion of the definitions of school success. A few facts about the labor market in our state¹⁷ should help to put this in perspective. In the year 2000, only 21.6 percent of

acknowledges that current law permits students to maintain continuous enrollment, and continue their high school studies to age 22, per local governing board policies (O'Connell, 2006).

¹⁶ The MET high school in Sacramento is one of a national network of over two dozen schools coordinated by Big Picture Schools in Rhode Island. It is modeled after the successful MET high school started in Providence in 1996. The Big Picture Schools feature common distinguishing characteristics, including: a highly individualized program for each student, learning in the real world through internships, authentic assessments, small school organization and advisory groups, emphasis on a culture of respect and equality, parent and family engagement, school and college partnerships, and professional development. Further detail can be found at: <http://www.bigpicture.org/index.htm>

¹⁷ The overall national labor market demand for college and non-college education is quite similar (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005; Hecker, 2001),

all jobs in California required a bachelor's or more advanced college degree. This is projected to rise to 23.2 percent in 2010.¹⁸ A recent Public Policy Institute of California study projects a much larger proportion of jobs (33.2 percent) to require a college degree in 2010, rising to 38.8 percent in 2020 (Neumark, 2005, Table 8). These latter projections exclude all farm workers, and are by far the most expansive yet reported.¹⁹ Even the PPIC projections anticipate that non-farm employment in 2020 will still be comprised of over 61 percent of people who need not have a college degree.

No society has ever needed or produced a work force where all young people get a college degree, and there is no plausible scenario for this in the California of U.S. economy. Yet public policy-makers repeatedly enunciate the goal of “college for all.” This leaves at least three-fifths (in reality, it is closer to three-quarters) of all students labeled as “failures” when they either try and fail to achieve the goal, or choose rewarding careers that do not require a college education. Sadly, public high schools are evaluated with the same criteria.

If California is serious about empowering students with the knowledge and skills for productive roles as citizens, workers, and lifelong learners, education policymakers must re-examine the curriculum in light of these purposes and provide more flexibility than the current standards and organizational approach allows. At the same time, educators must expect excellence from all students, which means providing multiple pathways to success for students who do not choose college, as well as for those who seek higher degrees.

Any discussion of options other than college for high school students evokes concern regarding social reproduction. This is the idea that low-track courses promote rote learning and attitudes associated with subordinate positions, rather than critical thinking and decision-making appropriate for leaders, managers, and owners (Gintis & Bowles, 1977). Low-track classes generally exclude students from networks that promote social capital—the contacts, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that promote their moving into leadership and ownership circles (Gibbons, et al., 2004; Oakes, 1985; 1997). Nonetheless, current approaches are failing to provide opportunities for advanced learning, or even high school graduation, for far too many English learners (Greene & Winters, 2005). A carefully planned program that is sensitive to issues of social reproduction could provide students practical preparation for the work force, along with skills and attitudes that would facilitate advancement within their chosen field, or further education in the future. High school must provide an equal opportunity for

¹⁸ California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information Division. Unpublished projections, August 2004.

¹⁹ California farms of all kinds were estimated to employ approximately 1.1 million individuals, or about 8 percent of all people employed in 2001. Due to the seasonal nature of farm work, the average annual employment on farms is estimated

all students to pursue a college preparation path if they desire; however, broadening the kinds of opportunities we offer *all* students (Goodlad, 2004) and expanding the definitions of success could lead to better outcomes for many English learners. Following are some steps that lead in this direction:

- 5.1 Make the curriculum and performance standards for success part of an individual plan from the outset.** A school's standards should be referenced for each student so that students, parents, and teachers understand each individual's goals and time line for reaching them. More than a decade ago, high school reformers recommended²⁰ individual learning plan for every student. Today, it is essential that such plans be developed through interviews with students and their families, by analysis of each student's cumulative file, and by reviewing portfolios of past schoolwork and activities outside school. Moreover, English learners should be placed into such individual programs from the outset of secondary education (middle school or high school). And, if they require additional time to master English and the curriculum standards to meet their goals, then this can be specified early on (See Myths 1.1 and 3.1).
- 5.2 Provide a real opportunity for all students to choose a college path.** We must reduce the barriers to college attendance for English learners and other under-represented groups. This requires careful attention to the individual needs and goals of each student and the development of a plan for probable success for reaching those goals, incorporating all of the recommendations (in this paper or in this chapter). Careful assessment and diagnosis must be done as early as middle school, and the plan revised annually. For many English learners, additional time will be required to satisfy college entrance standards. Any student who is willing to put in additional time to do the necessary disciplined work should be commended for accomplishment and perseverance.

However, if a student does not choose the college option, the school should provide a sequence of learning experiences and course work that leads to competence in all major fields, so that students are prepared for productive roles as citizens, workers, and lifelong learners.

In order to increase college opportunity, we must place greater attention on making smooth transitions from high school to community college to university, and to careers. Although the community college system provides a valuable service for over 1.6 million students in 110 separate colleges,²¹ relatively few students completed a degree or certificate program in 2003-04, and even fewer transferred to a CSU or UC campus.²² Certainly, these completion and transfer rates could be improved. Linkages between community colleges and high schools serve to accelerate programs for students who are ready for more advanced work, or who are unable to get access to selected courses at the high school campus. In addition, some high school students could benefit from the career-oriented and certificate programs offered on community college campuses (See also Myth 4.2.).

to be about 400,000. About three individuals are employed for each year-round equivalent job in California agriculture. (Kahn, Martin, & Hardiman, 2003).

²⁰ For example, see California Department of Education (1992).

²¹ Figures are for Spring, 2004 (See: <http://www.cccco.edu/reports/reports.htm>).

²² The statewide award count for (2004?) totaled 75,630 Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degrees, or less than 5 percent of students enrolled in the system. Transfers to any CSU campus from all CCC campuses in 2002-03 totaled 50,746, and to any UC campus only 12,780.

- 5.3 Promote courses of study that are routes to high paying, high status jobs that do not require attendance at a four-year college.** Many employers are anxious to establish linkages with high schools to ensure that they have the skilled workers needed for current and future jobs. For example, some provide for the development of a standards-based curriculum that links employers and schools, and that provide high school students with direct paths to (further?) education and employment.²³ State support and direction for these (options) should encourage high school administrators, counselors and teachers to provide information about non-college careers and make these options available for students.
- 5.4. Recognize that reform does not affect all students equally, and that small school reform may not be the best option for English learners.** “Small” has been a reform theme for decades (Sizer, 1992). Now, with major investments from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, system-wide efforts and billions of dollars²⁴ are going into dividing large high schools into smaller learning communities and into setting up small high schools. There is logic behind the movement, since smaller communities have the opportunity for providing more personal attention. Teachers and administrators also report that more adults can support and monitor the learning of each student, and there are studies that seem to support claims that smaller schools lead to better attendance, more persistence in school, and higher overall achievement (Vander Ark, 2002).²⁵ On the other hand, some researchers contend that data from major state and national accountability systems indicate that there is virtually no relationship between school size and measures of student achievement (Rogosa, 2003; Carlson 2004). There has been little attention to how this movement might affect English learners and their programs. For example, given the current dearth of educators authorized to teach English learners, as well as specific subjects like math and science, more small school sites means qualified teachers are spread even thinner.
- 5.5. High schools should strive to create the conditions sought by promoters of small schools and small learning communities.** In general, small learning communities share a common focus, high expectations, personalization, a climate of respect and responsibility, time for educational collaboration, performance-based accountability, and the use of technology as an instructional tool.²⁶ Many of these characteristics can be found in larger schools as well. Small schools without these characteristics, and without the major redesign steps in the recommendations above, will not be successful. Also, we need to be wary of the diseconomies of ‘small.’ Larger high schools have advantages of resources and potential for students to move from one type of instructional setting to another, as appropriate. Since this fluidity is a core feature of the redesigned high school, it should not be constrained by a small school’s inability to provide for a variety of classes with attention to various instructional needs, languages and modalities of learning.

²³ See for example the California Coalition for Construction in the Classroom (CCCC) (<http://www.constructcareers.org/>), CDE’s Agricultural Education Staff at <http://www.calaged.org/cde/index.htm>, Future Farmers of America at <http://www.ffa.org/> and business (Business Education Resource Consortium, at <http://www.bused.org/>).

²⁴ In its April 2003 Education Policy Paper, the Gates Foundation indicated that they had, “...committed \$2 billion to increase the number of low-income and minority students who graduate from high school and attend college.”

²⁵ See the reference list on school size research at:

http://www.gatesfoundation.org/nr/downloads/ed/researchevaluation/smallschools_bibliography.pdf

²⁶ See details at: <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Education/TransformingHighSchools/>

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

California's current approach to high school for English learners is failing, in part, due to misleading myths that severely limit the chances of success for English learners. English learners have many assets, but often teachers and administrators treat them as if they walk into school with nothing except needs. While they certainly must develop proficiency in English, they actually need much, much more than this. California high schools, and those who work and study in them, are stuck with an intransigent calendar and clock, and the limitation that secondary education must always take place in a building called "High School." This paper discussed how these restricting notions are obsolete, provided examples of programs that have broken out of these constraints, and proposed that there must be more than just one path to, and definition of, high school success.

In order to address the substantial failure of our current approach, business and public school leaders, legislators, and others must advocate for major redesign of secondary education. To facilitate these far-reaching changes we recommend that:

The Governor and Legislature

1. Support the creation and funding of a pilot program to establish at least six exemplary high school programs for English learners, stipulating that at least three of these demonstration sites be developed at large, comprehensive high schools, and three at smaller campuses. The pilot sites should be located in diverse parts of the state, and serve speakers of a wide variety of languages.
2. Support additional funding to ensure that all California students who need and wish to continue their high school educations beyond four years are welcome in our schools. This will require support for expanded enrollments in high schools as well as adult education programs.
3. Modify timelines for the diploma sanctions of the CAHSEE for high school students who maintain continuous enrollment and who make substantial progress toward graduation on individual learning plans that extend beyond a traditional four-year time frame.
4. Fund modifications to CAHSEE to ensure that any examination used as a diploma sanction is valid and reliable for English learners.
5. Expand funding for schools to offer independent study and other coursework to students who complete their senior year of high school, allowing these students to re-enroll the subsequent year in order to pass the CAHSEE and to meet graduation requirements.
6. Fund a professional development institute to train teachers, counselors and administrators on the specific needs of adolescent English learners.

The State Board Of Education

1. Submit a plan to the U.S. Department of Education, seeking to revise the timelines for compliance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) adequate yearly progress (AYP) for high school students who maintain continuous enrollment and who make substantial progress toward graduation on individual learning plans that extend beyond a four-year time frame.
2. Direct the California Department of Education staff to form a task force to develop specific recommendations for how CDE can identify and publicize exemplary practices for English learners in high school.
3. Widely publicize the current funding and flexibility in law for enrollments in summer, extended day, and other support programs.
4. Form a commission to study and widely publicize the full range of options beyond traditional four-year high school programs (including independent study, alternative and continuation programs, and five or more years to complete high school).

Education Organizations

1. Make the high schools that English learners need part of their agenda by including it in discussions, in study groups, in regional and state conferences, and in state-wide publications.
2. Advocate for expanded funding for high school and adult education programs, and for a pilot program to set up demonstration sites.
3. Form a work group with representatives from various organizations to develop proposals for a cohesive work-plan on high school for English learners.

Philanthropic Foundations

1. Fund a practical synthesis of research for English learners in secondary schools, and a dissemination effort to include video, PowerPoint, speakers' guides, brochures, and a network of presentations. Include a research agenda for pursuing answers to some key questions.
2. Fund an ongoing seminar series for researchers and practitioners, to meet at least every six months and showcase the best examples of effective structures and practices in the redesign of high schools for English learners.
3. Fund research on selected issues that are likely barriers to changing high schools, such as:
 - a) Cost-effective methods for using Internet courses and other distance-learning options for parts of high school programs, including language development and courses in various languages.
 - b) Costs and needed resources to support expanded high school course work in Spanish and other languages.
 - c) Impacts on teacher work rules and contracts, should the time and place of schooling change to better meet needs of English learners.

- d) Changing cost formulas to account for students enrolled in non-traditional courses (distance learning via video or the internet, internships, independent study, etc.).
- e) Costs and other resources needed for evening or night high school programs for students who need to work.

The Media

1. Publicize the extent to which high schools currently do not meet the needs of English learners, and some of the myths that surround the education of these students.
2. Identify and showcase schools taking steps to redesign programs for English learners and others.
3. Lend editorial support to the statewide investments (pilot program, professional development, etc.) needed to advance improvements in these programs.

The changes recommended here will require a significant investment to better meet the needs of English learners. All stakeholders will need to work together, and engage in refining the agenda for redesign, for organizing to overcome the anticipated opposition to change, and building the momentum that will create the high schools English learners need. To do any less is to ensure that tens of thousands of youngsters will continue to leave high school ill-equipped for further education, for finding and keeping rewarding work, and for full participation in American democracy. The current system provides neither optimal language development nor the academic skills needed for productive adult lives. California schools can and must do better.

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APPENDIX

1. **The California English Language Development Test (CELDT)** is a language test of a student's proficiency in three areas: listening/speaking (L/S), reading (R) and writing (W). The scores in each of these areas are weighed to derive an overall score: Listening/speaking =50%, reading=25%, and writing=25%
2. **The California Standards Tests (CST)** in English language arts, mathematics, science, and history/social science are comprised of items that were developed specifically to assess students' performance on California's content standards. The State Board of Education adopted the content standards specifying what all California children are expected to know and be able to do. The content standards are grade and course specific.
3. **The California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)** has two parts: English-language arts (ELA) and mathematics. The ELA part addresses state content standards through grade ten. In reading, this includes vocabulary, decoding, comprehension, and analysis of information and literary texts. In writing, this covers writing strategies, applications, and the conventions of English (e.g. grammar, spelling, and punctuation). The mathematics part of the CAHSEE addresses state standards in grades six and seven and Algebra I. The exam includes statistics, data analysis and probability, number sense, measurement and geometry, mathematical reasoning, and algebra. Students are also asked to demonstrate a strong foundation in computation and arithmetic, including working with decimals, fractions, and percents.