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## No. 10, April 2022: Uplifting the Perspectives and Preferences of the Families of English Learners in Los Angeles Unified School District and Charter Schools: Findings from a Representative Poll

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# UPLIFTING THE PERSPECTIVES AND PREFERENCES OF THE FAMILIES OF ENGLISH LEARNERS IN LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT AND CHARTER SCHOOLS: FINDINGS FROM A REPRESENTATIVE POLL

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## INTRODUCTION

Los Angeles, one of the most diverse cities in the nation, is home to one of the largest linguistically diverse populations. More than 185 languages other than English are spoken by 59% of its population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 & 2015). This diversity in language is reflected in the families and children that attend public schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (Los Angeles Unified), where almost half of all students have at one point been designated as an English Learner (California Department of Education, 2020). This diversity presents Los Angeles educators and school leaders with both tremendous opportunities for building on students' linguistic and cultural assets and challenges to creating systems that respond to their linguistic, academic, and socio-emotional needs. Seeking to understand the needs, perspectives and preferences of all parents and

caretakers is essential for a strong family, educator and school relationship and for providing effective supports for students. Given Los Angeles Unified's sizable language-diverse student population, it is critical educators and school system leaders pay close attention to the unique voices of English Learner (EL) families.

This education and policy brief provides Los Angeles school system leaders with an effective resource to understand the unique perspectives and preferences of EL families as key partners in the educational success of their children. Drawing on data from a representative poll of Los Angeles Unified families conducted in the fall of 2021 with both district and charter families within the boundaries of the district, this brief reports on EL families' perspectives about their recent experiences with schooling. The poll

covers a broad range of topics, including families’ pandemic experiences in and outside of school, communication with their schools, their levels of engagement and representation in school-based decisions, and what families want from their schools moving forward. To contextualize the poll results of EL families, this brief also provides background on the EL student population in Los Angeles Unified, and policy and practice recommendations for the future of Los Angeles public schools grounded in the specific needs of EL students and their families.

This information is particularly timely, as it highlights family input soon after full return to in-person instruction and recovery in the 2021-22 school year, alongside a critical moment of leadership transition for the district, including the new Los Angeles Unified superintendent and changes to long-term elected board representatives. Superintendent Alberto Carvalho’s 100-day plan, as well as the following four-year strategic planning endeavor, present a clear opportunity to listen to the voices of EL families and create a long-term plan building on the work already done to implement the [Master Plan for English Learners and Standard English Learners](#), which addresses state policies including the [California English Learner Roadmap](#) (Hakuta & CDE, 2018).

This is a companion report to the poll highlighting all families’ perspectives regardless of the English Learner status of their children, which can be found at: [greatpublicschoolsnow.org/familyinsights2021/](http://greatpublicschoolsnow.org/familyinsights2021/).

## OVERVIEW OF ENGLISH LEARNERS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN LOS ANGELES UNIFIED

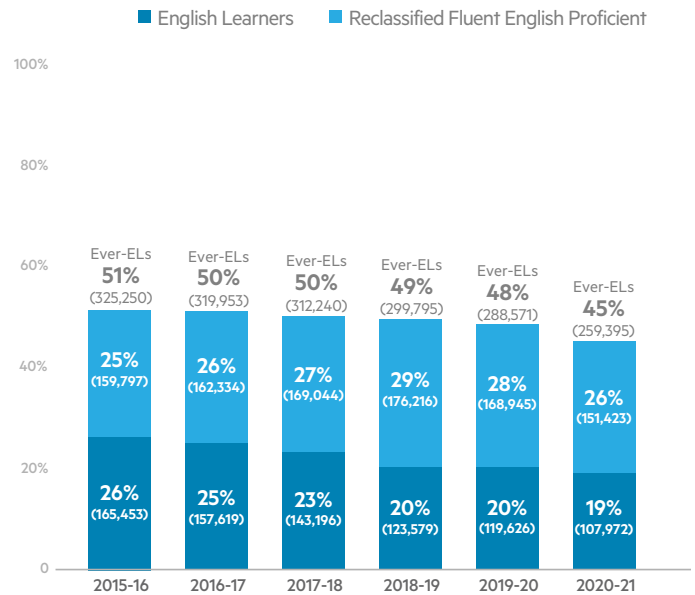
### English Learner Student Enrollment in District and Charter Schools

Los Angeles Unified district and charter schools serve a racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse student body that mirrors the diversity of the region more broadly. English Learners<sup>1</sup> account for almost one in five of the 575,000 students in district and charter schools. However, this number has declined over the last five years, from 158,000 students in 2016-17 to 108,000 in 2020-21 – reflecting a broader trend of declining enrollment in the region, where 2030 enrollment is expected to fall by 20% (Lafortune et al., 2021).

To appreciate the broader context of how district and charter schools are serving EL students across their full educational trajectory, it’s important to understand how many ELs are served and how many students were formerly designated as ELs. Indeed, these “ever-ELs”<sup>2</sup> make up a full 45% of the student body (with 42% being current ELs and 58% being reclassified students). English Learners constitute the vast majority of the ever-EL group until grade

4, where 58% of ever-ELs are current ELs (see Figure 1). This trend is consistent across all school types, regardless of charter status.

Figure 1. Current and Former English Learner Enrollment in Los Angeles Unified District and Charter Schools



Note: The percentages are of total K-12 enrollment. Ever-English Learners indicates students who are currently classified as English Learners and those who have already been reclassified as English fluent. The figure includes data for students in Los Angeles Unified and in directly-funded charter schools within Los Angeles Unified geographic boundaries.

Source: California Department of Education, Enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status, Long-Term English Learner Status, and At-Risk by Grade, 2015-16 to 2020-21.

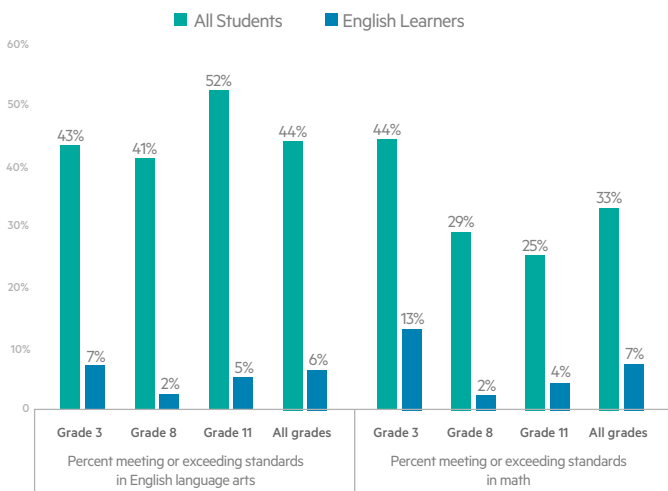
English Learners represent a diverse group of students. Almost 30,000 ELs in Los Angeles Unified district and charter schools, particularly at the secondary level, are long-term English Learners – meaning they have been enrolled in a U.S. school for six or more years without having been reclassified as fluent-English proficient (RFEP). Understanding the different EL typologies<sup>3</sup> is important because it helps education partners design learning opportunities that are responsive to the unique assets and challenges of each student – a key component of Principle 1 of the CA EL Roadmap.

### English Learner Academic and Linguistic Achievement

Performance gaps exist between the average achievement of ELs and other EL categories such as RFEPs and ever-ELs, primarily because ELs have yet to master English (Abedi & Gándara, 2006). As such, a comprehensive assessment system for ELs includes multiple ways of assessing students’ progress for designated purposes (CEEL, 2022; EL Roadmap, Principle 1, 2 and 3).

One summative measure is the statewide Smarter Balanced (SBAC) assessment. In 2018-19, the most recent year students were assessed before the pandemic, just six percent of Los Angeles Unified ELs met or exceeded English language arts (ELA) standards across all grades, and seven percent of ELs met or exceeded math standards (see Figure 2). Notable differences also exist across grades and subject areas. In math, for example, 13% of third grade EL students are meeting or exceeding standards, compared to just 2% of eighth graders. In English language arts, similarly, 2% of ELs are meeting or exceeding standards. However, outcomes for “ever-EL” students are 35% and 25% in ELA and math across grades, respectively – an important reminder that a) former ELs often perform better academically in the longer term, b) ELs by definition have often not yet met the academic standards required for reclassification, and c) assessing academic progress of ELs is difficult, particularly when demonstrating mastery on an assessment requires English proficiency. It should be noted that the SBAC data described here reflects Los Angeles Unified district schools and is not inclusive of directly funded charter schools, due to data limitations.

Figure 2. English Learner Academic Progress on State Assessments

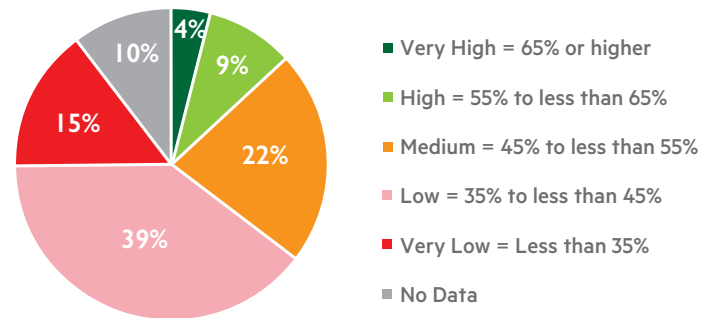


Note: The figure includes data for students in Los Angeles Unified only. Data for students in directly-funded charter schools in Los Angeles Unified are not included in the figure.  
 Source: California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) Research Files, 2019-20.

In addition to understanding ELs’ academic progress, it is also important to know how ELs are progressing linguistically. While a school or district’s reclassification rate is helpful for understanding when and how students meet the criteria<sup>4</sup> to exit out of their EL status, it is less helpful for evaluating how schools are doing. One way to monitor progress at a particular point in time is to analyze the [English Learner Progress Indicator \(ELPI\)](#), which is based on the summative [English Language Proficiency Assessments](#)

for California (ELPAC) administered to all ELs. Students are “making progress” if they increase at least one ELPI level or maintain the highest ELPAC level; results are aggregated to calculate school and district performance on this measure, from “very low” (less than 35%) to “very high” (65% or higher). A look at the distribution of status levels across Los Angeles Unified district and charter schools shows that over half of schools (537 schools) are at the “very low” or “low” status levels, while just 4% of schools (41 schools) are “very high” (see Figure 3). While the ELPI’s thresholds (status rate cut scores), particularly for the highest levels of performance, are arguably not ambitious enough, it is still a helpful measure for gaining insight into how schools are supporting their ELs to progress in their English language development.

Figure 3. Los Angeles Unified District and Charter School Performance on the English Learner Progress Indicator



Note: The figure includes data for students in district schools and in directly-funded charter schools within Los Angeles Unified’s geographic boundaries. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.  
 Source: English Learner Progress Indicator Data, 2018-19.

## English Learners and their Families in the Broader Landscape

English Learner families speak many different languages at home. While 42% of households in Los Angeles County speak English only, the majority of households speak a language other than English: 38% speak Spanish, 8.4% speak other Indo-European languages, 9.8% speak an Asian or Pacific Islander language, and 1.7% speak other languages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

Over 10 million Californians are immigrants, and over half of all foreign-born Californians are U.S. citizens (Johnson, Perez, & Mejia, 2021). The children of immigrants, many of whom are English Learners, are the state’s future workforce. Education leaders and the broader community have both an economic and moral imperative to ensure all students can access the opportunities they need to advance academically and linguistically in school in order to thrive and contribute their gifts to society. Given the sizable EL population and the diverse families served by district and



charters, conversations about how best to serve students must center the needs of ELs and their families, whose contributions and successes are essential for the region and state to thrive.

## EL FAMILY PERSPECTIVES AND PREFERENCES

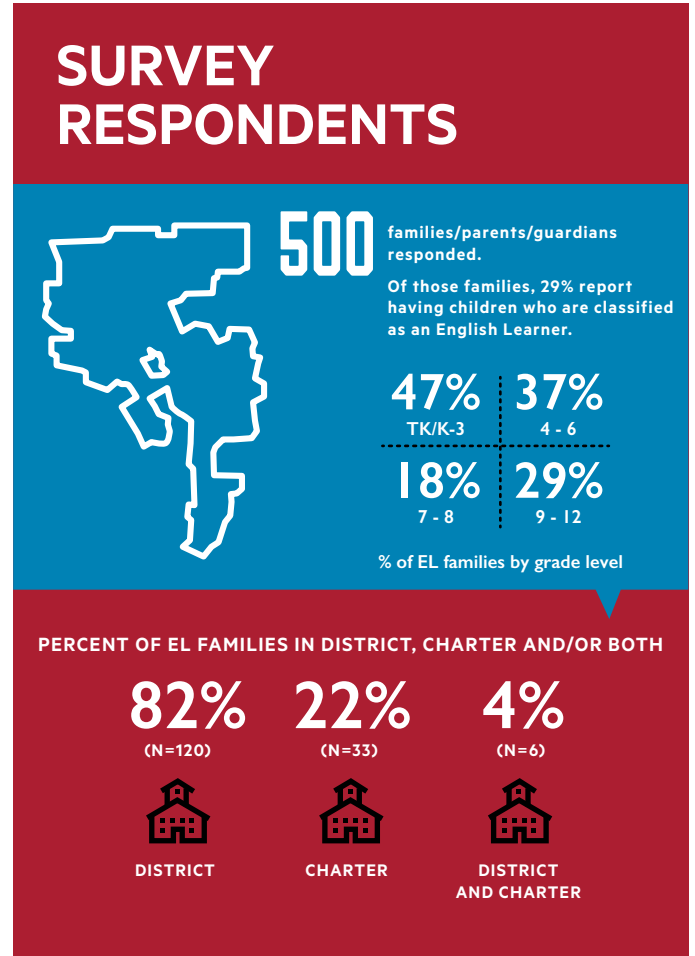
### Poll Sample and Methodology

The poll was designed in collaboration with [Great Public Schools Now](#), Loyola Marymount University’s Center for [Equity for English Learners](#) and [Families in Schools](#). It was conducted by the Gotham Research Group over the phone and online from September 27 through October 24, 2021, among a representative sample of 500 families (parents and caretakers) with school-aged children attending district public schools and charter public schools within the Los Angeles Unified boundaries. The “district schools” designation includes both district and dependent charter schools governed by the district, and the “charter schools” designation includes independent public charters that predominantly receive funding directly from the state.

The majority of surveys were conducted by phone, with half reached on cell phones and half on landlines. Phone surveys were conducted with live English and Spanish-speaking interviewers; 72% (n=360) were conducted in English and 28% (n=140) in Spanish. Almost a third of all respondents (29%, n=147) self identified as caring for a child classified as an English Learner at school, with the majority (82%, n=120) of those families attending Los Angeles Unified district schools, 22% (n=33) in public charter schools and 4% (n=6) with children in both district and charter schools<sup>5</sup> (see Figure 4). This brief is a companion report to the first report, [Family Insights: An Annual Poll of Los Angeles Families](#), published in December of 2021. Find a full description of the methodology and findings

for the entire poll sample at [greatpublicschoolsnow.org/familyinsights2021/](https://greatpublicschoolsnow.org/familyinsights2021/).

Figure 4. Representation of English Learner Families in the 2021 Los Angeles Family Insights Poll



## Primary Findings

Just two months after the full reopening of schools in Los Angeles Unified in the 2021-22 school year, EL families responded positively across a number of poll questions focused on communication with their schools, their levels of engagement and representation in school-based decisions, the support schools provided during the pandemic, and what families want from their schools moving forward. The majority of EL families report high engagement in their children's education, express positivity about their children's schools, and urge educators and school system leaders to innovate how they approach public education, rather than exclusively returning to pre-pandemic practices. The following findings and associated deep analysis examine the perspectives of EL families in Los Angeles. The primary findings are as follows:

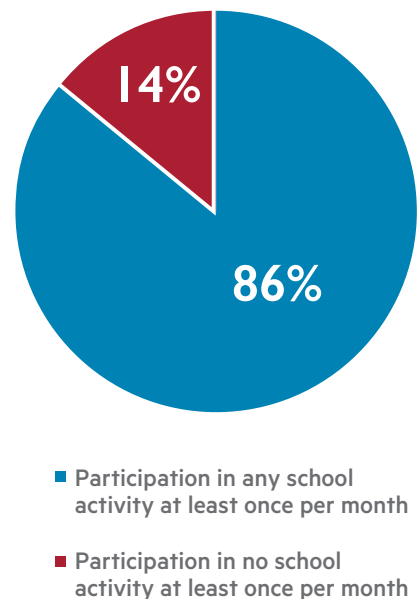
- 1 A majority of EL families are engaged and report they attend school activities.
- 2 EL families feel generally heard at their school sites, and they want even more personalized communication like home visits and personal calls from their school staff.
- 3 EL families want more information about their child's academic and English language development progress.
- 4 EL families want schools to rethink how they educate students, including more one-on-one academic support and wrap-around services, mirroring those offered in community schools.

### Finding 1: A majority of EL families are engaged and report showing up to school activities.

Parent/family engagement is a powerful tool for building trusting relationships between educators and families. When done well, it can lead to increased attendance and even stronger academic achievement than is true for students whose guardians are not involved in their

education and in school happenings (Mapp & Bergman, 2019; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Mapp, 2003). Focusing on the conditions that make it possible for families with different demands on their time to get involved is an essential part of achieving strong parental engagement (CA EL Roadmap, Principle 1). All families can face challenges in getting and staying involved in their child's education, but families of English Learners can face additional barriers to engaging with educators, including being unable to communicate effectively with school staff who do not speak their dominant language.

Figure 5. Percentage of English Learner Families Who Report Participating In School Activities



Given the challenges families can face in engaging with their school, the findings from the LA Family Insight Poll show educators and school system leaders are making significant efforts to connect with families, and families are showing up. A strong majority of EL families (86%) report participating in school-based activities at least

### What is family engagement?

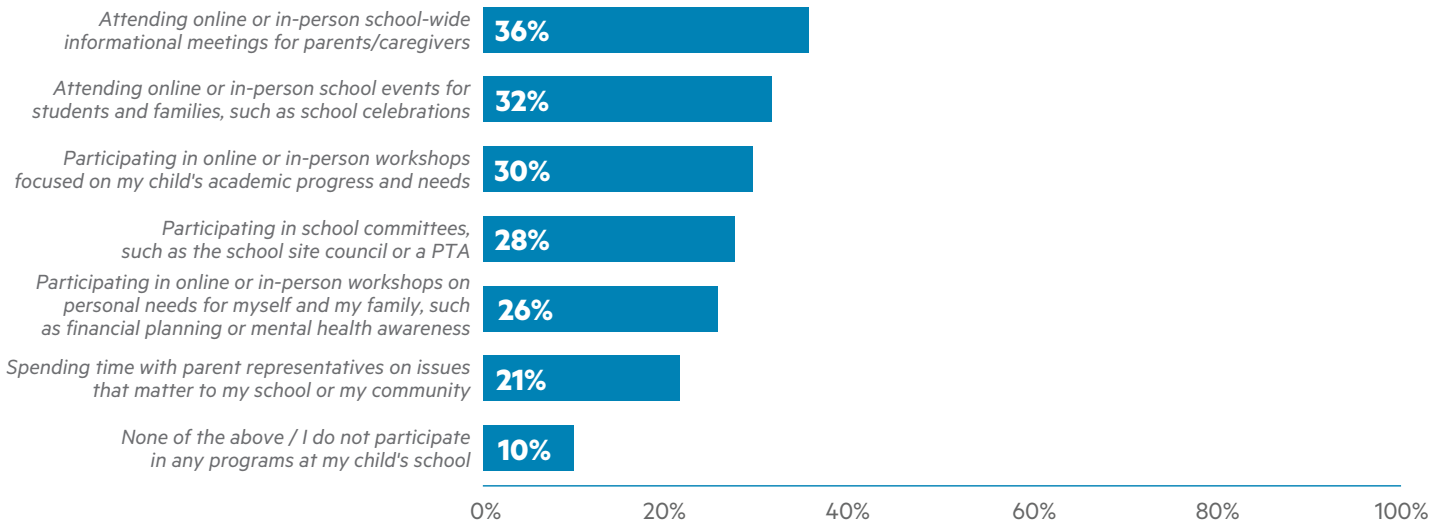
*The resource of formally gathering family input through a poll can only be used well if the learnings are grounded in what makes for strong parent engagement. Throughout the brief, family engagement is conceptualized based on Karen Mapp's dual capacity framework of family-school partnerships, which envisions families in a diversity of roles in schools and their children's education (co-creators, supporters, encouragers, monitors, advocates and models). The dual capacity framework also calls on educators to have the mindsets, be trained, and cultivate the relationships with families as co-creators of a learning journey for students (Mapp & Bergman, 2019). Family engagement goes beyond being involved in a child's academic career, though the role of parental involvement in knowing and supporting their child's academic progress is foundational to inspiring confidence and academic capacity in students (see Finding 3).*

once a month, such as online or in-person school-wide informational meetings for families/caregivers (36%), school events for students and families, such as school celebrations (32%), and workshops focused on academic progress and needs (30%) (see Figure 6). EL families also report being engaged in more than school-based events and activities intended for all school families, such as key leadership committees (see Figure 6). It is particularly promising to see that many EL families report being engaged in some of the governance and leadership opportunities provided by their schools, such as school committees like PTAs or spending time with parent representatives on issues that matter to their school and community (28% and 21% of EL families report engaging once per month, respectively). EL families, in fact, are more likely to report that they engage in school-site committees or councils (28%) than non-EL families (19%), and also report higher levels of engagement in online or in-person workshops on personal family needs, such as financial planning or mental health awareness (26% for EL families, 19% for non-EL families).

**Finding 2: EL families feel generally heard at their school sites, and they want even more personalized communication like home visits and personal calls from their school staff.**

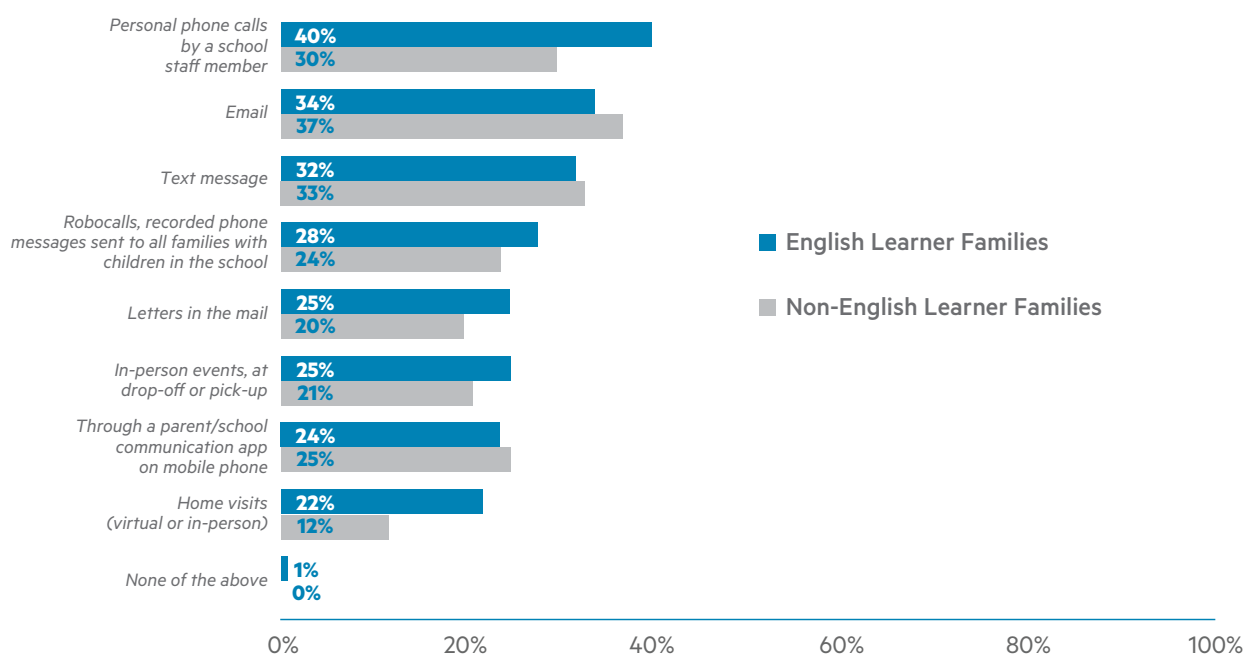
When asked how much they believe their perspective as a parent/guardian is represented in major decisions at their school site, 43% of EL families report feeling a “great deal” of influence at the school level, and an additional 39% feel their perspectives are “somewhat” represented. To contextualize this finding, we also asked a series of questions about how often school staff are in communication with families, whether this communication is adequate, what language(s) are used in communications, which mediums are used (e.g., phone, texts or email), and families’ preferences for communication and engagement moving forward. While schools are required by law to provide translated communication to families when 15% or more of the student population speaks another primary

Figure 6. Activities English Learner Families Report Participating In At Least Once Per Month



“43% of EL families report feeling a ‘great deal’ of influence at the school level, and an additional 39% feel their perspectives are “somewhat” represented.”

Figure 7. English Learner (EL) and Non-EL Families' Communication Preferences



language (California Education Code, 1976), over 80% of EL families report that they sometimes, often or always receive communication in the language spoken in their home. EL families are split on whether the amount of communication they receive is adequate, with 52% reporting they want the same level of communication moving forward, and 46% reporting they want more communication from their schools.

Given the barriers some language diverse families may face and the specialized English Learner services their students need, it is particularly important to understand the communication preferences of EL families to ensure a strong partnership between family and school staff on students' general academic progress and progress toward learning English. Overall, EL families expressed a preference for more personalized forms of communication from their school site compared to non-EL families (see Figure 7). Specifically, they report that the best mode of receiving information from schools is a personal phone call from a school staff member (40%), followed by other forms of communication such as email, text messages and robocalls. More EL families report wanting home visits from educators (22%) than their non-EL family counterparts (12%), and also report wanting in-person events at drop-off or pickup (25%) more than their non-EL counterparts (21%).

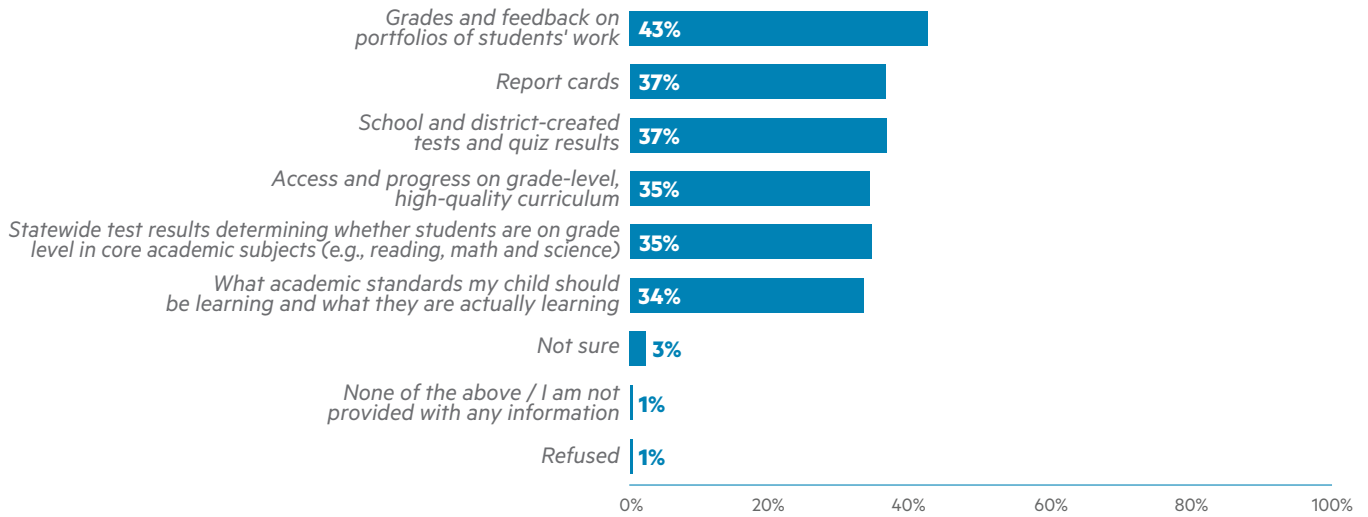
### Finding 3: EL families want more information about their child's academic and English language development progress.

As a foundation to family engagement, parental involvement is consistently found to be positively associated with students' academic success (Jeynes, 2003; Topor, et al., 2011; Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems, & Holbein, 2005; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). One of the ways parental involvement is associated with higher student achievement, beyond some mechanisms like improved social capital and involvement in a child's social life, is that parental involvement appears to increase a student's confidence in their own academic ability (Topor, et al., 2011). Therefore, as educators engage with parents around their child's academic progress, they can learn from and partner with families to use this information to better understand and encourage their students' abilities both in and out of schools (CA EL Roadmap, Principle 1 and 2).

The good news is that almost all EL families (99%) report that their school provides information about their child's general academic progress. The most common way EL families report receiving that information is through report cards and feedback on students' work (43%). As shown in Figure 8, 37% of EL families report they receive information through report cards and school and district-created assessments, with statewide test results (35%) and information about academic standards their child should be learning and what they are actually learning (34%) being the next most common response.



Figure 8. How Are English Learner Families Informed About Their Child’s Academic Progress?



Given the unique assessments EL students take in order to demonstrate progress towards learning English (and in some cases, assessments of academic progress in their primary language), we asked EL families to report whether they receive information about their child’s progress toward learning English and the ways they receive that information. EL families report that the most common type of information about progress in developing English language proficiency that their school provides are report card grades (50%), which tend not to include explicit information about progress toward learning English (see Figure 9). Directly following report cards, EL families say English proficiency is reported to them via the annual English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) test (44%) and other sources such as in classes their child takes (35%) or during the reclassification process, when their child/children changed or left English Learner status (33%). Based on responses about ELPAC test

reporting, over half of families that are legally entitled and need to receive that information, in fact, report not receiving it.

EL families also shared what type of academic progress information they want to receive moving forward (see Figure 10). Generally, EL families say they want academic information that is somewhat similar to what they already receive in schools, but there are some key differences that are worth uplifting to truly match EL’s families preferences and provide the information they need to encourage and support their child towards English proficiency. Forty percent of EL families report wanting information about their child’s progress toward mastering academic standards, but fewer families (34%) report actually receiving that information. Fewer EL families want information through report cards (31%), and even fewer families want to receive results from school and district-created quizzes (29%) as compared to the percent of families currently receiving

Figure 9. How EL Families Receive Information About Their Child’s Progress Toward English Proficiency

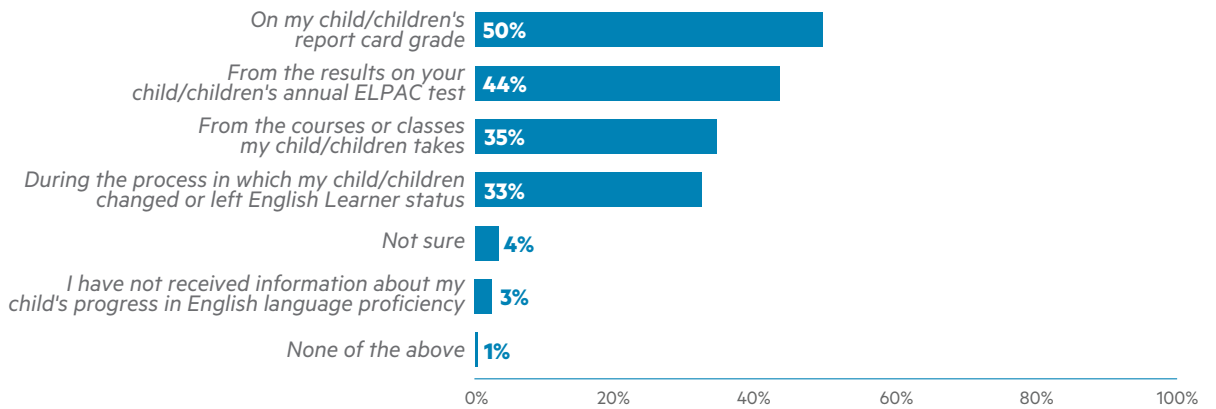
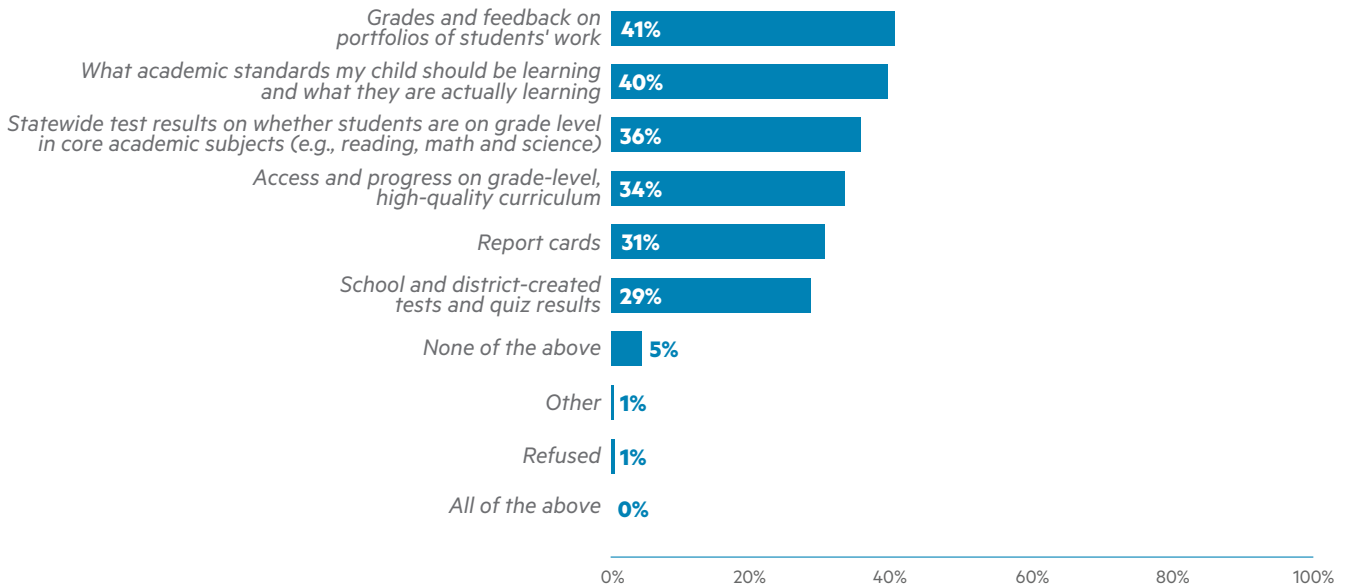


Figure 10. Types of Information EL Families Want Moving Forward

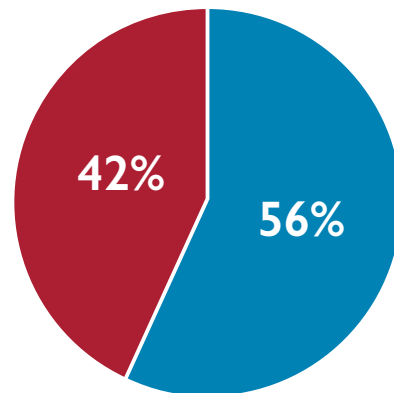


information in those ways (37%). EL families' preferences should be taken into account, especially because their highest priorities (receiving formative feedback on portfolios of students' work, on mastering academic standards, and on statewide tests) will provide them with a clearer picture of their students' progress than the more commonly used methods, such as report cards.

We also asked families how frequently they receive information about eligibility requirements for a four-year university, a crucial point of information given that EL students have less access to college preparatory courses and lower rates of eligibility for four-year universities in California and in Los Angeles Unified<sup>6</sup> (Murillo & Lavadenz, 2020). Many EL families (72%) reported that their school provides information on the courses and grades their child needs to take and pass to be eligible for a four-year university relatively often. About half (52%) of families reported that their school provides information at least once a week, with 14% of families reporting more than once a week and 38% reporting once a week. One of the most troubling findings from the poll is that some EL families (6%) say they only receive this information once per year, and 7% say they never receive this type of information. In a district the size of Los Angeles Unified, 7% of all English Learners could represent thousands of families that are not receiving crucial information about their child's access to higher education in California.

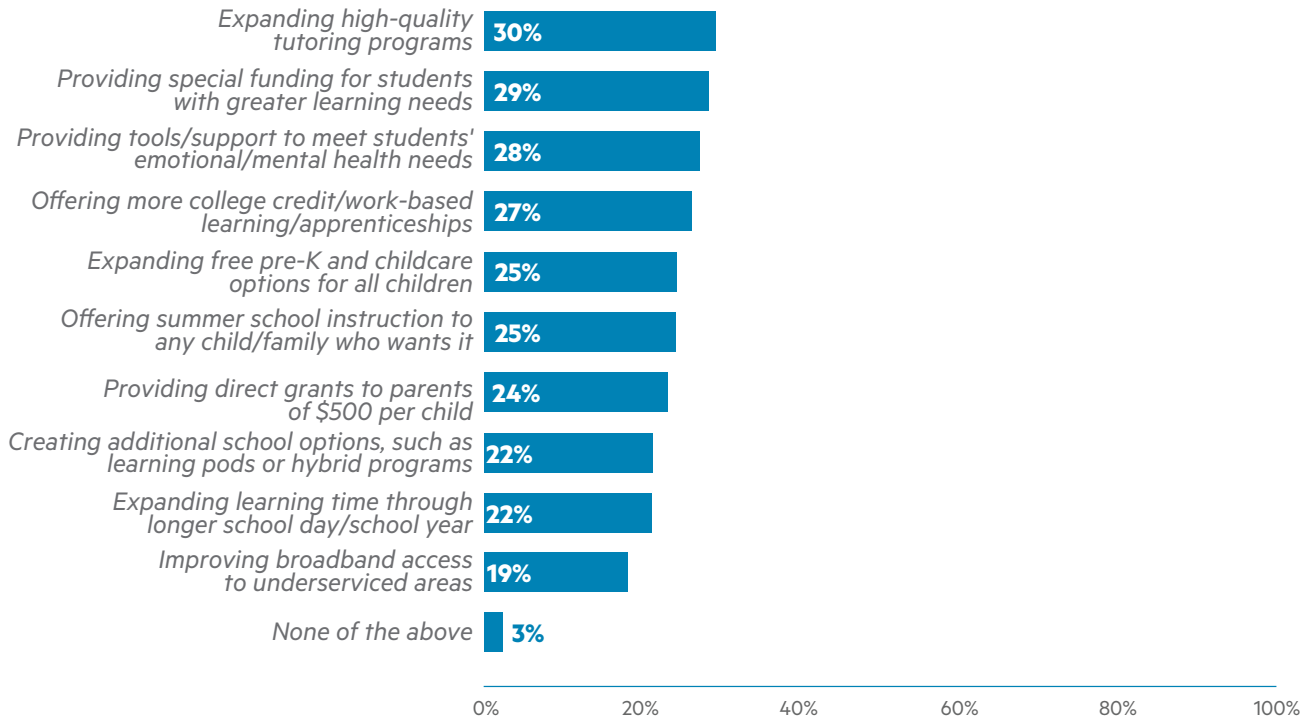
**Finding 4: EL families want schools to rethink how they educate students, including more one-on-one academic support and wrap-around services mirroring those often offered in community schools.**

Figure 11. Percent of English Learner Families Reporting They Prefer Restoring or Rethinking Public Education Post COVID-19



- Rethinking how we educate students and coming up with new ways to teach children moving forward as a result of the COVID-19 crisis
- Trying to return to how we educate students and what school looked like before the COVID-19 crisis

Figure 12. What EL Families Want Schools, Districts and the State to Prioritize to Improve Public Education



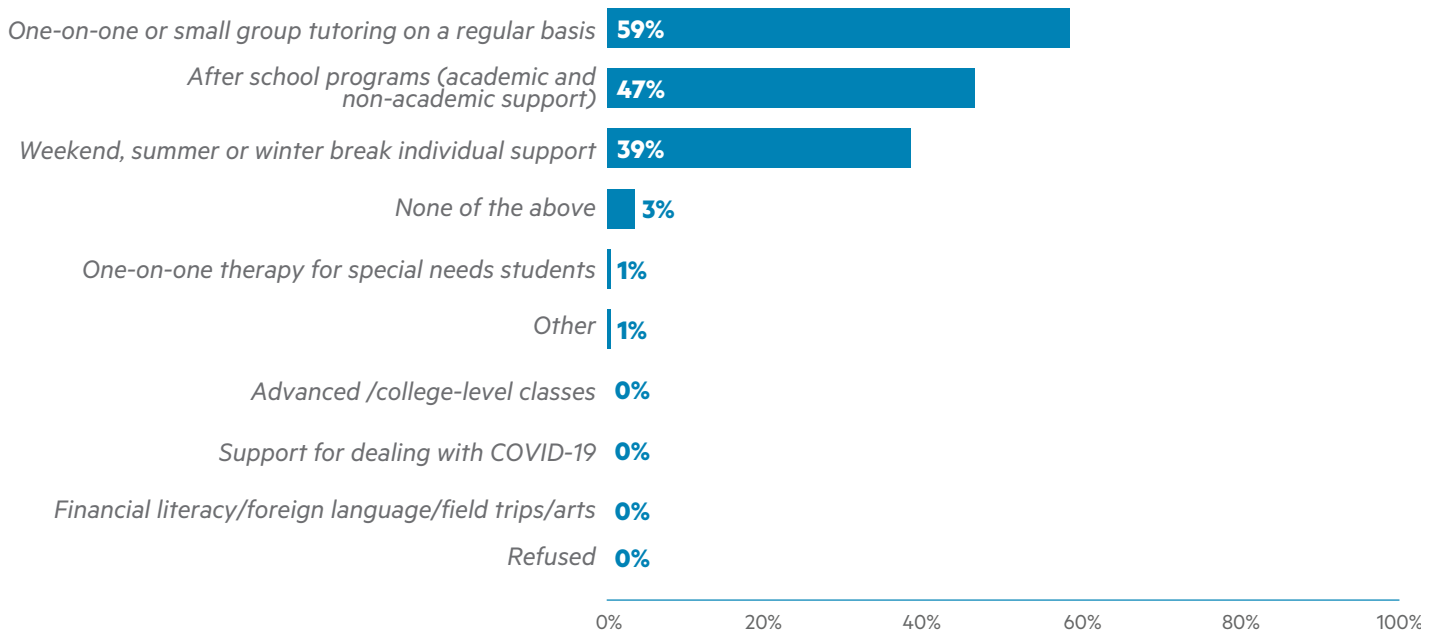
One of the key questions of the day that many school systems leaders face is how to “normalize” school operations and effectively achieve educational recovery when so many students have experienced unfinished learning and social-emotional challenges during the pandemic. Because we know educators and education leaders are faced with challenging questions about returning to old practices or keeping new approaches developed in times of crisis, we asked all families their perspective on whether schooling should return to how it was before the pandemic, or



whether educators should rethink and move toward new approaches. Families overall are divided on this question, with lower income and families of color favoring rethinking the education system (between 55% and 71%) compared to their more affluent and white counterparts (45-66%) (see Figure 11). English Learner families more strongly favored rethinking education (56%).

This desire for change across many families is worth further exploration, as the poll did not provide families with the ability to submit open-ended responses about what rethinking education means to them. However, several questions provided families with a number of options about what schools could expand/increase or do differently, either to improve the school system overall or to provide specific services and supports families want for their own children and families. A strong majority of EL families (96%) expressed support for an annual evaluation of the Los Angeles Unified superintendent (54% strongly support and 42% somewhat support). Across all questions (see Figures 12 and 13), EL families generally reported wanting more wrap-around and support services like those typically provided in community schools (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). EL families ranked mental health programs (39%), homework or academic support (37%), and enrichment programs outside of school hours (35%) highest in terms of the services they most want for their children. About a quarter of families reported wanting services that are not typically offered in

Figure 13. Additional Learning Opportunities and Services English Learner Families Want for Themselves and Their Children



schools, including on-site child care (27%), medical or dental programs (26%), food assistance programs (25%), legal support (22%) and job training or search programs (21%). These findings suggest that the vision of schools as a one-stop shop for families is desired by many EL families.

It is important to note that these findings were not consistent across all Los Angeles Unified families, especially because the level of additional resources these types of services require means more funding and resources, such as community partnerships. These resources would need to be targeted differentially across schools, given the often limited budgets that districts and school systems face, as well as the differential needs of student populations at school sites. EL families disproportionately report wanting these types of services. For example, 39% of EL families report wanting school-based mental health support for their children, compared to 29% of non-EL families. Twenty-seven percent of EL families want on-site childcare, and almost the same percent want medical services (26%), compared to only 18% support for both services among non-EL families. Unsurprisingly, more EL families report wanting legal services (22%) through schools compared to their non-EL counterparts (16%). While these needs and preferences can be costly and hard to implement, the emergence of community schools as well as state-level and federal investments make it possible for schools with high concentrations of EL families to consider adopting these wraparound, community schools approaches (Burch & Estrada-Miller, 2022).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Los Angeles Unified’s leadership, educators, students and families are in a unique moment in time, with the start of a new superintendent’s tenure, pandemic recovery efforts supported by specific funding, and the opportunity to ensure the district’s investments reflect the needs and desires of the community it serves. These shifts present an exciting opportunity to reflect on what the district’s diverse English Learners are experiencing, and how we can better serve them – particularly within the context of the statewide EL Roadmap policy, the district’s [Master Plan for English Learners and Standard English Learners](#), and the expansion of dual language programs. We present a number of short- and long-term recommendations for Superintendent Carvalho, administrators and educators that stem from what we heard from EL families in the Family Insights Survey; opportunities to strengthen the EL perspective in the superintendent’s recently released [100-Day plan](#); and what research says about good policy and practice for English Learners and their families (CEEL, 2022; CA EL Roadmap, Principles 1-4). The English Learner Roadmap should serve as the guiding policy in all conversations about how to best serve English Learners. As such, the Roadmap is reflected in both sets of recommendations here and should be the throughline that ties all these conversations together.



## Short-term recommendations

### Build on the Family Insights Survey in the 100-day plan.

- Findings, particularly for EL families, should be included in the documents reviewed and discussed by the board as part of the 100-day learning process and the development of the longer term strategic plan.
- Additional surveys and focus groups the district is planning should build on the learnings of the Family Insights Survey to probe further, particularly around what students and families envision around rethinking education, and where responses for EL families were markedly different or particularly notable.

### Disaggregate data by EL typology and age group in the 100-day plan.

- All data collected for the “student performance review” and other areas of analysis should be disaggregated beyond English Learner and English Only students to include other language proficiency categories (aka EL typologies), particularly reclassified ELs and the combined “Ever-EL” category, if data are available.
- Collect and disaggregate data on young dual language learners<sup>7</sup>, wherever possible.

### Assess implementation of the EL Roadmap as part of the 100-day plan.

- Assessment of district implementation of the EL Roadmap should be added as a critical component of the “assess” process. The district should utilize tools from CDE and state-funded ELRM professional development providers in this effort.

### Communicate with education partners frequently and in linguistically appropriate ways.

- Ensure external communication with education partners is done in the top languages spoken by EL families.
- Utilize multiple communication methods, based on preferences identified in the Family Insights Survey.
- Publicly report out the outcomes/findings of the 100-day plan, in the top languages spoken by EL families – with specific information about how the findings will inform the contents of the new strategic plan.

## Longer-term recommendations

### Ensure the 100-day plan informs the four-year strategic plan and that the strategic plan is shared intentionally and transparently.

- Incorporate lessons learned from the 100-day plan and action plan, particularly the findings from the equity analysis specific to ELs, to inform the process and content of the four-year strategic plan. Publicly share the strategic plan using multiple formats, strategies, and venues to ensure education partners understand the plan and know what district actions they can anticipate in the near and longer term.
- When drafting the strategic plan, identify opportunities to align with existing district plans to ensure coherence across district goals and initiatives.

### Create a sustained, comprehensive plan for English Learner Roadmap (ELRM) implementation.

- Evaluate and report on ELRM implementation practices and opportunities for strengthened implementation at the district and school levels, in the context of findings from the Family Insights Survey and the 100-day plan analysis. Utilize existing resources such as the [CDE’s resource page](#) and [Californians Together’s](#) teacher and administrator toolkits.
- Prioritize the needs of ELs through strategic, sustained structures like revised master scheduling, expanded learning opportunities, and dual language program access and participation that can be revisited in the [Master Plan for English Learners and Standard English Learners](#).
- Communicate with EL families through multiple avenues about program options (including dual language programs) for students.

### Expand programmatic and wraparound supports, such as the community schools approach.

- Identify where programs (mental health, child care, medical/dental, legal) already exist at school sites and where they are lacking. Prioritize access to these resources where higher concentrations of EL students are learning.
- Consider how to leverage learnings from existing community schools to identify opportunities to implement an EL-focused community schools model via new or expanded partnerships with community providers and/or additional funding (e.g., California Community Schools Partnership Program).
- Increase academic support services at targeted schools, such as tutoring, extended learning opportunities (after

school, summer, etc.), and expanded early childhood for DLLs.

#### Expand and personalize school-family communication.

- Increase the use of personalized modes of communication with EL families, including phone calls and home visits (as safety protocols permit).
- Provide more information to EL families on language development and academic progress, as well as sharing of grades and feedback on student work portfolios.
- Communicate frequently and consistently with students and families (across schools) about A-G requirements and course progress, using multiple forms of communication.

#### Reimagine/rethink education with all families, creating space for the unique perspectives of EL families.

- Create targeted opportunities to hear from families about what reimagining/rethinking education should look like in their context. Utilize existing school and district committees, outlined in the [Master Plan for English Learners and Standard English Learners](#), as well as new venues and opportunities for gathering this input.
- Refer to recently developed resources for ideas to present to parents as a starting point (for example, [Reimagine and Rebuild: Restarting School with Equity at the Center](#)).

#### Increase accountability, transparency and targeted funding.

- Hold top district leadership accountable by evaluating the Los Angeles Unified superintendent annually and sharing the results publicly.
- Ensure district- and school-level spending is equitable by providing special funding for students with greater learning needs, especially in the context of COVID recovery, with continuous larger proportions of Los Angeles Unified resources through the Student Equity Needs Index (SENI).
- Ensure the district's LCAP process is driven by authentic community engagement opportunities inclusive of EL families, with the final LCAP reflecting the most prominent desires and needs of EL students and families, and with appropriate resources allocated accordingly. Utilize the [LCAP toolkit](#) developed by LMU CEEL and Californians Together to support this process.

These recommendations hold the power to help Los Angeles Unified district and charter schools meet the current moment and take action to best support English Learners and their families. However, as with all policy

and practice recommendations, they will require strong implementation. Current capacity considerations and needs must be central to the implementation process – including professional development and capacity building for stakeholders across all levels of the system – for key initiatives outlined in the recommendations such as the [Master Plan for English Learners and Standard English Learners](#), the English Learner roadmap policy and the expansion of [community schools](#). With the superintendent's new 100-day plan, the district is off to an exciting start. Now, leaders have an opportunity to build on that momentum by thoroughly digesting these survey results and taking up the short- and longer-term recommendations in this brief to create better and more sustainable opportunities for ELs and their families.

## CONCLUSION

English Learners, as an ever-changing student group by definition, and their families can often be perceived as a small subgroup within a total population of a school community that only certain school staff members (e.g., bilingual teachers, staff or EL coordinators) are best positioned to support. In the context of Los Angeles Unified and surrounding charters, the data in this brief show this is not the case. EL students and their families are an integral and near majority population in the district and in charters, and holistically addressing their academic and language development needs requires whole-district and whole-school approaches that are guided by the California English Learner Roadmap and what we know to be best policy and practice. Through this poll, EL families share that they are showing up to school-based activities and trainings, that they want to be involved in leadership opportunities at their school, that they want more personalized communication and partnerships with educators to support their child, and they want (and potentially need) more supportive services like those provided by community schools. Grounding these preferences in the progress Los Angeles Unified and surrounding charters have made – and creating an action plan for ongoing improvement – in implementing EL-specific policies, such as the [Master Plan and Roadmap](#), are an important starting point. The poll data provides educators and leaders with an important call to action to supplement services and listen to EL families as educators move forward from the pandemic and rethink public education for all families.

## DATA SOURCES

The following publicly available data files were obtained from the California Department of Education:

- California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) Research Files, 2018-19. Downloaded from: <https://caaspp-elpac.cde.ca.gov/caaspp/earchFileListSB?ps=true&lstTestYear=2019&lstTestType=B&lstCounty=00&lstDistrict=00000&lstFocus=a>
- Enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status, Long-Term English Learner Status, and At-Risk by Grade, 2015-16 to 2020-21. Downloaded from: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/filesltel.asp>
- English Learner Progress Indicator Data, 2018-19. Downloaded from: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/datafiles2019.asp>
- U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2019. QuickFacts Los Angeles County, California. Downloaded from: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/losangelescountycalifornia>

Survey data retrieved from the 2021 Family Insights: An Annual Poll of Los Angeles Families. Downloaded from: <https://greatpublicschoolsnow.org/familyinsights2021/>

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>English Learners are K-12 students who speak a language other than English at home and are still developing the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English needed for success in a school's regular instructional programs. (See "Glossary of Terms for English Learner Reports," California Department of Education, <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/longtermel/Glossary.aspx>). English Learners are increasingly referred to as "emergent bilingual" students in recognition of both languages they are learning, rather than just progress towards English proficiency. (See "Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students," California Department of Education, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/documents/mleeducation.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup>"Ever-EL" students are a combination of current English Learners and students who were previously designated as EL and were later reclassified upon developing full English proficiency. Understanding this group holistically provides a more complete picture of how well schools are serving EL students across their educational trajectory, from entering school not yet fully proficient in English to achieving full English proficiency and beyond.

<sup>3</sup>With English Learners being a diverse group, there are a variety of different EL typologies, or profiles, based on students' educational backgrounds, that help determine their academic and linguistic needs. Examples include long-term ELs, newcomers enrolled in a U.S. school for less than three years, students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), and dually identified students who may also have special needs based on a disability – to name a few.

<sup>4</sup>Each LEA establishes a locally approved reclassification process in order to determine when students are eligible for RFEP status changes based on the four criterion listed in Education Code (EC) Section 313 (f) <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/rd/>.

<sup>5</sup>The strong representation of EL families in this brief inspired reporting the results of EL families independently; however, the small sample size of each subgroups requires reporting results for EL families aggregating across district and charter schools.

<sup>6</sup>Los Angeles Unified reports a cohort graduate UC/CSU rate of 48.1% for all students and 26.4% for EL students. Retrieved from <https://achieve.lausd.net/opendata>.

<sup>7</sup>Dual Language Learners are young children ages 0 to five who come from homes where a language other than English is spoken (Early Edge California, 2019).