



## Supporting English Learners in West Contra Costa

2019 Policy Recommendations | Improving College Readiness (TK-6)

### OVERVIEW

English Learners (ELs) are a large, underserved group of students in West Contra Costa.

One in three students are identified as such, amounting to more than 9,000 students district-wide. In the 2017-2018 academic year, **only three percent** of ELs met or exceeded SBAC standards in English Language Arts (ELA) and **only four percent** met or exceeded SBAC standards in mathematics, compared with the district's overall 34 percent and 23 percent success rates in ELA and mathematics, respectively.

In the Roadmap 2022, Superintendent Duffy set an ambitious student achievement goal: 80% of ELs will be reclassified within five years of entering our district. Using fifth grade as a benchmark for our progress, **only 36 percent of ELs reclassified**. Between 11 and 55 percent of ELs received language support for five or more years and have yet to reclassify.

To honor the mandates put forth by California's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), we must do better to ensure our ELs receive the quality education they deserve.

**OUR COLLEGE READINESS CAMPAIGN** work started with the realization that over half of West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) graduates leave our schools with a diploma that does not permit them to apply to California's public universities, creating a significant barrier to opportunity. In thinking where to focus our efforts to improve college readiness, our district's data highlights that one in three kindergartners transitions to first grade on level. We ask ourselves, what must be true to ensure our youngest learners experience sustained growth in pursuit of success in college and career?

## HOW WERE THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS CREATED?

Our campaign asked **what it would take to dramatically advance learning and collapse the reclassification timeline for the more than 9,000 ELs in our district.** We spent hours in one-on-one interviews and working sessions with district and school administrators, teachers, students and their families to create a holistic and shared understanding of current EL programming and its shortcomings.

Our research and analysis employed human-centered design strategies to engage community members in thinking through what it would take to advance learning for ELs. The work happened in phases of **'looking'** to observe human experience, **'understanding'** to analyze challenges and opportunities, and **'envisioning'** to map future possibilities. Specific techniques were adapted from LUMA Institute, a hub for developing innovative solutions to human problems.

## RECOMMENDATIONS | FOUR NEXT STEPS FOR WCCUSD

#1

### ALIGN PROGRAMS

Not one of our early learning centers leverages the linguistic capital of our emergent bilingual students. The district must create and align the language programming across early learning and elementary sites to establish clear and consistent language and literacy objectives. Further, the district must align language pathways through middle and high school.

#2

### SUSTAIN EFFORTS

Administrators are impermanent; school board governance ensures turnover. Students and teachers need focus sustained through these transitions. The district must take specific steps to ensure continuity.

#3

### DEVELOP RESOURCES

Human and material resources work in concert to create an effective, integrated system. Currently, there is a mismatch between the district's stated goals and their investments in achieving them. We ask that the district dedicate resources to ELs to better support our teachers and their classrooms.

#4

### ENGAGE PARENTS

When parents have agency, students do better. Our district must make systemic improvements to inform parents how to both choose a language program for their child and support their child through the chosen program.