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California Playbook for Accelerating Learning 2.0

The Playbook for Accelerating Learning was developed by the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence for California LEAs in collaboration with technical assistance partners.

Teacher Development Network
Building sustainable support systems for educator retention and growth.

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INTRODUCTION

"Now is not the time to take our foot off the accelerator when it comes to doing everything we can to help all our students progress toward mastery of our learning standards and thrive in every way in school.

California's investments in important initiatives such as high-dose tutoring, professional development for teachers, and expanded learning time, and in such areas as mental health and wellness, are critical to lifting up academic performance across the board while supporting students' well-being."

– Linda Darling-Hammond, CA State Board President

Long-standing inequities in access and readiness have resulted in significant learning lags (the gap between typical learning and actual learning) in both English/Language Arts and mathematics for many California students. Students in early grades, low-income students, and English language learners are most affected. While the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and exacerbated these challenges, and created a renewed urgency to ensure all students have the opportunity to graduate ready for success in college, career, and community life, we are still not seeing the achievement gains our students deserve.

While we have not yet achieved our goal, we have learned a great deal about what does work and what is required to scale success. What we have learned most clearly is that re-engaging students and addressing their unfinished learning is not something individual educators can do alone. It, instead, requires a system-wide transformation to a student-centered approach that addresses the overlapping learning, behavioral, and emotional needs that support effective learning and teaching. Fortunately, organizations in California and beyond are generously sharing their experiences, models, and research to support our collective efforts toward this worthy goal.

Therefore, as we close out the 2024-25 school year, we have updated the California Playbook for Accelerating Learning (PAL) to incorporate the most recent research and lessons learned from schools, districts, and other experts on how to best create conditions for student success. As Dr. Darling-Hammond's quote at the beginning of this section noted, now is not the time to slow our efforts, so let's jump in.

What the Updated Playbook for Accelerating Learning (PAL) Offers

The PAL is designed to serve as a resource for instructional service teams and leaders in schools, local educational agencies (LEAs), and county offices of education. It also includes resources these leaders can use directly with other instructional leaders and educators.

With that audience in mind, each section of the PAL will explore a key component of learning acceleration. In each section, you will find:

- A short explainer of the key component
- An overview of current research and best practices
- Models, examples, and tools from the field
- Links to resources for further learning

Initially published by the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) with support from Teacher Development Network LLC in 2021, the PAL aimed to distill available resources into a concise and actionable format, helping instructional leaders in California shorten the time it takes to create effective accelerated learning systems. Though the purpose of the PAL remains unchanged, California has taken bold action since 2021 to strengthen the system of support for learning acceleration. The updates to the PAL are intended to incorporate new research, learning, progress, and evolution since its initial publication.

PAL updates were informed by the work and expertise of Learning Acceleration System Grant partners in California through their Professional Learning Network meetings facilitated by the CCEE. The Learning Acceleration System Grant focuses on the development of a California education network to advance student progress, such that students experience a strong and rapid improvement in their mastery of knowledge and skills. The three grant-funded projects contribute to sustainable learning networks, online learning and resources, and education to:

- Ensure California's educators have **access to high-quality acceleration strategies**;
- Demonstrate the **impact of evidence-based accelerated learning strategies** for students with high needs, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and low-income students; and
- Create or expand existing **evidence-based professional development** opportunities or guidance for educators, paraprofessionals, and administrators to address students' learning acceleration.

For more on CCEE's Learning Acceleration System Grant work, visit the Learning Acceleration System Grant website.

The CCEE acknowledges and appreciates the thoughtful contributions to the PAL by our Learning Acceleration System Grant partners representing many counties and California institutes for higher education. The CCEE extends a special thank you to Jorge Cuevas Antillón, District Advisor for Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment, Spanish Language Literacy, Bilingual Education, Dual Language Program, and English Learner Services for the San Diego County Office of Education for his significant contributions throughout this PAL around effectively supporting Multilingual learners.

Learning Acceleration Requires A Systems Approach

Successfully accelerating learning is challenging because it requires a holistic shift in how educators and school systems approach student support. It demands a comprehensive and systematic change that centers learning acceleration in all educational system design decisions, educator professional learning initiatives, and instructional planning for students. It must be aligned with your system's vision, linked to your Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), and integrated with your Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) efforts to promote coherence, reduce redundancy, and build on existing best practices.

At the state level, the challenge of accelerating progress in California is compounded by the state's size, diversity, and social conditions of its student population. More than a thousand school districts in the state serve unique communities with their own needs and challenges, from large urban districts

to very small rural schools. California's challenges reflect not only the state's size but also its ethnic, cultural, and geographical diversity. This means there is no one way to accelerate learning that we can point to as the right way. By making these resources available in a concise and actionable format, CCEE aims to help instructional leaders in California reduce the time it takes to create effective accelerated learning systems, enabling every student to reach the desired outcomes that align with their schools, communities, and contexts.

Learning acceleration requires an all-hands-on-deck approach and a willingness to diverge from current models. We hope you find the resources in this playbook useful, help you get started, keep you iterating and improving, and provide support at all stages of your work.

Let's get started.

What Is Learning Acceleration?

Acceleration vs. Remediation

The terms "acceleration" and "remediation" are sometimes used interchangeably but represent two vastly different approaches to learning. To avoid confusion, let's begin by clearly differentiating between them. In this video, Dr. Darling-Hammond defines acceleration and explains some key research backing this approach.

Remediation purports to support students who have fallen behind by focusing primarily on helping students master concepts they should have learned in previous years. This often means revisiting prior grade-level content and working to fill in any gaps in understanding. When students spend their time in remediation, however, they may not have the opportunity to practice with content appropriate for their current grade level. This approach can put students further behind, has diminishing returns, and exacerbates inequity. Further, we know that remediation is often composed of "drill and kill" approaches, which breed stress, anxiety, disengaged and reluctant students, frustrated families, and even drive up rates of chronic absenteeism. Yet, students of color and those from low-income families continue to experience remediation more than wealthier white peers, even after demonstrating success on grade-level content.

Learning Acceleration is about keeping students motivated by providing grade-appropriate work and offering just-in-time interventions (the right type of or amount of support at the right time) to fill gaps in learning.

Acceleration, on the other hand, makes it genuinely possible to get and stay caught up by leveraging what we know about how people learn effectively. While the term 'acceleration' might lead one to think that the goal is to simply speed through the curriculum, that's not the intention. Instead, it's about keeping students motivated by providing grade-appropriate work and offering just-in-time interventions (the right type of or amount of support at the right time) to fill gaps in learning. Instead of focusing on a list of items that students have not yet mastered (remediation), learning acceleration is a system-wide approach that strategically addresses unfinished learning using a whole-child approach.

For an example of what learning acceleration and remediation look like in action, check out this video from the Tulare County Office of Education showing a bridge building activity facilitated as both acceleration and remediation and what happens as a result.

Learning Acceleration Advances Educational Equity

Unlike remediation, several studies have found that learning acceleration is particularly effective for students of color and those from low-income families. When systems and educators adopt a learning acceleration approach that provides all students with access to grade-level material, it is effective, and students of color and those from low-income families benefit the most. While these students have historically been most likely to experience remediation, they also see substantial benefits from acceleration compared to remediation. According to the same report,

Classes that experienced learning acceleration in schools with mostly students of color saw a much smaller increase in their struggle rate compared to remediated classrooms (only one-tenth as large) and completed 49% more grade-level lessons. In Title I schools, classrooms with learning acceleration saw an increase in their struggle rate only one-sixth as large as in remediated classrooms and completed 28% more grade-level lessons.

But it wasn't just that the classes that experienced learning acceleration struggled less. They also completed 27% more grade-level lessons. In fact, students in those classes mostly regained their pre-pandemic success on grade-level mathematics despite all the interruptions of the past year (see image below).

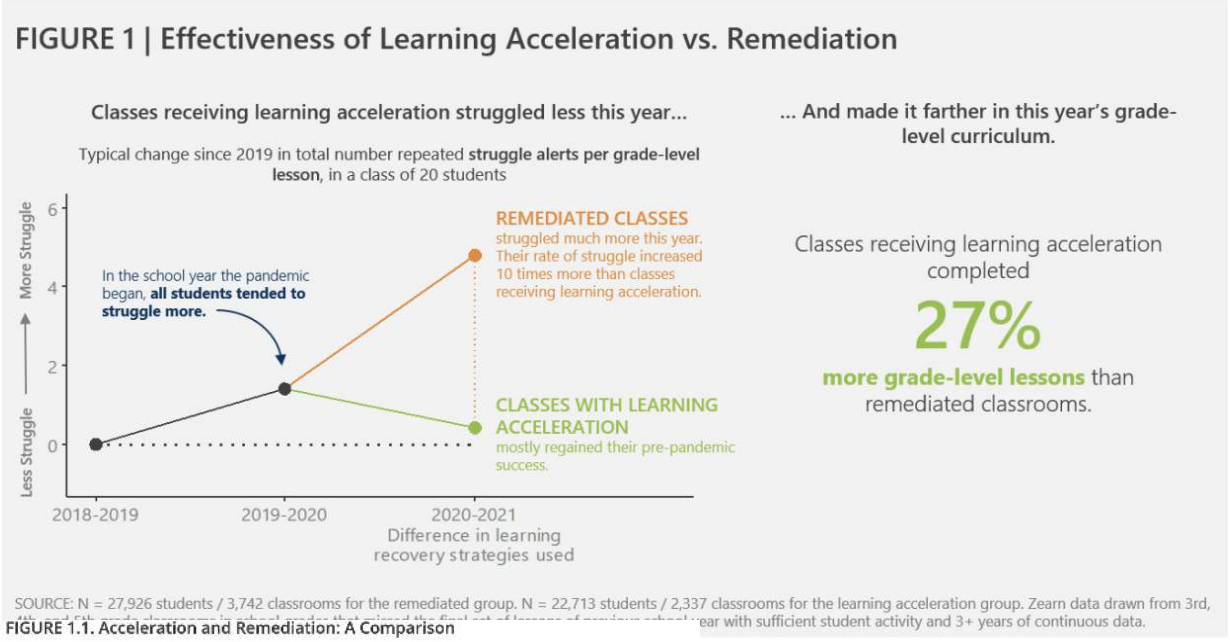


FIGURE 1.1. Acceleration and Remediation: A Comparison

	Acceleration	Remediation
Self-efficacy	• Self-confidence and engagement increase. • Academic progress is evident.	• Students perceive they're in the "slow class," and self-confidence and engagement decrease. • Backward movement leads to a sense of futility and lack of progress.
Basic skills	• Skills are hand-picked just in time for new concepts. • Students apply skills immediately.	• Instruction attempts to reteach every missing skill. • Skills are taught in isolation and not applied to current learning.
Prior knowledge	• Key prior knowledge is provided ahead of time, enabling students to connect to new information.	• Typically does not introduce prior knowledge that connects to new learning.
Relevance	• Treats relevance as critical component to student motivation and memory.	• Relevance is not seen as a priority.
Connection to core class	• Instruction is connected to core class; ongoing collaboration is emphasized.	• Instruction is typically isolated from core class.
Pacing and direction	• Active, fast-paced, hands-on. • Forward movement; goal is for students to learn on time with peers.	• Passive, with focus on worksheets or basic software programs. • Backward movement; goal is for students to "catch up" to peers.

This data only further confirms the need for California's schools to refocus their efforts on learning acceleration for all students.

In summary, as this chart created by Suzy Pepper Rollins illustrates, *remediation* is about focusing on the past—what students missed last year and what they need to redo. On the other hand, *acceleration* focuses on starting students where they are and accelerating them forward using data and a deep understanding of the content to create an individualized and highly targeted pathway for each student.

At its core, a learning acceleration approach is about building bridges rather than filling holes. Want more about the difference between remediation and acceleration? Check out these resources.

- This brief animation video, developed as students returned to school after the pandemic, effectively illustrates the difference between remediation and acceleration.
- The California Collaborative for Learning Acceleration developed this self-paced, online course covering foundational elements of acceleration.
- The Appendix of this report provides an example of a remediation approach versus a learning acceleration approach that addresses priority content.
- Watch this video to hear more about how teachers and experts think about the difference between acceleration and remediation and why it's so important.

Learning Acceleration Key Components

We have long known that students learn best when instruction is tailored to their strengths and needs. But learning acceleration is more complex than that. There is now a significant body of research showing that acceleration occurs most rapidly when we:

1. **Strategically teach content**. Acceleration requires educators to know how to systematically redesign instruction around disciplinary big ideas found within the state standards, weaving in just-in-time supports with grade-level content to move all students forward strategically. Tools such as instructional frameworks and learning progressions are crucial in this model.
2. **Harness the power of data-driven instruction**. Planning strategically requires educators to regularly collect authentic evidence of performance and utilize that data to affirm what has been mastered, pinpoint where students are in their learning, diagnose needs, and design upcoming instructional sequences to support readiness and confidence. Educators and systems also need to consider children as whole individuals, whose experiences, interests, needs, and strengths become crucial considerations in organizing their learning.
3. **Create the conditions for personalized learning**. Acceleration requires educators and systems to proactively redesign learning environments—both within and beyond the classroom and school day—using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This includes identifying and removing barriers to learning while increasing opportunities for students to exercise agency. By offering multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression, educators create the conditions where every learner can access the right learning at the right time, persist through challenges, and make meaningful choices in their learning journey.
4. **Embed strategic supports for diverse learners**. Closing long-standing opportunity gaps for students of color, those impacted by poverty, and other vulnerable populations, such as multilingual learners and those receiving special education services, requires knowledgeable educators and responsive planning. It also requires carefully coordinated support systems that span home, school, community, and other partners.
5. **Design sustainable systems**. Classroom educators cannot do this work alone. Learning acceleration requires a whole-system focus, grounded in data, committed to improvement, and designed to be sustainable for everyone involved.

Want more systems-level thinking about Learning Acceleration? Check out these resources.

- Peruse the BRIDGES to Learning Acceleration Framework created through a collaboration between the California Collaborative for Learning Acceleration (CCLA) and the Department of Educational Leadership at San Diego State's College of Education.
- Watch the Tulare County Office of Education talk about their Learning Acceleration work in this video.

Learning Acceleration and MTSS

Since 2015, California has invested in the Scaling Up Multi-Tiered System of Support Statewide (SUMS) Initiative to provide LEAs with the necessary resources to implement the MTSS framework effectively. Learning Acceleration complements the MTSS framework. Both approaches provide a strong, research-based foundation that encourages the use of data-driven decision-making to create supports tailored to the strengths and needs of individual students. They also center on developing flexible and targeted interventions to ensure that all students, regardless of their starting point, meet or exceed grade-level expectations. Both models encourage a focus on the whole child, including not only academic, but also social-emotional and behavioral supports, as well as promoting a system-wide approach to engaging in this work. To learn more about MTSS, visit California's MTSS SUMS website.

Since many schools already utilize the MTSS model, adopting and implementing the essential ideals of learning acceleration should feel like a natural next step, rather than replacing one system with another. Yet, despite the strong alignment between MTSS and learning acceleration, remediation remains a common approach when students demonstrate a need for additional intervention. Systems seeking to fully implement a learning acceleration approach will require a mindset shift for both educators and leaders regarding what MTSS and intervention mean within their systems.

Strategic Content Instruction

How can all students accelerate their mathematical and literacy development?

A key component of effective learning acceleration is knowing what content to focus on and when to do so. When students have unfinished learning, it seems only natural that we start by reviewing content they should have previously received. However, this strategy, often referred to as *remediation*, can actually harm students and exacerbate long-standing inequalities, as one study found.

So, what should we do instead?

A key tenet of learning acceleration is to allow students to engage with grade-level material *while simultaneously addressing* any prerequisite skills or concepts they may need. For example, a sixth-grade teacher begins with sixth-grade content and strategically incorporates key fifth-grade concepts when students need them to master current grade-level work. This "just-in-time teaching" ensures that students spend as much time as possible completing on-grade-level work — the key to catching up.

How can educators effectively teach grade-level content while simultaneously addressing learning gaps?

Instructional time is limited, and it can be challenging for teachers to address each student's unfinished learning while also covering the grade-level material, all in a single school year. Successful learning acceleration requires teachers to understand the content in a different way and *know how to prioritize it effectively*.

Table 1: Key Underlying Assumptions

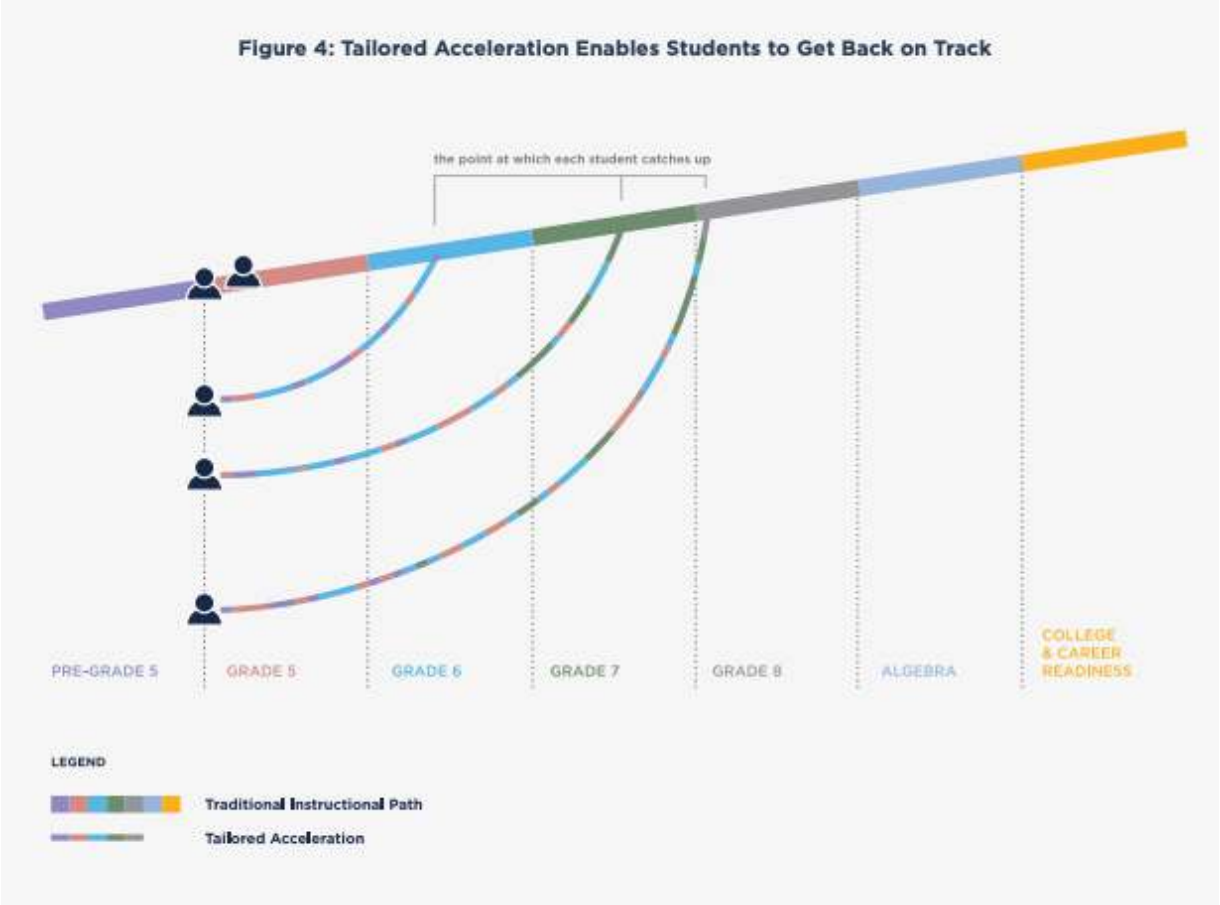
Traditional Approach	Tailored Acceleration
Teachers focus on grade-level skills.	Teachers focus on a strategic mix of pre-, on-, and post-grade skills.
Instruction is aimed at enabling students to achieve grade-level proficiency within one school year.	For some students (especially post COVID-19), achieving grade-level proficiency will require learning pathways that span more than one year.
Coverage of grade-level curriculum is paramount.	Student mastery of essential skills is paramount.
Growth reflects changes in performance relative to grade-level skills.	Growth reflects progress on essential pre-, on-, and post-grade level skills.
Classroom teachers instruct students on the same skill at the same time.	Classroom teachers enable multiple instructional modalities so that each student can focus on the skills needed to accelerate.

Instead of working lock-step through a grade-level curriculum, this approach asks teachers to regularly assess student learning and then plan instruction that focuses on the discipline's big ideas, makes connections across standards, and utilizes learning progressions to create logical and efficient learning sequences that weave in necessary practice with missing skills as they go.

What happens when educators make this shift?

When teachers are allowed to make these adjustments, student learning grows more quickly, as demonstrated in the Iceberg Problem and its follow-up report, Solving the Iceberg Problem. This enables students to accelerate their learning and meet grade-level expectations.

Figure 4: Tailored Acceleration Enables Students to Get Back on Track

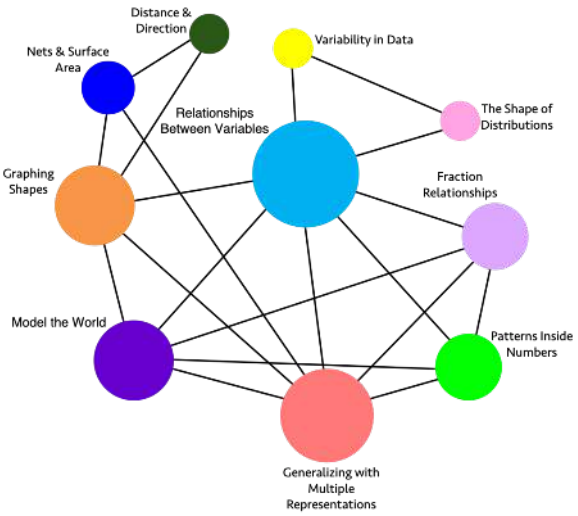


Furthermore, when students receive constructive feedback on their current progress, have opportunities to correct mistakes, are shown positive regard, and work toward mastery, their perceptions of themselves as learners improve. This increasing confidence leads to more engagement, persistence, and increased learning. In other words, it creates a persistent positive cycle of learning that helps educators close gaps more quickly. To create this positive cycle, educators need to know what to focus on and when.

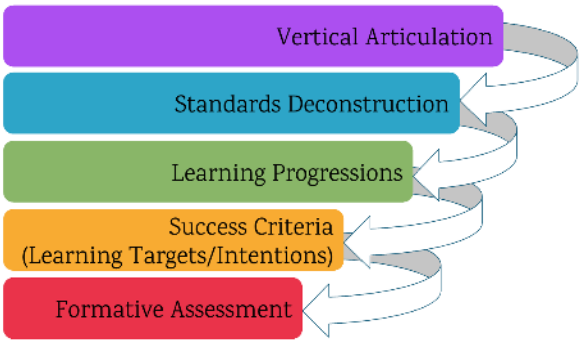
Strategic Content Instruction: What's The Same In Math And Literacy?

Those engaging in effective learning acceleration efforts have distilled a core set of five considerations that, regardless of subject area, those working to strategically plan and teach content should keep in mind. These include:

1. **Focus on content area big ideas.**
Big ideas are the foundational principles, concepts, and skills of a discipline (see the image for an example of mathematics big ideas). Without them, students never fully grasp how disciplinary concepts are developed and expanded upon. Research shows that focusing on big ideas helps students to see the purpose and relevance in their learning because they better understand how seemingly isolated facts and skills are connected. Educators can use the California content frameworks to identify key ideas that should be at the center of learning. Using these frameworks will help create clarity, coherence, and rigor that is grade-level appropriate.



2. **Employ learning progressions.**
Learning progressions outline the developmental sequence of skills and knowledge a student typically gains as they progress through a subject area over time. Aligned with state frameworks, they provide a roadmap for teachers to design instruction that builds upon prior knowledge and skills and prepares students for increasingly rigorous content. In essence, they allow the teacher to answer the question, "If my student is here, what is the next thing they need to learn?"



Focusing on these concepts and letting go of others can help teachers hone in on the most impactful learning while setting aside other, less critical work. Learning progressions are also essential for learning acceleration work because they support teachers in looking backward through the curriculum to determine the prerequisite skills students may need to understand and succeed with current grade-level skills.

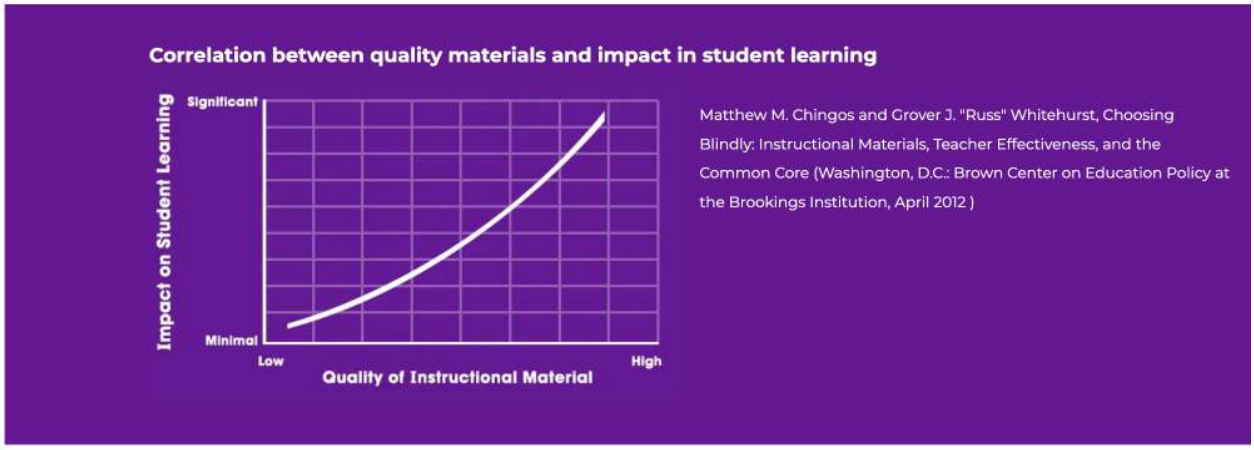
3. **Build students' background knowledge.**
Prior knowledge refers to what the learner already knows before the lesson begins. Students are more likely to remember and succeed with new ideas when they are explicitly linked to things they already know, because prior knowledge serves as a framework for learners to better understand new content. Educators can utilize their new understanding of priority content – its big ideas and how concepts develop- to revisit the ideas and skills that directly connect to current learning and help students

build meaningful bridges from what they already know to new ones. If students don't have substantial prior knowledge, use the learning progressions to help them develop the necessary background knowledge to make sense of the current content.

4. **Strategically teach vocabulary.**

Each subject speaks its own language. To make sense of content, students need to develop fluency in the academic language of their discipline. This becomes increasingly important as students move through the grades. By high school, the number of discipline-specific words students must know is immense. For multilingual learners, a focus on explicit vocabulary instruction is particularly important. While native English speakers continue to develop their language skills, English learners must run twice as fast to catch up to a moving target, especially in content areas. Therefore, as teachers develop lessons aligned with the standards and learning progressions, taking time to explicitly teach, practice with, and require students to utilize the vocabulary will help build their ability to make sense of and grow more quickly in their content area knowledge and skills. To be clear, strategically teaching vocabulary does not mean that educators should always present key terms upfront. Instead, it asks teachers to be mindful of how they introduce and use the language of their discipline and encourage students to practice using it as part of their regular instruction. For more on language development, visit the online courses created by the California Collaborative for Learning Acceleration.

5. **Utilize high-quality instructional materials**.



As the bulleted list above demonstrates, supporting unfinished learning requires deeply knowledgeable educators. When teachers must also create or find all the necessary resources to accelerate learning, the workload becomes unsustainable. Therefore, high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) are key to ensuring equitable access to the grade-level content that all students deserve. HQIMs are defined by their alignment with standards (including the California English Language Development (ELD) standards), have clear learning outcomes, provide rigorous instruction, incorporate evidence-based practices,

are content-rich, and are culturally and linguistically responsive. They offer a comprehensive set of materials for educators and include high-quality professional learning opportunities to ensure they can make best use of them. Research shows that using HQIM heightens the alignment of instruction with standards and leads to increased engagement and student learning (see image above) because it allows teachers to focus on modification, differentiation, and facilitation instead of curating materials.

When utilized effectively, various studies have shown significant increases in achievement across student groups, and HQIM can be a transformational tool for promoting equity. So, ensuring educators have access to HQIM and the support and guidance that enables their use is critical. Schools must, therefore, prioritize ongoing professional learning and coaching opportunities, creating structures for educator collaboration around the implementation of the HQIM in their context to ensure teachers are ready to make the most of the materials.

For more on selecting and utilizing HQIM in California, visit:

- California Educators Together, which educators across the state use to access thousands of free, high-quality lesson plans and classroom resources.
- California Curriculum Collaborative
- California-Adopted Instructional Materials
- This report from Ed-Trust West
- The Collaborative for Student Success
- EdReports free reviews of K-12 instructional materials

When systems focus on these five core strategies, they can help create a coherent approach to learning acceleration. These are also valuable foci for common professional learning, allowing educators within and across content areas to develop a shared vision, approach, and tools to ensure students have a cohesive learning experience that accelerates their learning in all content areas.

Attending To Language Development In Strategic Content Instruction

Embedded in the five core areas described above is an overarching focus on language development. Language development is essential for academic achievement, as students use language to communicate, engage in academic discourse, express their ideas, and make sense of the content shared. The recently released California Literacy Roadmap and California's English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework identifies language development as one of the key themes of ELA/literacy and ELD instruction. The CA Literacy Roadmap notes:

> *Language—heard, spoken, signed, read, and written—is the primary means by which humans communicate, and it is the cornerstone of literacy and learning. It is with and through language that children learn, think, and receive and express ideas, information, perspectives, and questions. Attention to language development occurs in all content areas, both formally and informally. Language is enriched when children have daily opportunities to interact with adults and one another and with texts as speakers, listeners, readers, and writers; when all children are comfortable*

contributing to conversations and feel heard and respected; and when all languages are valued and recognized as assets. Formal instruction includes, but is not limited to, teaching the meaning of words and word parts (e.g., affixes, root words), how phrases and sentences are organized to convey meaning, and oral and written conventions that contribute to meaning (e.g., grammar, punctuation, capitalization). Children learn that language is purposeful and changes according to context, audience, and task.

The Roadmap calls for **language development to be intentionally integrated within instruction across all subject areas daily** and provides guidance on evidence-based practices for language development for each grade span. Similarly, the 2023 California Mathematics Framework highlights the importance of language development. Chapter 4 of the California Mathematics Framework, titled "*Exploring, Discovering, and Reasoning With and About Mathematics*," emphasizes the integration of language development within mathematics instruction, particularly to support multilingual learners. The chapter underscores that mathematical understanding is deeply intertwined with language, and effective instruction must address both concurrently. Thus, while strategies to support multilingual learners are addressed more fully in the Embed Strategic Supports for Diverse Learners section, it is essential to highlight the importance of considering and embedding support for language learners at all levels of planning and development. Therefore, readers will find guidance embedded throughout each of the five core strategies in this section of the Playbook as well.

What's Different In Math And Literacy?

While all subject areas require a focus on the five areas outlined in the previous section, the application of these concepts in mathematics and literacy is unique. Consider the following modified excerpt from Rethinking Intervention that describes the differences between these two content areas:

> ***Math*** *involves a web of interconnected big ideas. Within any given concept, there is room to connect it to other concepts (which makes math so beautiful!), but some concepts are foundational skills necessary to attain other concepts. In general, we can push forward in math, but we need to understand which concepts are most important to the specific topic we are teaching and reinforce those as we progress. For example, we can reinforce base 10 place value concepts while teaching double-digit subtraction.*
>
> ***Literacy*** *includes distinct components that need to be thought about differently. Foundational skills (how students learn to read) are the most sequential of all the disciplines. For example, students cannot decode multisyllabic words if they cannot first decode a monosyllabic word. There are risks if the sequence of instruction is broken because the skills progressively build upon one another. Comprehension (how students read to learn and express themselves) requires a reader to create a mental picture of what they are reading, build a 3D puzzle out of knowledge of the text's topic, understand the vocabulary in that text, and develop analysis and communication skills. There are no prerequisites required to dig into the next text or unit — missing the unit on human rights does not prevent a student from engaging in a unit on innovators.*

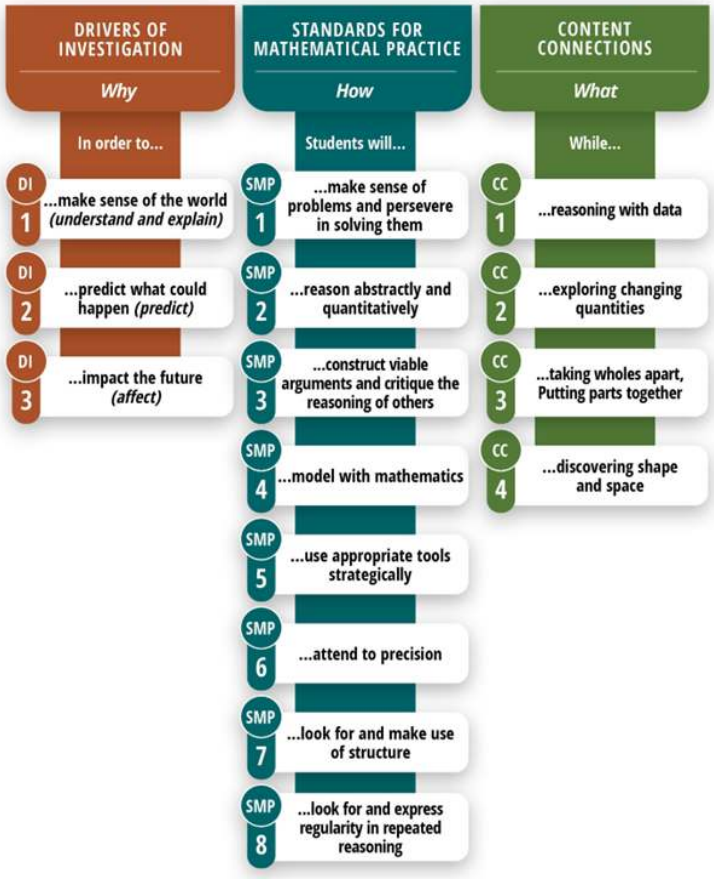
Considering these differences, the sections below provide additional details and guidance for strategically selecting content in math and literacy-specific settings.

Strategically Selecting Mathematical Content

Adopted by the California State Board of Education (SBE) on July 12, 2023, the 2023 Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools guides mathematics instruction in California. The Framework prompts educators to structure the teaching of the state's rigorous standards around "Big Ideas" that integrate rather than isolate TK–12 math concepts. This approach encourages teachers to think about how the Big Ideas in mathematics connect within and across grade levels in developmental progressions. Check out these free modules the Rural Math Collaborative developed to build knowledge about the 2023 Mathematics Framework and strategies to align your instruction.

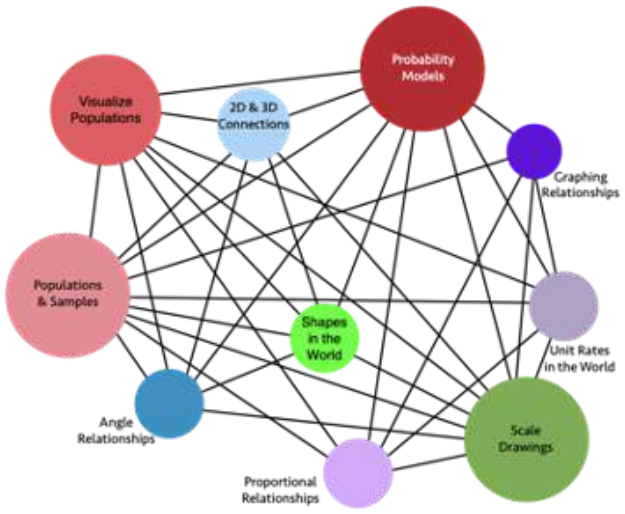
Strategically selecting mathematics content requires educators and systems to focus on this set of five core recommendations:

1. **Focus on mathematical big ideas.**
   A "big idea" approach has been shown to engage students and increase achievement because it feels more coherent, connected, and meaningful. The image on the right illustrates how the California Mathematics Framework guides teachers in designing and framing mathematical instruction within their classrooms. It organizes work around the four Content Connections (CCs in green), the eight big ideas or Standards for Mathematical Practice (SMPs in blue), and the three cross-cutting themes or drivers of investigation (DIs in brown). In Chapter 1, the Framework describes the need for authenticity, defined as a task or activity that includes questions and situations about which students actually wonder. Note that authenticity may be real-world or not, such as in games that still inspire curiosity. Being authentic is essential for learners to connect the mathematics to their context, thereby making math more purposeful. The diagram provides a frame for this type of instruction, with the DIs providing the "why", the SMPs providing the "how", and the CCs describing "what" content will be learned.



"Big idea teaching" involves intentionally designing instruction around the most important mathematical concepts—big ideas—that often connect multiple standards in a more coherent whole, thereby strengthening mathematical understanding. Focusing on these standards will also address other interrelated and overlapping standards.

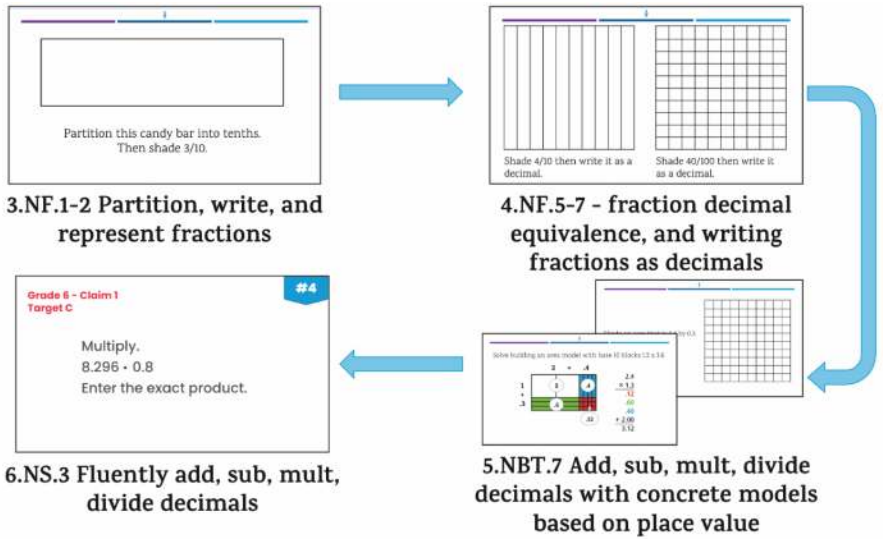
The image to the right shows a Grade 7 constellation map, an example of how the interrelated standards can be addressed by focusing on big ideas. As evidenced by the Iceberg Problem Study, when teachers concentrate on priority content, coupled with regular diagnostic assessments, their students made almost three times the gains as those who adhered only to grade-level content and pacing guides. Therefore, making this shift will yield significant gains for students.



Part of the "big ideas" approach to mathematics in the framework is that concepts are taught as interconnected rather than isolated skills. It emphasizes making sense of problems, reasoning, and applying mathematical knowledge to real-world contexts. Additionally, it encourages inquiry-based learning and student-led exploration to foster deeper understanding and retention of concepts, appreciation for mathematics, and an increased ability to persevere through more challenging mathematical endeavors. Therefore, focusing on big ideas must also involve helping students to make sense of mathematical content by helping them understand how it works and why. Educators can use their knowledge of the big ideas to create multiple ways for students to interact with and represent mathematical concepts, such as using manipulatives (physical and digital), videos, pictures, simulations, and graphic organizers to support students in making sense of concepts and showing what they know about how mathematics works. They can create learning driven by investigations and inquiry rooted in the *why, how, and what* of mathematics. Students need regular opportunities to explore mathematical concepts independently and with each other, explain their thinking, and develop their stamina as sense-makers. Sense-making focused on big ideas works well for all students, but is particularly important for English learners and students with special needs who will benefit from the connections and practice that comes from this approach.

2. **Employ mathematical learning progressions.**
   Sequencing instruction to build on students' prior mathematical knowledge enables teachers to scaffold learning effectively, particularly for those with knowledge gaps. This image, drawn from Building Thinking Classrooms, shows how 6th-grade multiplication of decimals builds on 3rd-grade partitioning and 4th-grade understanding of tenths and hundredths. This is where clear learning progressions become an essential tool for mathematical educators who seek to plan grade-level instruction that weaves in just-in-time supports.

While learning progressions have not yet been developed to accompany the 2023 California Mathematics Framework, other organizations have created tools that can assist mathematics teachers with creating a developmental continuum focused on disciplinary big ideas (see list below). Achieve the Core has also created focus-by-grade -level pages and corresponding priority instructional content pages (math begins on page 42), which can help educators identify priority content.



For more on learning progressions in mathematics, check out these resources:

- The interactive CCSS Mathematics Coherence Map by Achieve the Core illustrates how the standards relate to one another within and across grade levels.
- Expanded Grade-Level Learning Progressions Frameworks for K-12 Mathematics by the Center for Assessment
- CCSS Conferring Continua by The Math Collective
- Future of Education and Skills 2030: Curriculum analysis, A Synthesis of Research on Learning Trajectories/Progressions in Mathematics by Jere Confrey for the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills, Education Policy Committee.
- Learning Trajectories for Teachers: Designing Effective Professional Development for Math Instruction, edited by Paola Sztajn and P. Holt Wilson
- Translating Learning Trajectories Into Useable Tools for Teachers by Cyndi Edgington, P. Holt Wilson, Paola Sztajn, and Jared Webb in Mathematics Teacher Educator.
- Using Learning Trajectories to Enhance Formative Assessment by Caroline B. Ebby and Marjorie Petit in Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School

(Image from the Math Collective)

3. **Build students' mathematical background knowledge.**

In mathematics, more than almost any other subject, what students already know about a topic strongly indicates their success with new learning. Research shows that assessing students' prior mathematical knowledge and understanding enables educators to plan, focus, adopt, and adapt new learning strategies, as it helps them construct connections between old and new knowledge. Students' understanding of mathematical concepts can be enhanced when teachers review prior knowledge and assess understanding before introducing new concepts. When they do so, students gain a deeper understanding of the content, effectively link it to subsequent learning, and increase their ability to apply higher-order cognitive problem-solving skills. Focusing on priority content and utilizing learning progressions can

help educators consider the background knowledge students need to succeed with current content and plan how to assess for and build that knowledge as needed.

4. **Strategically teach mathematics vocabulary.**
   Learning new vocabulary is essential for comprehending and applying mathematical concepts effectively. Without understanding the plethora of abstract and specialized terms used in a math classroom, both English-only and multilingual learners struggle to comprehend concepts, solve problems, and articulate their thinking both verbally and in writing, as the mathematical standards require. In a mathematics classroom, teaching vocabulary does not necessarily require presenting vocabulary with definitions upfront. Instead, educators can strategically incorporate vocabulary instruction during lessons through authentic, problem-based learning, embedding vocabulary discussion and practice within authentic instruction. The California Collaborative for Learning Acceleration offers self-paced courses on high-leverage, evidence-based strategies to accelerate math achievement, including the incorporation of mathematical language.

5. **Utilize high-quality instructional materials in math.**
   The 2023 California Mathematics Framework encourages teachers to adjust their approach to planning and instruction to better align with the best practices for teaching the subject described therein. Coupled with new thinking about planning from learning acceleration, educators have a lot of "new" to deal with right now. HQIMs have been particularly useful in helping achieve these shifts in expectations, especially in subjects like mathematics, which have shown a persistent reluctance to change. For more about what to look for in mathematics HQIMs, look at this resource from EdTrust-West. The California State Board of Education (SBE) formally scheduled a mathematics instructional materials adoption for 2025 to align with the instructional materials evaluation criteria in the 2023 Math Framework. This instructional materials adoption will consider three types of programs: basic grade level for kindergarten through grade eight, Algebra I, and Integrated Mathematics I.

Examples From The Field: What Does This Look Like In Practice?

The example below, adapted from one created by the Fordham Institute, shows what prioritizing key content in mathematics might look like in practice:

> *Ms. Smith, fifth-grade math: Her first lesson to her class of twenty-two students was on adding unlike fractions. Our diagnostic assessment data showed that twelve of the children were at a third-grade level on that skill—two years behind. The diagnostic showed that some of these students hadn't yet grasped the need for equal parts when identifying fractions, and others did not yet understand where the values of the numerator and denominator are represented in a visual diagram. Ms. Smith started the lesson by teaching the fifth-grade concept to the whole class. She then had the class work on fully planned, differentiated independent work that was tailored to each student's mastery of the prerequisite skills—skills meant to be taught in lower grades—that they'd need to*

understand the new concept. Struggling students had various gaps: some struggled with halves, for example, while others struggled with breaking fractions into smaller units.

Ms. Smith did not go back to teaching third-grade work for multiple days, as it would have left the entire class behind. Instead, for each day's fifth-grade-level lesson, she focused on filling the gaps that prevented students from grasping it. And then she used RTI hours for those who needed more help. Differentiation in her classroom, however, was relevant to what was being taught that day, allowing students to follow along and soon catch up with their on-grade-level peers. The lesson's objective applied to all students. She did not focus on filling the years' worth of gaps at a slow speed by moving backward. She pulled the students up to grade level faster by focusing solely on fractions. The resulting data showed that the whole class mastered, unlike fractions within the specified time.

This example underscores the importance of ensuring that mathematics educators possess a solid understanding of the key concepts in the content and how these concepts evolve across the grades. Her ability to quickly gather data about student readiness enabled her to pivot from the curriculum and offer differentiated supports artfully, ensuring that all students could move forward with the grade-level focus on fractions while simultaneously weaving in prerequisite third-grade skills necessary for success. Utilizing additional instructional time to offer extra support for those with larger learning gaps was also critical for success.

Want to learn more? Check out these resources focused on prioritizing math content.

- 2022 Addressing Unfinished Learning Toolkit (Introduction slides 1 - 8 + slides 9 - 14 for math) *Source: Instruction Partners*
- CCEE Field Guide resources for Accelerating Learning (ELA, math, science)
- Math fluency inventories by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- California Digital Learning Integration and Standards Guidance Excerpt: Section B—Standards Guidance for Mathematics (pages 101–212)

Strategically Selecting Literacy Content

In July 2014, the State Board of Education adopted the ELA/ELD Framework to support the implementation of the California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy (ELA) and English Language Development (ELD). Developing a single framework that unites these two sets of standards helps California educators support all students as they learn to read, write, and communicate with competence and confidence across all content areas. This means that *all California educators, regardless of grade level or subject, are teachers of literacy and English language development*. The standards are also notable for positioning cultural diversity, multilingualism, and biliteracy as strengths to be considered in planning and instruction. This means all educators, regardless of content area, must ensure they are knowledgeable and ready to implement high-quality literacy and English language development best practices as part of their instruction, in alignment with the best practices laid out in the ELA/ELD Framework. For more on the ELA/ELD Framework, check out:

- This video provides an overview of the standards.
- CDE offers these resources to support the ELA/ELD Framework.

- The California Collaborative for Learning Acceleration (CCLA) created this set of literacy acceleration modules.
- This webinar recording also provides guidance on California ELA/ELD Standards.

Strategically selecting literacy content requires educators and systems to focus on this set of five core recommendations:

1. **Focus on literacy big ideas.**
   At the center of the combined ELA/ELD Framework is a set of big ideas called "key themes" that represent the major work of ELA/literacy instruction. As shown in the blue circles in the graphic to the right, these include foundational skills, making meaning, language development, effective expression, and content knowledge. Foundational skills have a sequence of instruction—for example, students need to decode monosyllabic words before tackling multisyllabic ones. The other themes are embedded and taught throughout all grade levels, developing continuously over time.

   Part of the "big ideas" approach to literacy laid out in the framework is the idea that literacy is a skill that transcends subject areas and requires students to understand and utilize language for a variety of purposes, through a variety of processes, and using a range of resources (see image to the right). Students must also show increasing competence with these ideas across the literacy domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). This approach requires teachers in all content areas to introduce increasingly complex texts with intentional scaffolds, helping students make meaning while developing confidence. This just-in-time support approach to literacy may involve breaking down a comprehension skill, such as identifying themes, into manageable steps, starting with character motivation and plot analysis. For example, a sixth-grade text analysis lesson can build on third and fourth-grade skills such as identifying key details, summarizing, and recognizing character traits. Teachers build upon students' prior knowledge and guide them through a progression of close reads, using student talk and writing as bridges toward grade-level proficiency and beyond.

   This building and spiraling approach to the big ideas can make it challenging for educators to determine what is "strategically important" in the standards, and so requires educators across content areas to be deeply knowledgeable of the key themes and how to create

learning experiences that address the ELA and ELD standards, drawing in content from earlier spirals. It is also important to note that English/Language Arts teachers are not solely responsible for literacy instruction. The standards clarify that literacy instruction is the responsibility of all educators, so educators in history/social studies, technical subjects, and science must also know how to strategically identify and teach literacy content in their classrooms to help students continue to grow their literacy skills in content-embedded ways.

2. **Utilize literacy learning progressions.**
To support the strategic selection of content, the framework identifies a set of key standards for each grade. In May 2025, the California Department of Education released a literacy roadmap and early literacy learning progressions to help educators organize their instruction around both grade-level targets and key themes. By focusing on these standards, educators will also address other interrelated and overlapping standards (see chart from the ELA/ELD Framework included here as an example).

Priority standards and learning progressions, such as those described here, can also support educators in all subjects to make thoughtful selections about how to weave in just-in-time supports that help students build bridges from where they are with the big ideas to grade-level content. This acceleration approach is critical in literacy, as evidence indicates that having struggling readers read texts below their grade level day after day does not help them "catch up" (Unlocking Acceleration). While students need explicit instruction in foundational reading skills (K-2), once they have developed basic decoding skills, teachers intentionally use their time to focus on instruction that fosters students' assets and targets their instructional needs, working with grade-level text and providing appropriate scaffolding and knowledge-building to help students be successful.

Critical Areas of Instructional Focus: At a Glance

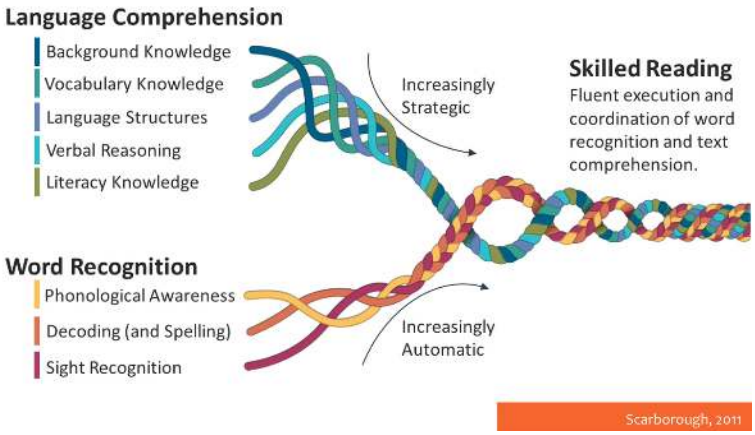
Theme	Key Standards	Related Standards
Meaning Making	RL/RI.2.1,10; RF.2.4; W.2.1-3; SL.2.1,3,4 ELD.PI.2.1,5,6,9,10.Ex	*RL/RI.2.2,3,5,7,9; L.2.4,5* *ELD.PI.2.7,8.Ex; PII.2.1.Ex*
Language Development	RL/RI.2.4,10; RF.2.4; SL.2.1,4; L.2.6 ELD.PI.2.1,3,6,12b.Ex; PII.2.3-5	*RF.2.3a,b; SL.2.3; L.2.4,5* *ELD.PI.2.7,8.Ex*
Effective Expression	RL/RI.2.10; RF.2.4; W.2.1-3,4,5; SL.1.1,4 ELD.PI.2.1,4,7-10.Ex	*RL.2.4-7; RI.2.8; W.2.4,6; SL.2.3,5; L.2.1-3,6* *ELD.PI.2.2,11.Ex; PII.2.1-7.Ex*
Content Knowledge	RL/RI.2.1,10; RI.2.4; W.2.2,7; SL.2.1,3;L.2.4,5 ELD.PI.2.1,5,6,10,12b.Ex	*RI.2.5,7-9; RF.2.3,4* *ELD.PI.2.7.Ex; PII.2.1.Ex*
Foundational Skills	RF.2.3a,b,c,d,e,f,4; L.2.2b,d; W.2.1-3 ELD.PI.2.10.Ex	*RL/RI.2.10; SL.2.5*

Other resources for strategically selecting literacy content include:

- The related standards are outlined in the California Digital Learning Integration and Standards Guidance (Section C, pages 212–486).
- Achieve the Core's Priority Instructional Content in Language Arts/Literacy.

A note about foundational reading skills:
Foundational reading skills are intended to be taught sequentially. Dr. Hollis Scarborough's concept of the "reading rope," introduced in 2001 (see image), illustrates how the various "strands" of literacy interconnect and reinforce one another. Therefore, educators are

encouraged to use the new California early literacy learning progressions to develop research-based instructional trajectories.



Given the need for sequential instruction, *foundational reading is one area where researchers and experts agree it's acceptable to revisit and refocus on core concepts if students show a need, as it's a proven strategy for acceleration.* If students missed parts of reading foundations, it is appropriate to go back and teach the skills (including print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency) beginning where they left off. Administer a brief diagnostic, such as the Reading Difficulties Risk Screener (RDRS), at the beginning of the year and periodically throughout the school year to determine students' current levels and plan accordingly. Prioritize each student's Phonological Awareness, letter identification, letter/sound correspondence, Decoding (and Spelling), and Sight Recognition (the Word Recognition part of Scarborough's Rope shown above).

For more information on foundational skills, please refer to these resources:

- CDE: Resource Guide to the Foundational Skills
- WestEd: Developing Foundational Reading Skills in the Early Grades
- CCLA's free online courses on foundational literacy skills
- Project ARISE offers free online courses on foundational skills

3. **Build students' background knowledge to support increased access to literacy.**
Building background knowledge is a core component of language comprehension as outlined in Scarborough's Rope and literacy in all subject areas. The California ELA/ELD Framework and research summarized in the What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide, "Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade," also note that explicit instruction, which builds upon students' prior understanding, such as word recognition, fluency, and vocabulary, supports deeper comprehension and long-term literacy success. In later grades, research emphasizes the importance of building on background knowledge. It notes that students learn more quickly and retain information more deeply when instruction is tied to what they already know and then builds upon it. For multilingual learners who may not have the same background knowledge, it becomes especially important to help students make connections between their current knowledge and new learning. The framers of the Common Core English Language Arts Standards also noted this vital component of literacy instruction, writing a need for deep reading on subjects and reading widely to build the background knowledge necessary to make sense of increasingly complex texts. In other words, knowing a lot about a topic makes reading more complex texts on the same subject

easier. Educators in all subject areas can support students in developing and then building on the background knowledge necessary to make sense of content-specific texts.

All content-area educators must consider how to help students become more strategic in their ability to make connections with what they already know as they read and write, thereby becoming increasingly fluent in both general English and the discipline-specific language of the various content areas. Working from the key themes in the ELA/ELD standards and drawing on the learning progressions, educators can intentionally develop learning sequences that build on students' background knowledge.

4. **Strategically teach vocabulary across disciplines.**
   Like building background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge is a core component of language comprehension as outlined in Scarborough's Rope and literacy in all subject areas. Explicit vocabulary instruction is crucial for learning acceleration because it provides students with a structured and intentional approach to acquiring new words, directly impacting comprehension and overall learning. Focusing on specific word meanings and connections helps students build a stronger foundation for understanding complex texts and engaging more deeply with new information in English and all subject areas.

   As students progress through the grades, language instruction moves from learning to read to reading to learn, and vocabulary instruction increasingly turns toward academic vocabulary encompassing Tier Two and Tier Three words (and Tier I words that may require additional focus for multilingual students) which are pivotal in students' ability to engage with discipline-specific content. Tier Two words, such as "analyze," "synthesize," and "evaluate," are essential for understanding and discussing complex texts across various subjects. Tier Three words, which are specific to particular fields of study, are crucial for grasping subject-specific concepts and terminology. As the Center for Student Achievement Solutions notes, "Effective academic vocabulary development goes beyond mere exposure to words; it involves systematic practice, review, and deep processing. By integrating academic vocabulary into every academic subject and providing cumulative instruction, educators ensure that students internalize and apply these words across multiple contexts."

   Educators must consider which Tier Two and Three words are most critical for students to know and utilize as they seek to make sense of increasingly complex text in their field of study, and how they can support students in using them across domains and themes.

5. **Utilize high-quality literacy instructional materials.**
   The California ELA/ELD Framework advocates for a strategic approach to planning and instruction that better aligns with new ways of thinking about teaching the subject. Coupled with new thinking about planning for learning acceleration, educators have a lot of "new" to deal with right now. HQIMs have been particularly useful in helping achieve these shifts in expectations, especially in literacy, which requires complex planning and implementation work to create effective acceleration.

When selecting HQIM, systems will want to ensure that the resources included are equitable and culturally relevant, aligning with the California ELA/ELD Framework requirements. This means ensuring the texts and topics reflect and positively affirm the lives, languages, perspectives, and histories of all students, including historically marginalized populations. You can audit your classroom library to ensure that texts and topics represent diverse perspectives and identities and that the curriculum is culturally relevant. Consider these additional ways to bring more equity to literacy instruction.

For more about what to look for in California-aligned literacy HQIMs, take a look at:

- California-Adopted Instructional Materials
- This resource from Ed-Trust West on selecting HQIM in California
- This resource from California Educators Together, where educators across the state can access thousands of free, high-quality lesson plans and classroom resources

Examples From The Field: What Does This Look Like In Practice?

The example below, modified from one created by the Fordham Institute, shows what strategically selecting content in literacy might look like in practice:

Ms. Jones, fourth-grade English language arts: She introduced her class to a lesson on drawing inferences from a text, and the diagnostic results showed that multiple students were one or two grade levels behind in that skill.

She introduced the fourth-grade standard and then divided the students into groups for independent work or group activities. Her students were required to read a text, note specific details, and then synthesize them to achieve new understanding. The work was differentiated for various ability groups and levels of English language development, but crucially, every child read the same text. The guided groups that Ms. Jones met with were based on the prerequisites required to understand what it meant to infer something. Ms. Jones helped her students slow down and list the important, relevant details on graphic organizers. Then they relied on their background knowledge to make connections, generate predictions, and draw conclusions. Reviewing those "mini-inferences" led to deeper understanding of the text. Finally, that understanding was brought to bear in a whole-group discussion.

Since reading requires a broad range of foundational skills, it would have been easy for her to wander into teaching other skill sets instead of staying focused on one. If a student struggled with sounding out a word, for instance, she did not slip into teaching phonics, but rather stayed focused on the progression skills needed for inferencing. The students connected better throughout the lesson, as Ms. Jones kept them within the range of current grade-level skills.

Educators Need Strategic Professional Learning

As you can see, planning and teaching for learning acceleration that focuses on strategically selected content requires specific knowledge and skills. Teachers need to know their content deeply and know where their students are in relation to it in order to plan the right lessons at the right time. They need to know how to best use their high-quality instructional materials. A 2025 Math Coherence Survey asked California mathematics educators what they are looking for in professional learning, and educators were clear about what they need:

- How to teach with coherence and mathematical practices
- How to connect new curriculum to the 2023 Framework
- Concrete models that show how to implement the California Math Framework in real classrooms
- Support using pacing guides, unit plans, and materials lists
- Support working with diverse learners
- More time for collaboration and planning

Similar needs arise when educators in other subject areas are asked to provide input as well. This is because the type of instruction educators are now tasked with developing and facilitating is not how most teachers learned when they were in school, and it is not how most teacher preparation programs approach learning to teach. So, *every educator, regardless of how long they have been teaching, will need support in making this shift*. Just as student interventions are targeted for students, so should professional learning be targeted for educators. High-quality professional learning is ongoing and layered. It requires just-in-time, embedded learning opportunities and harnessing existing coaching and mentoring systems to tailor support for educators rather than blanket, one-size-fits-all professional development. The content and resources found in this section can be utilized to plan and develop these strategic and ongoing learning experiences for educators at all levels. If systems truly want to see growth, they need to invest in high-quality professional learning and instructional coaching for educators that builds their knowledge, skill, and efficacy.

Harness the Power of Data-Driven Instruction

How can data be used to tailor learning experiences in a way that drives learning acceleration for all students?

At the core of accelerated learning is personalized instruction delivered effectively by teachers in the classroom. Various studies over the years show that high-quality instructional content, tailored to the assessed needs and strengths of individual students, leads to increased engagement and the mastery of instructional skills and concepts for all students. Moreover, data-driven instruction promotes a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. By analyzing data on student performance, educators can identify achievement gaps among different student groups, implement targeted interventions, and provide additional resources to support historically marginalized students, thus helping to ensure all students have equal opportunities to succeed and thrive academically.

Before educators can personalize learning, however, **they must be clear on the assets each student has built along their learning journey.** With this baseline, teachers can accurately pinpoint the specific support a student needs. This is where data-driven instruction comes in.

Data-driven instruction supports learning acceleration by enabling teachers to select specific learning targets and tailor instruction to individual student needs, resulting in more efficient and effective learning. By analyzing data from assessments, educators can identify areas where students would benefit from targeted support, adjust their teaching strategies, and develop precise interventions accordingly, ensuring that every student is more engaged with meaningful tasks and can master concepts before progressing. This evidence-based and targeted approach to instructional decision-making leads to more effective and efficient instruction, ultimately expediting learning and ensuring that students reach milestones and progress at a faster pace.

Rethinking Assessment Use

Assessing student learning is not a new concept in education, but the way educators utilize that data can significantly enhance their ability to support student learning effectively and efficiently. Historically, educators have primarily used assessment as a means to understand what students know at the end of a learning sequence or the end of the year. Data-driven instruction that supports learning acceleration requires educators to do something different– **use assessment to support learning, rather than just to measure its results**. This approach requires educators to know how to collect, analyze, and use data *throughout* the students' learning journey as a means to determine next steps. In essence, educators are being asked to shift from the "assessment *of* learning" (summative) to the "assessment *for* learning" (formative) approach, as suggested by Dylan William.

However, whole-class data alone is not enough to support learning acceleration. Student data collection and reviews need to reveal more than a broad understanding of where students generally are; *they also need to provide specific information about the individual progress of each student*. Insights

gleaned from frequent student assessments, paired with literacy and math learning progressions and high-quality instructional materials, enable educators to identify students who may be behind (or falling behind) and offer targeted interventions and customized instructional support to improve student outcomes. For more on learning progressions, see the Strategic Content Instruction section of this PAL. Ongoing assessment is also the opportunity to help educators identify language-related challenges separately for content misunderstandings, which creates more targeted and equitable learning support especially for multilingual learners .This requires real-time, ongoing data from reliable and actionable sources.

To learn more about comprehensive assessment best practices, watch this video featuring Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond alongside California's teachers and students (embed video here).

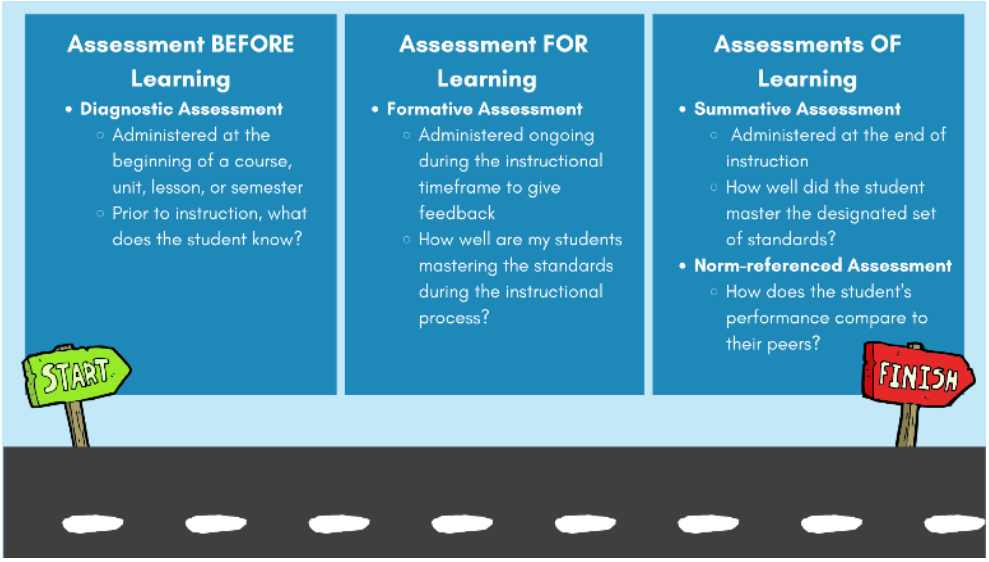
Assessments Useful for Learning Acceleration

Let's begin by defining our terms. For our purposes, there are four types of assessments that educators can generally use to gather data. These include:

- **Language Proficiency Assessments** determine the fluency of a language for a student new to that language. In California, all potential English learners, as determined by the Home Language Survey results, must take the initial ELPAC (English Language Proficiency Assessment of California). If they score below a specific threshold, they are officially identified as English learners and subsequently take the summative ELPAC at the end of each school year. The results of all other content assessments (e.g., literacy or mathematics) should be informed by the level of a student's language proficiency. The higher the language proficiency, the more valid the results of all subject matter assessments administered in that language. The initial ELPAC is an assessment *for* learning, while the summative ELPAC is an assessment *of* learning.
- **Screeners and Diagnostic Assessments** measure a student's proficiency in prior years' skills and their level of understanding of key concepts. These are generally given *before* new instruction is offered to allow for the tailoring of an instructional plan. They are useful for planning instruction and are generally not graded. For example, in California, all kindergarten through second-grade students must now take a yearly Reading Difficulties Risk Screener, selected by their school district, to identify students who may benefit from reading interventions. These are assessments *for* learning.
- **Formative Assessments**, sometimes called interim assessments, are administered frequently *during* the learning process to identify where students are in their learning, including both areas of strength and areas of struggle, as well as any misconceptions they may hold. They are low-stakes assessments that may be graded but do not comprise a significant portion of a course grade. They have the power to improve teaching and learning simultaneously by helping educators adjust instruction in real-time, and by enabling students to self-assess their progress toward learning objectives, take action to improve, and feel more confident in their learning. These are assessments *for* learning.
- **Summative and Evaluative Assessments** are typically higher-stakes measures of student learning at the *end* of an instructional unit, course, or program, designed to determine the extent to which students have acquired knowledge and skills in relation to instructional objectives. These can include both in-class assessments and district or state-level assessments, but are often norm-referenced tests that allow educators to see where a

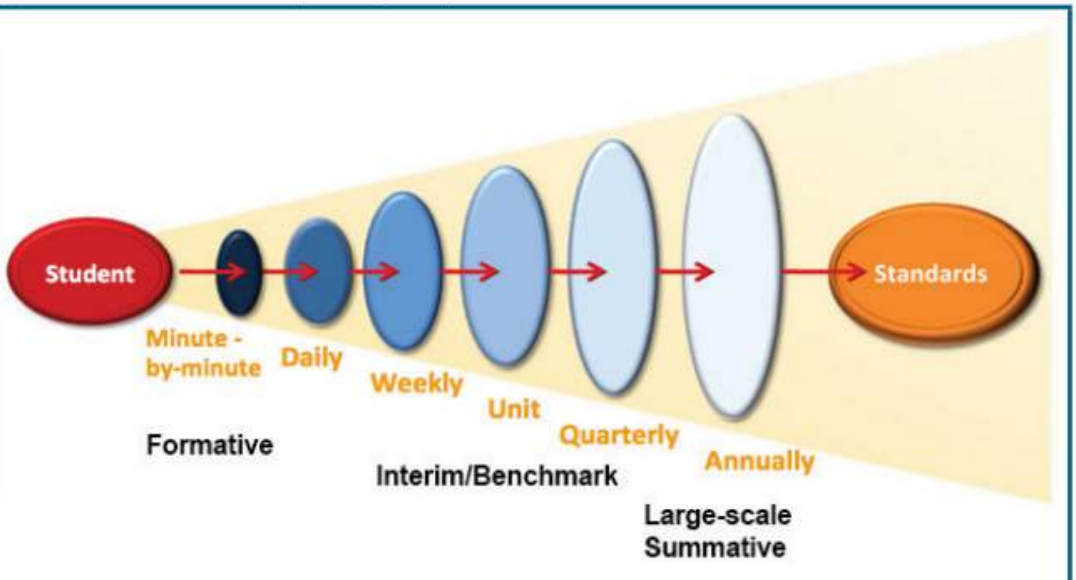
student stands in relation to the average performance of other students. These are assessments *of* learning.

This image from Riverside Insights shows the differences between these three types of assessments:



Collectively, these three types of assessment create a balanced assessment system as illustrated in the image below drawn from Chapter 8 of the CA ELA/ELD Framework on assessment.

Figure 8.4. Assessment Cycles by Purpose



Source
Adapted from
Herman, Joan L., and Margaret Heritage. 2007. *Moving from Piecemeal to Effective Formative Assessment Practice: Moving Pictures on the Road to Student Learning.* Paper presented at the Council of Chief State School Officers Assessment Conference, Nashville, TN.

What to learn more about balanced assessment systems?

- The components of this system are well-described in the Supporting Balanced Assessment within the TK-12 Learning Ecosystem Executive Summary developed by the San Diego County Office of Education.
- Information on creating balanced assessment systems aligned with the California Mathematical Learning Progressions is well-described in this webinar featuring Rincon Valley USD.
- Here are two tools for building assessment systems focused on reading that are aligned with the California ELA/ELD standards and CDE best practices.
- If you're wondering whether your own assessment system meets the information needs of classroom teachers and school/district leaders, consider completing CCEE's Assessment System Review Online Learning Path developed in partnership with the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment.
- Finally, here are a few district-specific examples that might provide insight:
    - Bakersfield City School District: Eliminating Unnecessary District-Required Assessments
    - Coachella Valley Unified School District: Bringing a Fresh Perspective to Assessment Purpose

While all assessment data are important, for the purposes of learning acceleration in the classroom, assessments *for* learning — such as screeners, diagnostics, and formative assessments — provide the kinds of data that are most useful for tailoring daily instruction. Let's explore these types of assessments and their connection to learning acceleration in more detail.

Harnessing the Power of Diagnostics and Screeners for Learning Acceleration

Diagnostic and screener assessments are crucial for supporting learning acceleration by identifying learning gaps and tailoring instruction to meet the individual needs of each student. These assessments pinpoint specific areas where students may be struggling or need more intensive support, allowing educators to implement targeted interventions and provide customized support, ultimately helping students progress at an accelerated pace. Both the California Department of Education and the US Department of Education strongly encourage the use of these tools as a way to inform personalized instruction in the classroom. Let's start with a quick review of terms.

- **Universal screeners** help educators quickly and proactively identify what level of support students need on a given topic. These are generally norm-referenced tests designed to provide reliable and valid data about current performance in relation to other peers, such as Reading Difficulties Risk Screeners required to be administered to California students in grades K-2. Similarly, for students who might be English learners, the initial ELPAC can be considered a screener to identify those needing English language development. Often offered at the start of the year, such data allows teachers to quickly get an overall idea of a student's current level of performance and identify students who may be falling behind and need targeted interventions to catch up before instruction begins.
- **Diagnostic assessments** are administered at the beginning of a learning sequence on a specific skill or topic. They are designed to provide a deeper understanding of students'

existing knowledge and skills on that topic, pinpointing specific learning gaps and areas of strength for each student in relation to upcoming instructional goals. By providing detailed information about a student's understanding of specific concepts and skills, these assessments help educators understand what students already know and where to focus their efforts. This data can allow teachers to identify trends across a class, which is useful for guiding MTSS Tier 1 instruction, such as creating instructional groups, prioritizing specific content, or adjusting pacing. The data can also determine whether a student might benefit from a specific Tier 2 or 3 intervention aligned with their area of need.

The data from diagnostics and screeners can also **inform the development of strategic content instruction** (see the Strategic Content Instruction section of the Playbook for more details). Likewise, the data can reveal students who are ready for more advanced instruction. These pretests allow educators to tailor their instruction to meet the specific needs of their students. Instead of reteaching entire units (remediation), educators can accelerate learning by creating strategic instruction that focuses on addressing specific gaps and building on students' strengths, allowing for more efficient and effective learning. For example, if a diagnostic assessment reveals that a student is struggling with a particular math concept, the teacher can use the standards continuums in the California Mathematics Framework to assess the student's current level of understanding and plan instruction that will help them progress from where they are to where they need to be. Even if students are missing knowledge or skills from a previous grade, a focus on content connections, big ideas, and cross-cutting themes allows students to continue developing their knowledge while working on grade-appropriate standards. This approach provides targeted interventions and support to help students master the concept while continuing with grade-level content.

Diagnostic assessments can also help students become more aware of their own learning strengths and weaknesses. By understanding their own needs, **students are empowered** to take a more active role in their learning and work with their teachers to address areas where they need support. This increased self-awareness can lead to greater motivation and engagement in learning. For example, it is crucial to inform students who are English learners about their language proficiency status so that they and their parents can monitor their progress year after year in the subsequent ELPAC status. English learners benefit from recognizing their capacity to eventually become reclassified as English proficient within five years, per state accountability expectations.

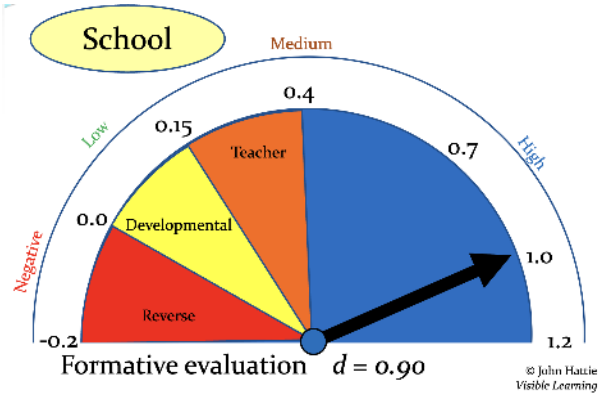
By using diagnostic and screening assessments effectively, educators can create a more personalized and efficient learning environment that supports students in reaching their full potential and accelerating their learning from the start. For more on diagnostic assessments, visit CDE's Guidance on Diagnostic and Formative Assessments**.**

Harnessing The Power Of Formative Assessment For Learning Acceleration

For the purposes of learning acceleration, **the most powerful form of data comes from** regular, instructional, goal-aligned formative assessments. According to Black & Wiliam (2001), formative evaluation refers to *any activity used as an assessment of learning progress before or during the learning process itself*. These low-stakes, standards-aligned glimpses of student progress can include

homework assignments, discussions, Q&A sessions, student work samples and portfolios, and other in-class activities.

John Hattie, an education metadata researcher and author of Visible Learning, found that formative assessment was one of the *most* effective tools educators had to influence student learning, with *an effect size of 0.90*. Effect size suggests that anything over 0.40, which is what we can expect from an average year of schooling, is considered to have a positive impact. Therefore, an effect size of 0.90 suggests that formative assessment has the potential to *almost double the amount of student learning expected in a school year*.



To truly uncover and address learning needs, educators must understand what students know and can do throughout the school year. This means *assessing their knowledge and skills daily or weekly, not just on unit or quarterly benchmarks or standardized assessments*. Ensure frequent formative assessments are included in daily lesson plans and drive instructional planning. Entrance and exit tickets, 1-to-1 conferences, written and oral explanations, reading fluency checks, quizzes, classwork, homework, and digital tools (such as polling or assessments embedded in tools like PearDeck or NearPod) all can provide plenty of information for teachers to determine student's current levels of performance and make data-driven instructional decisions if they are carefully aligned with instructional goals. This iterative process of assessment and adjustment is crucial for maintaining momentum and accelerating learning.

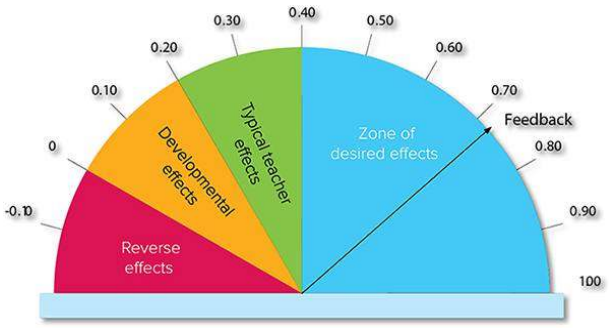
But simply giving formative assessments alone is not the answer. As Black and Wiliam note, **"Assessment becomes 'formative assessment' when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs."** Therefore, educators need to know how to utilize the data they collect to make short-cycle, in-the-moment adjustments to instruction and refine their mid-range and longer-term plans based on what they see and hear from students in real-time. They need to hear, for example, about a misconception that arises during partner work and make an immediate course correction, either for that student or for the whole class. To do this well, educators must be very clear about where each learner is going (*What is the goal?*), where the learner is right now (*Where are you in relation to it?*), and know how to move the learner forward (*What can you do to achieve the goal?*). Answering these questions requires educators to be strong at clarifying and sharing learning intentions, analyzing data in relation to those goals, and engineering effective discussion, tasks, interactions, activities, and interventions that elicit evidence of learning aligned with learning progressions. They also need to carefully consider how their own mindsets and biases about learning and students may affect their data analysis, selection of learning tasks, and instruction. The assessment chapters of the mathematics and ELA/ELD

curriculum frameworks provide additional content-specific guidance on using assessment to inform instruction and offer strong examples of what this looks like in practice.

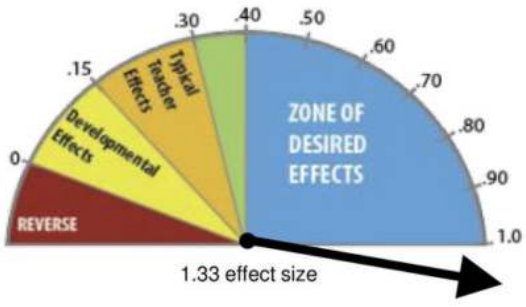
Educators keeping the data to themselves is not enough either. According to John Hattie's research, it's also crucial for educators to **provide specific and clear feedback that helps students understand their current performance in relation to learning expectations and the actions they can take to improve.** This descriptive feedback also needs to provide students with the answer to these same questions: *What is the goal? Where are you in relation to it? What can you do to close the gap?* Tools such as those described in this article can provide a good starting point.

This "just-in-time feedback" is most powerful when it **allows students to process their own data in meaningful ways.** Processing formative data together provides educators with information about what students know and have learned, and it also offers important insights into how students are learning. It also provides educators a chance to address students' social-emotional needs as part of the learning process. Learning is hard, and the resilience needed to persist, even when struggling, is an essential part of becoming an effective learner. When students are the owners of their own data and are given the support to develop their learning mindset, they can become full partners in their own learning journey, building stamina, confidence, and a willingness to persist along the way. Utilizing a structured protocol for student data analysis, like this one from the Learning Accelerator, can help facilitate the process.

Then, educators need to create opportunities for students to use that feedback to improve their performance. When the feedback is coupled with teaching students strategies to improve, opportunities for students to immediately apply and practice those new skills, and tools to help them monitor and adjust their own learning, **feedback from formative assessments can significantly increase students' confidence, engagement, and learning– another critical element of learning acceleration success**. According to Hattie, this type of feedback has a strong effect size (0.75) when used as a stand-alone practice, as illustrated in the graphic.



Want to take it a step further? When **students self-assess their own work and utilize the feedback they received from their formative assessments to set their own goals, monitor their own achievement, and reflect on the process of learning, the effect size jumps to 1.33**–*nearly three times the amount of learning expected in one year*, and the instructional move with the highest effect size on Hattie's list. This is because students recognize the value of the assessment and the data it generates.



Examples From The Field: What Does This Look Like In Practice?

This CDE video series, entitled Formative Assessment in Action, offers six short video vignettes from across the state, showcasing formative assessment approaches in math, science, ELA, and history. The instructional resources utilized in these videos can be found on the Tools for Teachers website.

As another example, through participation in CCEE's Data Research Learning Network, Rincon Valley Union School District (RVUSD) piloted comprehensive formative assessment practices at Whited Elementary Charter and Madrone Elementary, including foundational training for teachers on formative assessments and effective data practices. Hear more about RVUSD's learning journey in fostering formative assessment practices by leveraging the mathematical learning progressions from the Ongoing Assessment Project (OGAP) by watching this recorded webinar and reviewing related resources.

For more on formative assessments, explore the following resources:

- CCEE: Insta-Data: Real-Time Formative Assessment that Works
- CDE: Guidance on Diagnostic and Formative Assessments
- CCEE and Center for Assessment: Formative Assessment Micro-Courses
- NWEA E-Book: Making it work: How formative assessment can supercharge your practice
- For formative assessments aligned to big ideas in the disciplines, visit NWEA, MAP, iReady, and Smarter Balance.
- For ELL-focused formative assessment ideas, consider these resources curated by California Together, as well as SEAL.org's Oral Language Analysis video.

Take A Mastery Learning Approach

A data-driven approach to accelerating learning is a mastery learning approach. To develop a deep understanding of grade-level content and skills, students need to engage in high-quality work tailored to their zone of proximal development **(ZPD), full of rich tasks with opportunities for** feedback, revision, and time to try again and improve. T**hey require flexible, differentiated, small-group instruction and learning centers that are tailored to the skills they need to practice, as well as brief, targeted, and strategic interventions, such as high-quality one-on-one tutoring, when necessary to build foundational skills and knowledge. This model is built on thoughtfully and regularly collecting and analyzing data from a range of sources, as described in this section of the Playbook (see image below).** This **approach is meaningful for students because it fosters** ownership, confidence, and a sense of control over their learning. Students who say they know how to improve are more likely to persist in the hard work of learning acceleration.

Educators Need Strategic Supports And Professional Learning

Asking educators to develop, administer, analyze, and partner with students to review their own data and set meaningful goals is a time-consuming task that requires both a new way of thinking about instructional planning and significant technical know-how. Rather than expecting that educators will be able to master this new way of work on their own, school systems can help in two ways:

- **Providing teachers the professional development they may need to understand what high-quality formative assessment entails** for all students including multilingual learners, how to create high-quality assessments that provide meaningful data, how to read and analyze the data in efficient and meaningful ways to analyze assets, adapt plans, and create personalized supports that consider students' linguistic and other needs, how to take advantage of new assessment technologies, and how to engage with students around the data.

- **Investing in formative assessments that utilize technology to provide prompt feedback** by measuring student progress in real-time. These assessments can include online quizzes, interactive games, and simulations, and may adjust their difficulty level in response to the student's performance. Teachers can then focus not on developing or analyzing assessments but on using the real-time data to identify areas where students need additional practice, adjust and personalize their instruction, and support students' agency by making sense of the data and setting goals for themselves.

Create The Conditions For Learning Acceleration

How can high-quality accelerated learning experiences be designed to meet the needs of every student?

Diagnostic and formative assessments are a powerful tool for indicating where students are along the learning progression toward grade-level instructional goals (visit the Data-Driven Instruction section of the PAL for more information). The act of measuring alone, however, isn't enough to make improvements. As the last section of this PAL detailed, ***it is what we do with that data that matters.*** The data can help educators tailor their approach to supporting each student – deciding what each student needs to move forward, which interventions to offer, considering how they are organized, and the conditions under which each student will learn best. However, educators need more than assessment data to develop learning that meets students where they are and helps them to grow as quickly as possible.

In this chapter, we will explore the components of personalized learning and how designing learning experiences that center students creates the conditions for learning acceleration.

Defining Personalized Learning

Personalized learning occurs when teachers tailor their approach to meet each learner where they are today, thereby maximizing their progress. As this image from Education Elements illustrates, this model requires educators to:

- Gather regular data on learners as whole people
- Use that information to tailor instruction to meet students where they are
- Differentiate their scaffolds, assignments, pacing, and assessments
- And partner with students as owners of their own learning journey.

The ultimate goal is to help each learner grow from where they are to where they need to be in a way that works best for them. It's a flexible, authentic, student-centric, data-driven instructional model that has been proven to promote student agency and growth.

To really individualize learning, educators need to know students well. Brain science research indicates that learning is most effective when it is connected to what we already know. So, when we connect current learning to what they already know and understand, we get even better results. This personalized, brain-science-backed approach has been shown to close learning gaps more quickly and

support students in staying on track once they catch up. It also promotes equity by tailoring educational experiences to individual students' needs, which can help to dismantle systemic barriers that may have historically prevented certain students from accessing the kinds of learning opportunities they need to succeed.

In essence, personalized learning is about teaching smarter by focusing on the individual learner and providing them with the right support at the right time to accelerate their learning. Approaching learning this way means educators need to know a great deal about students – the way they think, what they already know, what they are interested in, and what kinds of learning experiences they respond to best. This knowledge enables them to design targeted support, select appropriate interventions, and tailor resources that help each student grow in areas where they need improvement, building on their strengths. Research shows that when educators plan and teach in this way, students are more engaged and motivated, gain a deeper understanding of the content and skills, and learn more effectively.

Isn't That Differentiated Instruction?

To some degree, yes. Differentiated instruction and personalized learning both aim to address diverse student needs, but they differ in the degree of customization and the level of student engagement. Differentiated instruction asks educators to adjust existing curriculum and instruction to meet the assessed interests, readiness, and preferences of students within a classroom. Generally, this means using regularly collected formative data to predict the likely needs of learners and create a set of options for future learning. These options might include the adjustment of the *content* (the knowledge, understanding, and skills students need to learn), *process* (how students are learning about the content), *product* (the ways students show what they know, understand, and can do), or *learning environment* (the pace, time, and space within which students work) to maximize the potential of a group of learners to meet a common instructional goal. For more on differentiation, check out Key Elements of Differentiated Instruction.

Personalized learning takes it a step further by asking educators to start with what they know about a student's interests, passions, and experiences, and then customize instruction based on the assessed strengths, needs, and experiences of individual students, further tailoring their approach to best fit each student. It also asks educators to rethink how they engage and empower students by involving them as active participants in the design of their learning, such as through reflection, self-assessment, goal-setting, and choice. For more information on personalized learning, visit the Aurora Institute's guide to Getting Started with Personalized Learning, which provides resources for education leaders, teachers, and policymakers seeking to redesign K-12 education around student learning through personalized learning and competency education.

For a quick overview of the distinctions between differentiated instruction and personalized learning, check out:

- This post by Aequitas Solutions, Differentiated vs. Personalized Learning: Finding the Right Approach for your Students
- This chart created by TeachThought

Rethinking the Conditions for Learner Success

Learning acceleration through a personalized learning approach is possible when we focus on conditions that help students see themselves as capable learners. This means educators and systems need to think carefully about both the instructional approach and the environment and conditions in which students learn. This means more than attending to the physical setup of the classroom–its layout, lighting, or materials. It is also about considering how students *feel* in that space—physically, socially, psychologically, and cognitively. Research indicates that learning conditions—particularly social and psychological factors—can have a profound impact on student outcomes, encompassing academic performance, social and emotional well-being, and readiness for college, careers, and life beyond the classroom. When students perceive their classroom environment as positive–when they feel safe, seen, and heard– they are more likely to achieve higher grades, particularly in subjects like math, where the quality of learning conditions strongly influences academic success. This finding holds true across student socioeconomic and racial groups and is a factor in closing long-standing achievement gaps. Visit CCEE's Field Guide for Learning, Equity, and Well-Being to find more information on creating a learning culture, or the Build Sustainable Learning Acceleration Systems section of this playbook for more details.

A recent study on the conditions for learning math highlights that when educators create a supportive and encouraging classroom environment, students are more likely to experience substantial learning gains than in a classroom where the environment is less intentional. The article lays out four positive classroom learning conditions that allow students to thrive in mathematics classrooms:

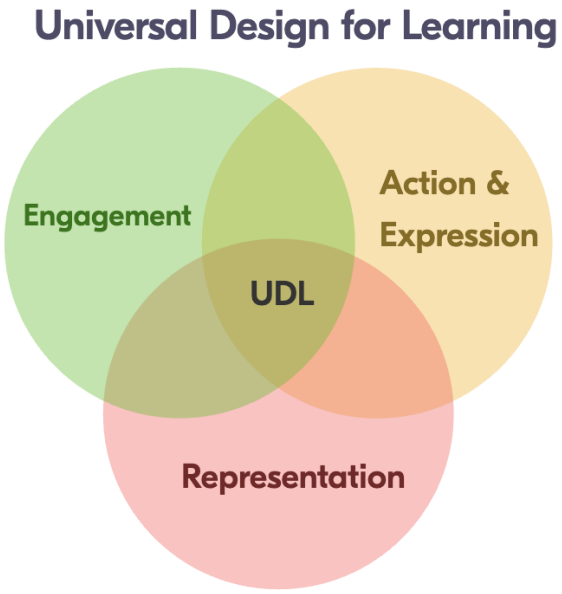
- **Supportive Relationships**: Students benefit from positive relationships with their teachers and peers. Research shows that when students have strong relationships with their teachers, are in classrooms where they feel encouraged to participate, where there are smooth routines, and see themselves as members of the community, students tend to experience increased self-efficacy, motivation, engagement, self-regulation, resilience, and mathematics identity, leading to higher achievement.
- **Sense of Belonging:** Students thrive in math classrooms where they feel they are "personally accepted, respected, and included by others," feel psychologically safe, have their identities affirmed, and see themselves as capable math learners. The authors suggest that teachers can build a sense of belonging by positioning students as mathematically competent, fostering positive collaborative interactions with peers, and helping students examine their own beliefs about themselves as mathematicians.
- **Growth Mindset:** All people are motivated to learn when they see progress, feel encouraged, and know how to move forward in their learning. Students generally have strong beliefs about their mathematical abilities–often, these are fixed and negative. The authors suggest that mathematics educators, in particular, need to focus on helping students develop a growth mindset about their mathematical abilities through direct instruction, intentional practices, intentional and ambitious goal setting, and built-in opportunities for students to practice. This helps students overcome math anxiety and pursue challenging problems.
- **High-Quality Instruction:** The way mathematics educators design learning experiences can also promote students' mathematical growth. Well-organized classrooms, where students are engaged in meaningful tasks, lead to higher student achievement. When teachers also attend

to conceptual understanding, provide space for students to collaborate, and ensure learning experiences are culturally relevant and empowering, those outcomes improve even more. In another LPU study, the authors found that physical activity, joy, and opportunities for self-expression are also key factors in learning success. Educators must also recognize when something is hindering students' learning, actively work to eliminate that barrier, and offer evidence-based interventions in a timely manner to ensure students' continued progress.

Similar recommendations exist for creating the conditions for learning in language and literacy classrooms. When students learn in spaces where they feel safe and empowered, and where their voices and identities are valued, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning, leading to greater academic engagement and success.

Isn't That Universal Design for Learning?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a great place to start when considering learning environments that set students up for personalized learning success, as this approach builds support into the learning architecture from the outset. Even before knowing students individually, the research behind the UDL model suggests that it is possible to anticipate what a variety of students might need to successfully access and engage in learning based on decades of scientific insights into how humans learn. Just as an architect might incorporate ramps, sidewalk cutouts, and elevators into a building, educators can also *proactively* reduce physical, psychological, and other barriers in their classrooms, designing flexible learning environments and instruction that are inclusive of a range of learners. The UDL guidelines focus on building structures that offer multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression, allowing students to choose how to engage and thereby empowering them to become active, strategic, and purposeful learners. Its primary goal is to cultivate learner agency, which is critical for learning acceleration success. Thus, UDL is a great Tier 1 intervention that can and should be implemented in every classroom.



UDL, however, is not enough. As its name implies, the support offered by this framework is *universal*. As previously described, personalized learning occurs when "educators cater to the strengths, interests, and needs of students through instructional strategies, personalized goals, and action-oriented assessments in flexible learning environments" (Bingham et al., 2017). As educators learn more about their students, they will need to extend beyond UDL to continue tailoring their learning environment, along with their instructional approach, to meet the individual needs of students in their classroom. A teacher might, for example, ask students to self-assess their own beliefs about themselves as readers and then use that data to consider how to adapt their own language and instructional approach to support their students' confidence while they read. Building on a proactive UDL strategy of offering students choices of what they read, the teacher might offer a

range of modalities for students to access the text, such as providing an audio version of the text alongside the text itself, and thinking carefully about how they introduce these choice supports for students to avoid inadvertently stigmatizing options, thus avoiding any further erosion of students' self-efficacy as readers.

Personalizing Learning in the Classroom

Creating customized learning for students may seem like an overwhelming task for classroom teachers. However, there are numerous ways educators can increase personalization or student-centered instruction, even in a classroom of 30 students. Below is a list of sustainable, MTSS Tier 1-aligned approaches that build on practices many teachers already employ. These ideas can also serve as the basis for redesigning schools to promote student success, as outlined in the Learning Policy Institute article.

Start with UDL

Universal Design for Learning encourages educators to consider students who will require the most access and to design their learning environment with these students in mind, even before they enter the classroom. Consider doing an audit of your current classroom environment, instructional practices, materials, and resources using the UDL Guidelines as a rubric or these UDL observation tools. Where might you enhance accessibility or provide more flexible support? Beginning with these research-based structures will ensure that the conditions for learning acceleration are built into the classroom's architecture from the outset. For more on successfully implementing UDL in California classrooms, visit the UDL Journey Guide created by CCEE and CAST.

Focus on relationships and social connections

In socially connected learning environments, students are encouraged and able to make meaningful, supportive connections with teachers, experts, peers, and the content of their learning, which contributes to their ability to persist, deepen their commitment, and co-create together. Environments and practices that support students' social, emotional, and academic development create spaces for students to thrive–a key component of educational equity. *Start by getting to know students as whole people* – their strengths, concerns, experiences, interests, and self-perceptions, as well as their instructional knowledge levels- and build individual student profiles, such as this one from the New Teacher Center. Reflect on how you can use this information to adapt your learning environment and instruction to better align with your students' strengths, needs, identities, and experiences.

Intentionally build trust and positive professional rapport with students. Students work for teachers they trust, feel have their best interests in mind, value them as whole people, and who are supportive. Even small moves, such as greeting students at the door, learning their names and

using them consistently, asking students to share their experiences and perspectives, and thoughtfully sharing your own, stating and maintaining expectations, modeling appropriate interactions, and following through on consequences calmly and respectfully, make a huge difference. Visit the CCEE Field Guide on Accelerating Learning, Equity, and Well-being, and this article from the Institute of Education Sciences, for more strategies to intentionally build student-teacher relationships.

Students also need to know and trust one another. Do students know each other's names? Do they see each other as resources? Do they know how to talk with one another or resolve differences? Creating intentional opportunities for students to get to know one another, such as through open discussions, thoughtfully constructed cooperative learning activities, and reciprocal teaching, can significantly contribute to developing a community where every student feels safe, seen, and respected. This article from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments offers more ideas for promoting positive peer-to-peer relationships in classrooms. The Learning Accelerator also outlines various options for organizing collaborative student work.

Build student agency

When students are empowered and self-directed learners, they are more likely to remain engaged, persevere through challenges, and achieve academic success — a necessary mindset for learning acceleration. Students develop this agency by having a clear understanding of where they are and where they are going, with multiple opportunities and ways to get feedback, demonstrate competency, and plan next steps. This means creating regular and authentic opportunities for students to:

- **Foster self-awareness and a growth mindset**. Teachers can assess students' perceptions of themselves as learners of a particular content and then intentionally use language that models and promotes a growth mindset, creating learning experiences that support improved self-perception.
- **Engage in goal-setting and planning.** Create space for students to engage in meaningful analysis of their own data, reflection, goal-setting, and self-monitoring of progress, and learn how to monitor their own progress towards those goals.
- Repeatedly participate in **deliberate and sustained opportunities for practice** that build transferable and successful academic habits.
- **Receive actionable and meaningful feedback** from the teacher and peers that is connected to your goals and instructional objectives.
- **Build skills for self-directed learning and self-advocacy** by teaching students to work independently and providing them with regular opportunities to practice these skills. Having

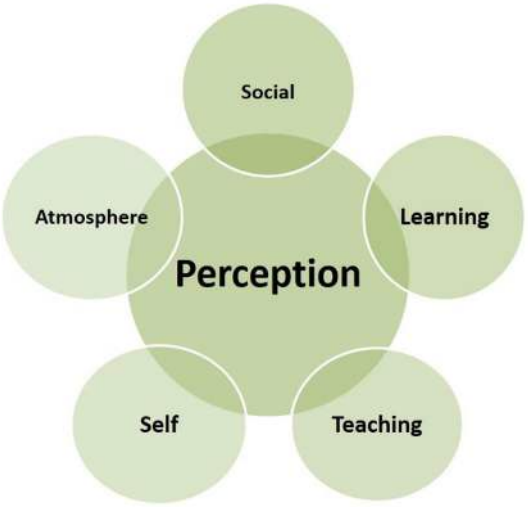
clear expectations and strategies will make execution easier and contribute to students' development of agency.

- **Connect and collaborate in meaningful ways with other students**, which both builds their sense of community and teaches them to interact with others to build knowledge and skills effectively.
- **Have meaningful choices.** An important strategy for building student agency is to provide students with some control over how and with whom they learn. Allowing students to choose the way they demonstrate their learning or select from several options for learning about content on a choice board a powerful option. This could also include choosing whether they want to work independently, with a partner, or in a group, or self-selecting into groups with more or less direct support from the teacher.

For more information on developing student agency, visit the UCLA Center for Community Schooling or explore this menu of student opportunity practices from AIR.

Use data to adapt the environment and instruction

Individualized learning starts with the assumption that the more we know about students, the better we can tailor our work to support their learning acceleration. So, gathering, interpreting, and using a range of data sources to continuously refine both the learning environment and instruction must be at the heart of our approach. Short-cycle formative assessment data aligned to instructional outcomes are most helpful in tailoring learning. Educators may also consider utilizing performance-based assessments, such as project-based learning and portfolios, as they can offer students a different, and perhaps more authentic, way to demonstrate their understanding and help teachers better understand where students are in their learning more clearly. As the image illustrates, educators will also want to regularly gather student perception data that helps teachers know more about how students feel about themselves, their learning progress, the classroom community, and the instruction they are receiving. This data can support quick changes in approach, inform students' goals, and help educators identify and address any barriers to learning that may persist. New Visions for Public Schools has created a toolkit of student perception surveys, which may serve as a helpful starting point.



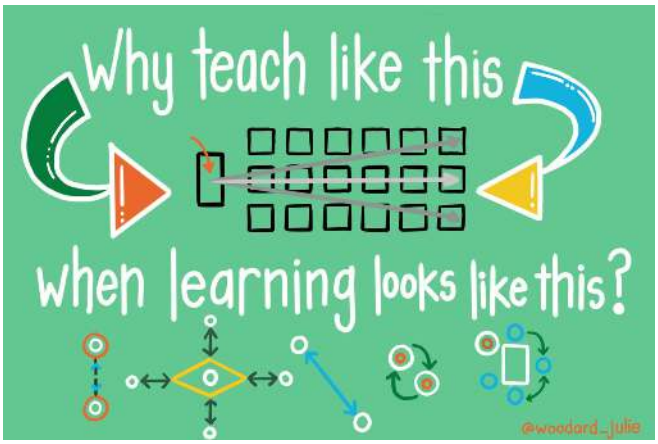
Plan meaningful instruction

The most important part of high-quality, individualized learning is the instruction facilitated by the teacher in the classroom. It must be standards-based, meaningful work that intentionally builds towards mastery. Such instruction regularly asks students to activate their current knowledge as a connector point for new learning. It engages students in authentic inquiry, helping them develop meaning through approaches such as problem-based

learning, project-based learning, hands-on activities, inquiry-based lessons, and virtual simulations. It scaffolds and then de-scaffolds learning as students show increased readiness and skill. It centers engaged collaboration with peers, prioritizing active learning over teacher talk time. Meaningful instruction in the context of rich learning experiences helps students see themselves as capable learners, engaged in worthy work, who can persevere through rigorous tasks with the support of their teacher and peers. Equitable Math notes that creating rigorous, grade-appropriate, and meaningful instruction that fosters deep content understanding is crucial for both learning acceleration and increased educational equity. Watch this video to see an example of meaningful instruction that builds student agency and engagement in action:
Student-Centered Learning: Building Agency and Engagement

Build in flexible learning

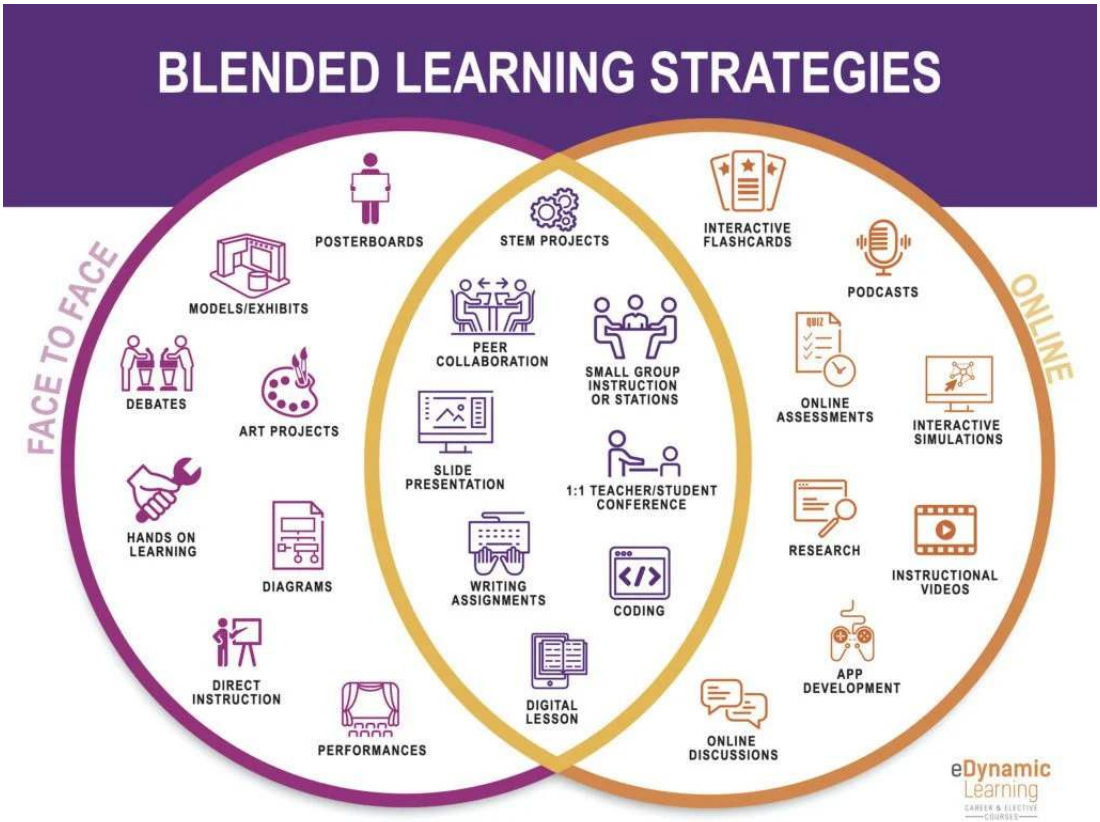
At the center of personalized learning is an educator who knows how to design a range of differentiated pathways for students to engage with new content and skills. Building on student profiles and formative data, educators can create a range of flexible learning configurations that help each student access just-in-time support to accelerate their learning. In addition to creating scaffolds that might support learners during traditional instruction, educators might consider the following:



- **Creating customized playlists** for students. A playlist is a sequence of resources and/or activities for students. Playlists enable students to practice just-right learning concepts at their own pace, allowing teachers to track their progress and offer support when needed. For example, Cisco Independent School District uses an individualized assignment chart that students work through at their own pace. Valor Collegiate in Tennessee personalizes math practice through self-directed and self-paced online playlists housed in Google Docs. Each playlist is focused on a grade-level math standard, allowing students to self-select a targeted playlist based on their individual needs. Playlists and other individualized learning pathways support student agency and self-direction, enabling students to progress at a pace that suits them best.
- **Organizing non-permanent small groups** that allow educators to pull students together to address a common need by providing short, highly-tailored instruction to best meet students where they are, build background knowledge, address a common misconception, or accelerate the learning of those ready to move forward more quickly. One example might be to create study groups as described in research by Jo Boaler. Study groups, consisting of 3-4 students, help expose students to different perspectives on any given subject and observe various approaches to a problem. They can be flexibly organized in the classroom around an assigned classroom task. Consider how you can use paraeducators, volunteers, student teachers, and other staff to create simultaneous small groups.
- **Using a rotational model** that incorporates both small-group instruction led by the teacher and other forms of learning, such as individual or station-based learning. Station rotations

involve students working in small groups that rotate through a series of learning experiences guided by the teacher, collaborating with peers, and/or working independently. For example, in Mississippi, the K-3 reading program's learning progression is designed as a rotational model, incorporating whole-group, small-group, and individual work. While traditionally an elementary school model, stations are equally powerful practice for middle and high school students. Block scheduling at the secondary level provides an ideal amount of time for this model. When the stations and groupings are carefully configured to ensure that each student's experience in each rotation aligns with their personal learning needs, rotational learning can be a meaningful and individualized approach to learning.

- **Trying flipped instruction.** In a flipped classroom, students watch a video lesson to learn the material at home, then come to school and have class time to work on problems where the teacher and fellow students are available to answer questions. Moving content online allows students to review challenging materials multiple times, watch lessons with captions to support language acquisition, or advance more quickly when they are ready. This allows for personalized pacing of instruction, freeing up time in class to practice, apply, collaborate, and explore the material in greater depth.
- **Offering blended learning.** Blended learning combines online learning opportunities with traditional place-based classroom methods. In some iterations, students learn content online at their own pace and then work with others to practice using that new knowledge (see the image for more ideas).



In other forms, blended learning may resemble station rotations, where one or more stations have students working online on content specifically tailored to them. Here is a sample rotation from Blended Learning Universe. Creating playlists (see description above) from sources such as Khan Academy can help expedite the creation of this material. For a deeper look, visit Thrive Public Schools' Blended Learning Rubric, which maps out not only their approach to blended learning but the key pieces needed to be successful within their blended model. It also allows an educator to map each student's level of mastery and application by assessing themselves within each strand. Blended Learning Universe also offers a tool to help design blended programs.

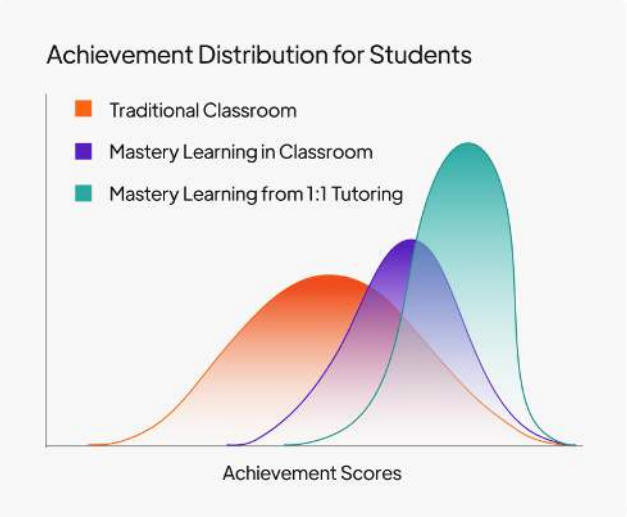
It is essential to note here that personalizing learning does not involve placing students in front of computers for extended periods of machine-based instruction. Instead, technology-based instruction is used as part of a holistic learning approach. Relatedly, education technology and Artificial Intelligence are best incorporated when their use is directed and facilitated by teachers purposefully. This SRI report, "Using Technology to Personalize Learning in K–12 Schools," may be helpful in finding the right balance.

Blended learning can also extend beyond the traditional classroom setting. Building and curating individualized learning materials requires a significant amount of time, expertise, and effort. Consider collaborating with your grade-level, subject-matter, and school teams to develop personalized learning options that align with grade-level outcomes and learning progressions, contain high-quality materials, and can be used across classrooms. For example, Lindsay High School implemented blended learning in its diverse rural district, with a particular focus on high school English and English language learner classes. Core strategies include implementing a performance-based system, enabling students to work across grade levels, creating customized playlists for learners, providing learner choice throughout the day, week, and year, allocating personalized learning time, and focusing on lifelong learning standards (noncognitive skills). You can read more about this work here.

Notice and respond when individual students need more. When individual students are still not able to meet learning targets, even with classroom-based personalized learning efforts, educators must move quickly to adjust their approach and prevent students from falling behind. Similarly, if students consistently exceed expectations and their pace of learning cannot be effectively supported by classroom efforts, adjustments must also be made to avoid inadvertently holding back students showing advanced proficiency. Offering immediate, on-demand, and targeted instructional interventions, as well as Tier 2 and 3 supports, is needed. Often, these interventions extend beyond the classroom, requiring whole team, school, or district structures. For example, Da Vinci Connect High School uses office hours and study groups to accelerate learning. Office hours are designed to facilitate small-group or one-on-one interactions between students and a teacher, with a small student-to-teacher ratio, either during class or at other times of the day. This allows students to participate more freely and openly with the teacher. It is also an opportunity for students and teachers to get to know each other. Other schools may turn to high-impact tutoring or other methodologies that reduce the student-to-teacher ratio, allowing for increased personalization (see below for more information about high-impact tutoring).

The Power of High-Impact Tutoring for Personalized Learning

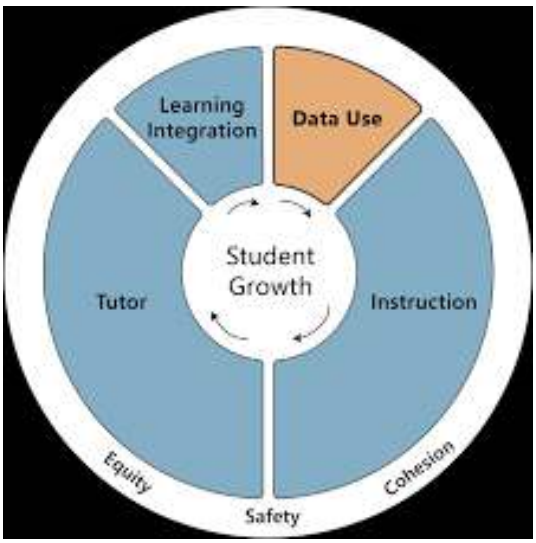
High-impact tutoring is unusually effective at accelerating learning because it is the ultimate personalized learning experience. In this model, students work one-on-one with an educator or in a very small group, in an intensive and targeted manner over a period of time. By responding to students' individual needs, complementing the existing curriculum, and supplementing (*not replacing*) students' quality Tier I classroom instruction as described above, high-impact tutoring leads to substantial learning gains for students and an increase in students' self-confidence. As Benjamin Bloom found in his Two Sigma Problem, "Most students have the potential to reach a high level of learning" when engaging in 1:1 learning. As the image shows, nearly 98% of students perform higher than baseline classroom performance, compared to 84-90% with master learning, because, when the educator is well trained and works consistently with the student, they can perfectly tailor their approach to the individual student and create an ideal learning environment for that learner. A review of 96 randomized control trials further finds that tutoring yields significant improvements–sometimes as much as twice the norm, making it the most effective intervention to have been tested. Those results hold across all grades and content levels, demonstrating a strong track record of closing achievement gaps between racial groups. For example, this Chicago study found that the Black-White math test score gap narrowed by almost a third in one year.



Not all tutoring initiatives have the same results, however. High-impact tutoring is most effective when it includes these design principles, with essential elements summarized below:

- **Consistent, effective, and relational tutors**. Tutors need to be highly knowledgeable, trained, and supported to effectively deliver targeted instruction and build positive, trusting relationships with students. They should also be closely supervised to ensure they provide the high-quality support that students deserve. Programs should provide quality initial training on content and facilitation skills, as well as ongoing support for tutors. Consistency is also key. Students need to meet with the same tutor throughout the program to foster trust and a strong relationship. Certified classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, teacher candidates, college students, or trained volunteers from organizations such as AmeriCorps can be great groups from which to recruit tutors.
- **High-quality curriculum and instructional materials**. High-impact tutoring complements the classroom curriculum and learning objectives. Therefore, it needs to be grounded in research and aligned with the standards taught in the class. Like content teachers, tutors should also have access to high-quality instructional materials that are aligned with state and local standards and curricula.

- **Frequent and consistent intensity**. Research indicates that tutoring sessions should occur three times per week, each lasting 30-60 minutes, for a total of 90 minutes per week to be most effective. Tutoring interventions conducted during the school day consistently yield greater student attendance and academic outcomes than those held after school or during the summer. However, if tutoring must be scheduled outside of school time, it is crucial for programs to promote and prioritize attendance and meaningful engagement. With the passage of major funding initiatives, such as the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P), California has made an unprecedented investment in supporting students beyond the traditional school day. This recorded webinar features California districts implementing high-impact tutoring programs during the school day and extended-day programming, leveraging ELO-P funds.
- **An appropriate teacher-to-student ratio**. Tutors should ideally work with small groups of not more than 1:3 to ensure personalized attention and to build strong relationships with students.
- **Data-Driven and Targeted.** Tutors need access to students' regular assessments so they can use that data to inform session content, adjust their approaches, and ensure continuously targeted interventions, rather than offering a generic or canned program. Establishing a feedback loop with teachers and tutors ensures tutoring support is tailored to the student and aligned to classroom instruction.



High-impact tutoring is more than just occasional help with homework. As this image from the National Student Support Accelerator illustrates, high-impact tutoring is a structured, evidence-based approach designed to provide students with the additional, intensive, and targeted layer of support they need to thrive academically as an MTSS Tier 2 or 3 intervention. Wondering if your LEA's current tutoring efforts or programming align with evidence-based quality standards? Check out the National Student Support Accelerator's Tutoring Quality Improvement System (TQIS) and LEA self-assessment tool.

For more on implementing a high-impact tutoring program, here are a few strong resources:

- The National Student Support Accelerator's High-Impact Tutoring District Playbook includes a workbook to guide districts through the development process, a toolkit for tutoring programs, a resource on aligning tutoring curricula with school curricula, and a searchable database of tutoring program providers.
- JPAL's guide to designing an evidence-based tutoring system offers a thorough examination of the components of an effective program, offering recommendations and guidance for districts.
- CCEE, in collaboration with JPAL, developed this learning path for implementing evidence-based tutoring programs for high impact.

- FutureEd at Georgetown's Tutoring Playbook includes helpful funding considerations and extensive tips and tools.
- This video primer, created by CCEE and the National Student Support Accelerator, provides a comprehensive overview of the model, best approaches, and how to get started, presented by tutoring expert Dr. Susanna Loeb.

Educators Need Strategic Supports And Professional Learning

Personalized learning, as described in this chapter, to promote learning acceleration, is not something individual educators can be expected to design and implement on their own. This model asks teachers to build positive learning environments, be well-versed in a range of approaches to learning, be knowledgeable about how to adjust their plans to meet student needs in real-time while also staying on track to meet grade-level learning targets, and know how to partner with tutors and others to offer aligned supports for students. Educators will need support in learning about and successfully implementing a range of new ideas related to personalized learning, as described in this section. This includes understanding what personalized learning is and how it is connected to learning acceleration. This section of the PAL can help guide some of that learning. They will also need support in harnessing the potential of instructional technology that the school or district is using to support personalized learning. ISTE 's Standards for Educators, the National Standards for Quality Online Teaching, and this resource on Providing Effective and Equitable Digital Learning for All Students may be helpful in guiding planning. There are additional resources in the mathematics and ELA/ELD frameworks on technology use.

It starts with leadership. Learning acceleration will only be truly successful when schools and systems allocate the necessary time in their schedules to make it happen. Classroom teachers can only control what happens in their classrooms, so school and system leaders need to set district-wide goals, create a shared understanding of what personalized learning means in their context, and create the foundation of systems, structures, communication, technologies, and collaboration required for personalized learning. These include finding and allocating resources, being creative with staffing, providing training and coaching, and making time for collaboration. For more information on how leaders can establish systems for learning acceleration success, visit the "Build Sustainable Learning Acceleration Systems" section of the PAL.

EMBED STRATEGIC SUPPORTS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

How can schools and educators support the acceleration of English learners and students with disabilities?

California's classrooms are some of the most diverse in the nation. All students deserve challenging, engaging school experiences that set them on a course for social and economic mobility. Yet achievement gaps among student groups—foster youth, students experiencing homelessness, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, Black and Latino students, English learners, and students with disabilities—have persisted over the past decade. As school systems focus on learning acceleration, it is important to continue centering the experiences and needs of historically underserved students and consider how to build new systems that acknowledge and work with the many assets they bring as a foundation for future learning. While all sections of this PAL speak to the experiences of English learners and students with special needs in the design of learning acceleration efforts, this section will dive deeper into strategies school systems can employ to ensure students who identify in one or more of these ways are honored and strategically supported in their classroom. Though this section of the PAL focuses on English learners and students with disabilities, mindfully incorporating these strategies when building your learning acceleration plan will indeed benefit all students. In sum, focusing on diverse learners is not just about equity; it is a powerful strategy for accelerating learning for every student by creating a more inclusive, engaging, and effective learning environment.

Strategic Supports for English Learners

California is rich in student linguistic resources. As of 2023, approximately 40% of all K-12 students, or 2 of every 5, live in homes where a language beyond English is spoken. Slightly more than half of those K-12 public school multilingual students are fluent in English while nearly 18%, or 1 in 5 are currently classified as English learners (ELs). With the highest concentration and number of ELs in the United States, ensuring positive learning experiences with robust instructional support for multilingual students is critical, not only for their own current educational experience, but also for their future and the ultimate success of California.

Supporting English Learners

Learning acceleration thrives when lessons attend to ELs' language development needs and concurrently when educators deliver opportunities to grow language proficiency of all students during instruction across content areas. To do so, the state of California has provided clear guidance to educators on how to move ELs forward along the English Language Development Standards (ELD) continuum. Coupled with the state's ELA/ELD curriculum framework, these two complimentary resources guide educators in designing and providing effective instruction in all subject areas from pre-K to graduation. They advocate that every educator views themselves as a language instructor by becoming deeply fluent in using these tools, in conjunction with their content area curriculum guidance. As promoted by the auspices of Universal Design for Learning, planning instruction that

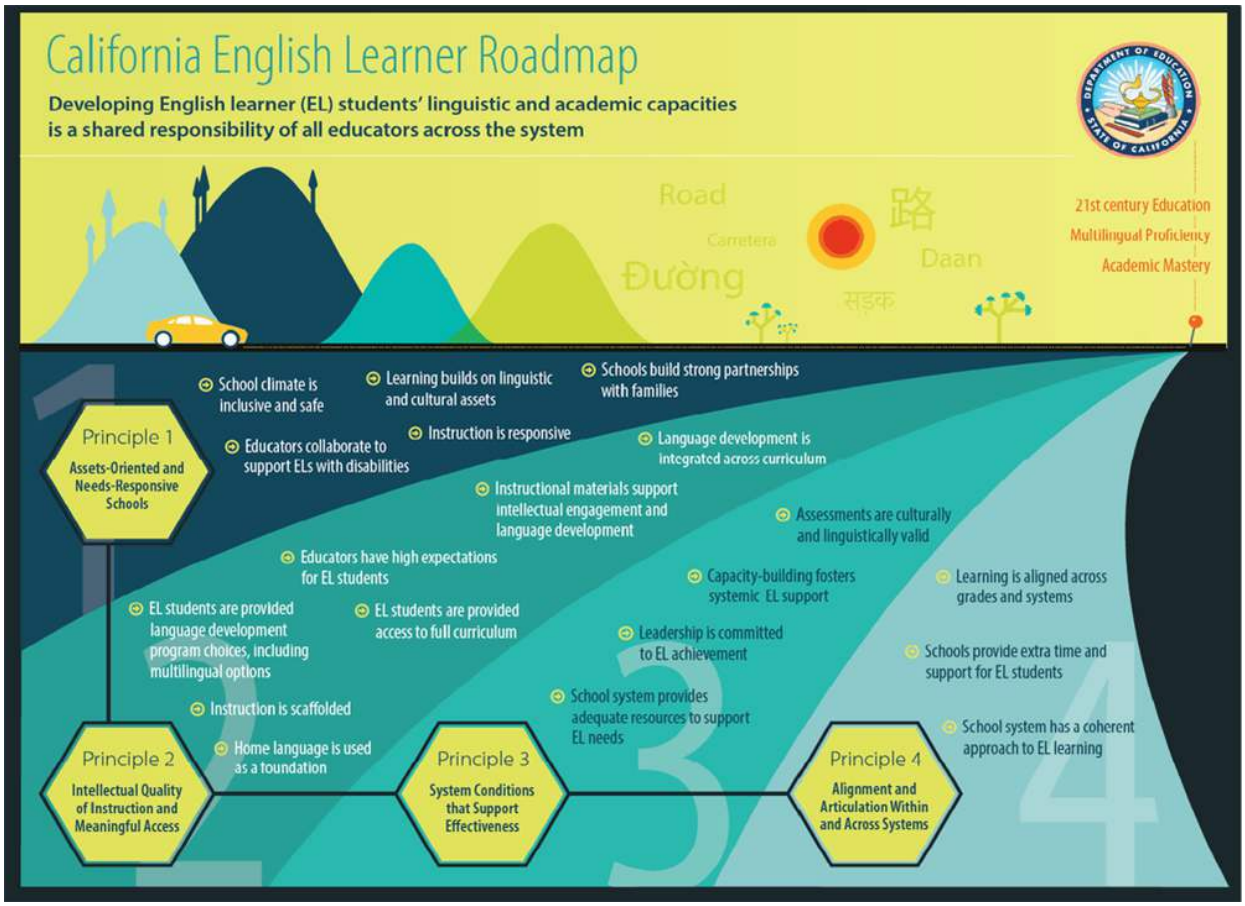
embeds support for language learners from the outset results in access, participation, and language learning excellence for all learners in every classroom.

Some classroom teachers find it daunting to build English language and literacy skills into their content-area instruction, especially when their classrooms contain students with varying levels of English proficiency. Nonetheless, research shows that all students, English-only and English learners alike, benefit when educators intentionally provide explicit instruction and opportunities to practice using academic English in context.

To guide educators, the California Department of Education has curated an in-depth resource called the English Learner Roadmap. The CA EL Roadmap builds on the statutory policy by providing local educational agencies with a dynamic set of guidance materials, including principles, case studies, instructional strategies, toolkits, rubrics, and crosswalks for planning key services, such as during the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) development process. As a keystone influence for schools, the roadmap presents a unified vision: English learners should fully and meaningfully participate in a rich, rigorous education from early childhood through high school, achieve high English proficiency, grade-level mastery, and have access to multiple-language learning opportunities. The Roadmap serves as a strong resource for educators and systems looking to center the experiences, strengths, and needs of ELs as they rethink systemic school and classroom learning experiences with learning acceleration in mind. Its core principles and approach to supporting ELs are well-aligned with those covered elsewhere in this PAL:

- Principle One: Assets-Oriented and Needs Responsive Schools. Ensuring students and their families are recognized, known, and valued, assuring learning happens in a safe, affirming, and inclusive manner.
- Principle Two: Intellectual Quality of Instruction and Meaningful Access. Offering learning that is intellectually rich and developmentally appropriate, with integrated language and content development and rich participation opportunities.
- Principle Three: System Conditions that Support Effectiveness. Establishing a school system that provides adequate resources and support for ELs and their teachers, supports, assessments, and materials are valid and culturally aligned, and leadership is committed to EL achievement.
- Principle Four: Alignment and Articulation Within and Across Systems. Transforming the school system to provide a coherent approach to EL learning across grades and schools with additional time built in for EL support.

These principles are also outlined in the image below.



For any educator seeking to engage in a self-learning journey to understand and apply the principles, San Diego County Office of Education's Resource Guide offers an excellent self-paced opportunity to explore each principal. Moreover, the straightforward toolkits developed by Californians Together and shared by numerous COEs across the state, are especially practical and applicable for teachers and administrators desiring hands-on recommendations.

One important fundamental component for accelerating the success of English Learners, established by California's policy and framework expectations, is the dual requirement to plan and deliver the synergistic instruction of both Designated English Language Development (D-ELD) and Integrated English Language Development (I-ELD). D-ELD, which is a dedicated time for providing ELs academic language learning, should be considered core instruction, a subject matter of its own, and dependent on the ELD Standards with connections to other subject matter standards. I-ELD, on the other hand, is the purposeful design for teaching academic English during each content area for every student, which actually accelerates all students' learning. Together, both forms for language development ensure all students become fluent in language, literacy and every other subject. Samples of how each can be delivered are exemplified in resources available through SEAL (Sobrato Early Academic Language), a nonprofit dedicated to improving educational outcomes for multilingual learners. Educators may benefit from perusing and establishing professional learning opportunities through their YouTube channel, with practical and inspiring digital video exemplars of instruction, for Kindergarten, second grade, fourth grade, oral language analysis, etc.

In sum, numerous key state resources document and provide guidance for accelerating learning by planning for and confirming that ELs have access to asset-based, high-quality learning experiences grounded in data and occurring in well-developed learning conditions. Under the guidance of knowledgeable and caring educators, their learning can and does accelerate.

Supporting Long-Term English Learners

Recently the state added a new long-term English learner (LTEL) category to the California School Dashboard. The recent enactment requires that LTELs be included in the planning for each district's annually updated Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). LTELs are now explicitly defined as students who have been English Learners for six or more years without adequate progress in English acquisition.

Typically, it takes 5 to 7 years to develop academic English proficiency. Nonetheless, some notable school districts have managed to reduce the average duration needed to achieve English fluency. Sample successful strategies implemented by districts working to decrease LTEL numbers in their community include:

- Establishing teacher **partnerships with families and students** themselves to understand EL status, to collaborate on the goal of reclassification, to recognize the value of achieving English fluency (especially to provide enrollment flexibility into college prerequisite courses as ELs approach or enter secondary schools), and to jointly monitor progress.
- Using **standardized assessments** like the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) with clear benchmarks (e.g., Overall Level 4) and using the ELPAC practice assessments to prepare for the state assessment and debrief/analyze the practice test results. Dialogue around assessment results also serves the purposes of sharing information about language mastery, reinforcing belongingness and belief in capacity, and recommending next steps for learning.
- Provide **targeted support for ELs with disabilities**, including alternate pathways, via IEP team collaborations, use of alternative assessments as merited, or utilization of formative data such as student portfolios.

Still, for many districts, low reclassification rates and slow progress on the ELPAC signal that English learners in their schools may lack appropriate or sufficient support, barring them from accessing the full school curriculum.

Research shows that students designated as LTEL are, for example, disproportionately male, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and/or have special education needs. They are also much more likely to begin school with an English acquisition level of 1 (beginner) and score poorly on the English Language Proficiency Assessment for California (ELPAC) year after year. Recognizing the risk factors early can help early grades educators rethink the kinds of support they offer to students and their families. They can adopt an accelerator's mindset and check into their beliefs by studying systems that show ELs can and do succeed when learning circumstances are optimal. Educators can become advocates by ensuring asset-based instruction, the data they collect, and instilling a shared belief in capacity building with the students under their care. For ELs who may also have learning disabilities (dually-identified students), determining the nature of the disability separate from language development needs is paramount to tailor instruction to their unique needs. The *California*

Practitioners' Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities provides guidance to teachers and specialists in grades transitional kindergarten (TK)/K–12 to help them appropriately identify and support EL students with disabilities. The guide presents a variety of methods to assist practitioners in providing the highest quality, most culturally and linguistically responsive educational program to all students. Additionally, Project MUSE, led by Imperial County, offers a variety of resources and training to help LEAs advance the achievement of ELs with disabilities. For every typology of multilingual student, offering personalized early interventions and resources that address both language development and other learning needs to ensure continued success and avoid long-term language learning challenges.

For students already designated as LTELs, identifying them promptly, and providing interventions for uplifting literacy, socioemotional well-being and other factors affecting engagement will be key to helping educators better personalize their approach to supporting and accelerating the learning of these students from this point forward. For example, LTELs often have higher rates of chronic absenteeism and lower rates of high school graduation than other ELs, so building in communication structures and collaborations with families and caregivers of LTELs is critical.

Strategic Supports for Students With Disabilities

During the 2024-25 school year, 865,213 students (~ 13% or 1 in 8) of California's students were eligible to receive special education support and services. The dynamic needs and assets of students with disabilities warrants some additional thinking about how to best support their academic acceleration.

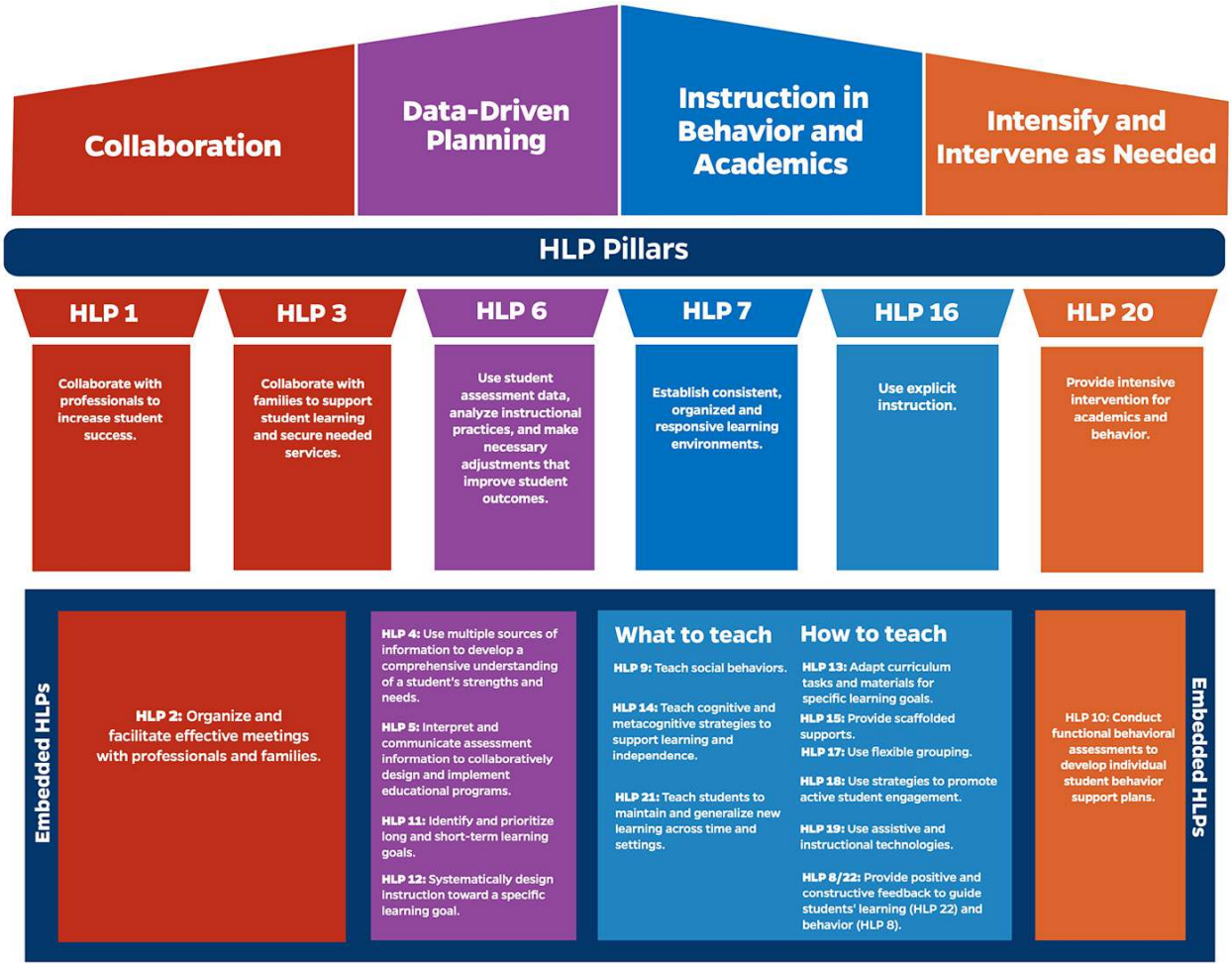
Every student benefits from the type of robust Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Tier 1 (universal) and Tier 2 (supplemental) aligned learning acceleration supports outlined in this PAL. Starting with a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach, offering strategic selection of content, spiraling curriculum, using multiple instructional modalities and strategies, gathering regular data to personalize learning, and planning targeted interventions all benefit students with identified special needs. Embedding these strategies into every classroom will increase the likelihood that each student can find success. In doing so, schools create a valuable opportunity for struggling students to get the support they need, thereby potentially reducing the need for a special education referral.

While raising the levels of personalization may reduce the need for more intensive support, like an evaluation for special education, it does not eliminate it. There will always be a few students who require additional support and accommodations, which is the point of a multi-tiered system of support. From a learning acceleration perspective, all students are first provided with the high-quality instruction and support necessary to be successful in the general education classroom. Utilizing the MTSS model for all students ensures every student can succeed and accelerate their learning with the appropriate level of support.

Rethinking the role of special education in learning acceleration

LEAs that are successful with learning acceleration efforts view special education as an opportunity to further leverage the strengths of the student and the system, such as *intervention specialists and special educators with specialized knowledge* in educational data collection, multi-modal instruction,

targeted interventions, and parent/caregiver partnership. The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center created a set of 22 high-leverage special education practices that all teachers of students with disabilities should master for use across a variety of classroom contexts. These practices can be found in the image below, and you can read more about them here. These practices center on the same core learning acceleration techniques outlined elsewhere in this PAL-collaboration, data-driven planning, high-quality instruction, and intensive intervention as needed. This alignment further solidifies the importance of strategically leveraging special education programming in a school or system's learning acceleration efforts.

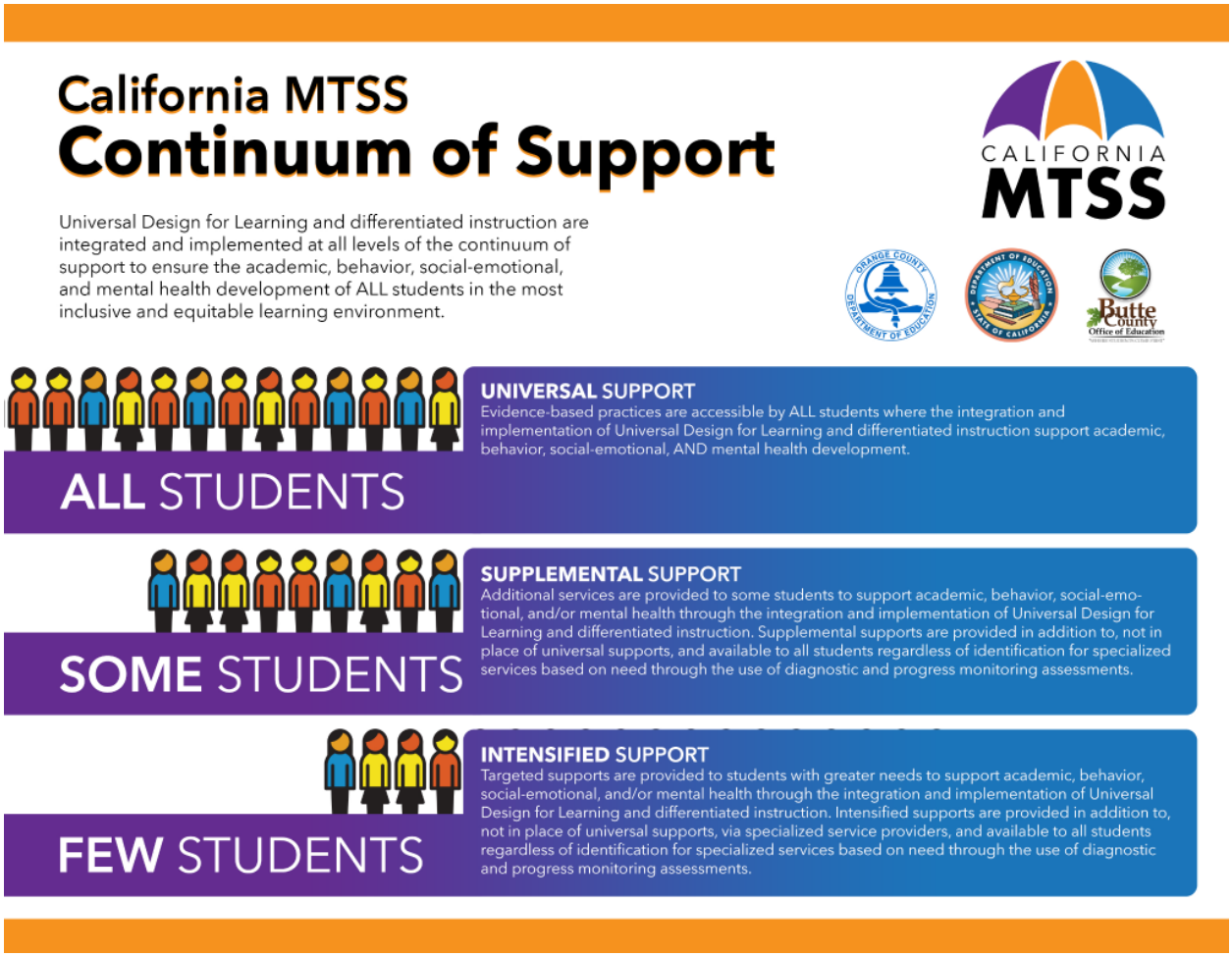


California's System Improvement Leads (SIL) project elevates these high-leverage special education practices along with many other resources for California LEAs. The SIL project aims to create equitable and cohesive school systems where students with disabilities receive high-quality instruction and support leading to success. How can teams determine whether their LEA has the cohesion and infrastructure necessary to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities? CCEE's Basic Components Tool can be used to assess your special education infrastructure for essential components of an effective system. Ensuring these basic components are in place will ensure your system is primed to successfully implement high-leverage special education practices.

Component 1 of the Basic Components Tool is collaboration and communication, which calls for authentic, active partnerships between special education and general education teams. By working together, they can collectively ensure high-leverage practices are being used in general education classrooms at both the Tier 1 (universal) and Tier 2 (supplemental) levels, that additional scaffolds are thoughtfully built for students who need them, and that all students have the support they need to accelerate their learning in the general education classroom. For example, general and special educators can:

- Support robust Tier 1 best, first instruction for every student through consultation, inclusive learning environment design, positive behavior supports, data collection and progress monitoring, collaborative planning, material modification, and co-teaching.
- Collaborate to create more intensive and targeted Tier 2 supplemental supports for students who are showing a need for additional background knowledge, prerequisite skill development, or social, emotional, or behavioral support. These can occur in class, such as through small group instruction or the development of individualized playlists for students. Or, they may offer strategic pull-out learning experiences such as high-impact tutoring or other RtI^2 or PBIS-aligned supports which, as the image illustrates, are considered components of the comprehensive MTSS system.
- If individual students need more intensive support, even with robust Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports, special educators can guide Tier 3 intervention development. This can include intensified support provided by specialized service providers, a referral for an evaluation, and high-quality Individualized Education Program (IEP) development for some students. Special educators can then collaborate with general educators to implement Tier 3 supports, or IEP accommodations and modifications in the classroom alongside continued robust Tier 1 and Tier 2 support. Strong tiered support provided in inclusive settings ensures that students are only removed from the general education setting as a last resort.

The image below provides a visual overview of the MTSS tiers described above.



A note on Dyslexia

In recent years, dyslexia has garnered increased attention due to advancements in research, growing awareness, and advocacy among educators and parents. As outlined in the California Dyslexia Guidelines, dyslexia is defined by the International Dyslexia Association as a specific learning disability in the area of reading, specifically phonological processing. It is often characterized by unexpected difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition, poor spelling, and decoding abilities, stemming from a deficit in the phonological component of language, even when students have had strong literacy instruction. It can affect all types of students, including English learners. For many students, referrals for special education testing for reading-related concerns occur at the transition from learning to read, to reading to learn (around third or fourth grade), though it may take longer to diagnose English learners because their challenges might be masked by their English language learning process.

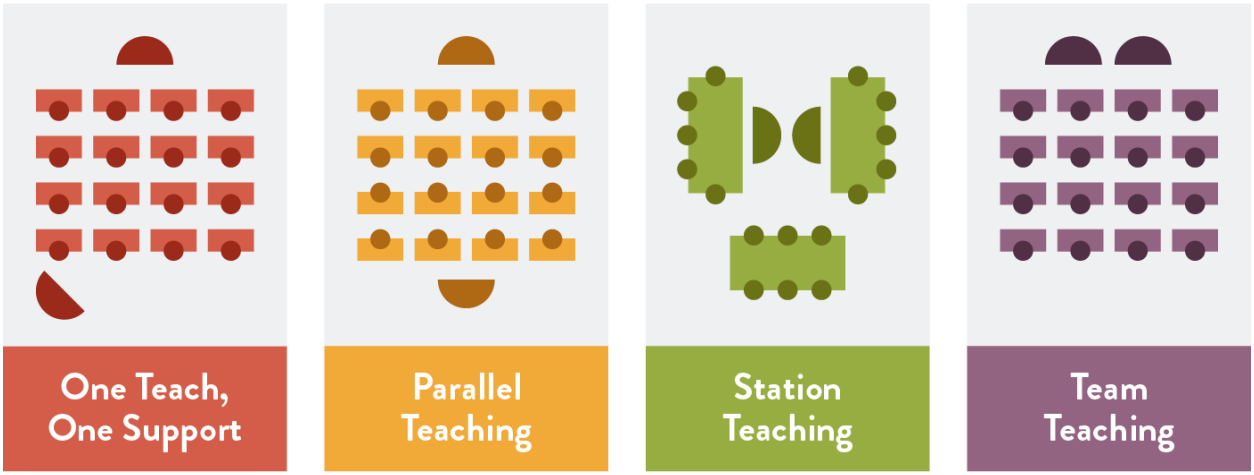
To qualify for special education services, a student must be identified as having a disability, and that disability must have an adverse effect on their ability to benefit from their education. For this reason, some students diagnosed with dyslexia may not qualify for special education services. However, when schools implement the kinds of robust, multi-sensory, tiered, personalized learning acceleration-aligned instructional model outlined in this PAL, the diagnosis and services offered by special education may not be necessary. *Students with dyslexia particularly benefit from early universal screening and strong structured literacy instruction, especially in grades K-3.* These instructional

components should be built into the architecture of every MTSS-aligned learning acceleration-focused classroom. California has demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting students with dyslexia with strategic investments in recent years. For example, the state funded the California Dyslexia Initiative to build capacity and resources across California's educational systems to address the needs of struggling readers and students with dyslexia. Additionally, beginning in the 2025-26 school year, California's kindergarten, first, and second grade students will be annually screened with newly approved tools for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, providing early identification and support for 1.2 million students.

Educators Need Strategic Supports And Professional Learning

Learning acceleration requires every classroom teacher to see themselves as competent professionals able to work with every child that walks into their classroom. This requires school system articulation and professional development that empowers educators to utilize the high-impact practices described in this PAL and, specifically, in this section. This includes:

- **Deepening educators' instructional and pedagogical knowledge to support diverse learners.** Offer ongoing professional learning and coaching to all educators on the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to support diverse students (including those with disabilities, English learners, dually-identified students, and students with dyslexia) through robust Tier 1 (universal) and Tier 2 (supplemental) instruction. Topics might include: UDL, explicit instruction, asset-based pedagogies, structured literacy instruction, and culturally-sustaining pedagogy. Consider a close look at the California ELD standards, and ensure every educator knows how to guide the simultaneous development of content knowledge and language development, and how to measure the development of language *and* content mastery. Using resources like Stanford University's Understanding Language Project and biliteracy resources provided by CDE are a good start.
- **Ensuring technologies for learning are accessible to all students.** Integrating digital learning for all students requires considering how devices and tools, as well as the internet, should be equitably accessible to all students–including English learners and students with special needs. Educators will benefit from guidance on how to best utilize these tools to increase access to content and learning experiences that meet students where they are on their learning acceleration journeys.
- **Teaching professional partnership skills.** General educators, special educators, English language development specialists, tutors, paraprofessionals, and other intervention specialists benefit from guidance on how to effectively partner to meet the unique needs of every student. This could include professional learning around co-teaching models (see image), co-planning, and collaborative data analysis strategies.



- **Creating regular collaboration time for general and specialized educators.** Establish time and structures for teachers supporting the same students to collaborate, share data and ideas, and use data and best practices to plan instruction. Build shared accountability, mutual respect and even fun to strengthen the collaborative relationships among all teaching staff.
- **Supporting parent/caregiver connections.** Educators will need guidance and support in how to communicate and collaborate with the parents and caregivers of both ELs and students receiving special education services. For example, learning to utilize technologies or services that facilitate communication and resource sharing across languages, or how to provide feedback on students' progress against ELD standards or IEP goals, would be worthwhile professional learning topics. Make time to establish these strong connections, as communication between classrooms and homes can often be at the bottom of a long list of tasks to accomplish.
- **Advocating for multilingual learning even as students develop their academic mastery in English**. With the advent of greater technological options for language enrichment, the long history of evidence proving the value of multilingual instruction, and the community-building value of incorporating student/family languages and cultures into classrooms, every school has additional opportunities to acquire new languages. Celebrate students with biliteracy pathway awards or the official California State Seal of Biliteracy. If a comprehensive dual language education program is out of reach, other multilingual pathways before or after school can still bring joyful learning, increase student belongingness, and create the compassionate caring between educators and students that is at the heart of interventions for learning acceleration.

BUILD SUSTAINABLE LEARNING ACCELERATION SYSTEMS

How can schools redesign their systems to support accelerated learning?

A shift to a learning acceleration model provides every student, particularly those who have been systematically left behind by traditional schooling, with the opportunity to access high-quality instruction that leads to academic achievement and social-emotional well-being. Individual teachers in classrooms alone cannot make this happen, however. To support effective learning acceleration, schools and districts can engage in systems thinking to implement several structural changes that *create the right conditions for educators and students to sustainably and permanently shift toward a learning acceleration model*. California's Statewide System of Support exists to assist schools and districts with this type of deep, layered, and systemic change.

This section examines five areas that school system leaders can strategically focus on to create the conditions for a sustainable and successful transformation into a learning acceleration-focused system.

Adopt an Acceleration Strategy

Systems that have had the most success in transitioning to a learning acceleration model have all adopted a continuous improvement approach to their work. Continuous improvement is a process of identifying what is working and what needs to change, developing a sound, evidence-based plan, implementing the plan, and using data to monitor outcomes and make timely adjustments to improve those outcomes. This approach is based on the belief that making sustainable change takes time, involves collective effort, and requires constant adaptation based on data and learning. While there are several versions of the model, all include some version of the components described below:

1. **Shared vision and goals**
   Everyone in the organization needs to be able to answer the question, *What are we trying to do, and why are we doing it?* in the same way. This requires a shared and clear vision of what successful learning acceleration looks like for all students, as well as a common language to discuss what learning acceleration is and what it isn't. This shared vision and set of goals should be reflected in key documents such as your Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), tech plan, and MTSS plan, to ensure learning acceleration is centered in your work, efforts are aligned toward that purpose across all parts of the system, and visible for all partners to see. Designing or selecting a model for learning acceleration that illustrates that vision, such as the BRIDGES to Learning Acceleration model, may be helpful in creating a shared vision and language for the community. Then, this Learning Acceleration Roadmap toolkit can help school sites and/or districts to implement and iterate learning acceleration objectives to support students in reaching grade-level standards.

2. **Engaged and motivated partners**

When educators, students, families, and communities are deeply involved in creating solutions that address their own unique needs, those solutions are more likely to be effective and equitable. District and school teams may consider convening a group of partners representative of the community to build, execute, and communicate the system or school acceleration plan. Authentic collaboration with your community will help clarify the reasons behind this change and foster motivation to engage. This PAL may be a valuable resource for building awareness, urgency, and knowledge amongst partner groups. Acknowledge and make space for the emotions that will arrive as you collectively work through the stages of change. Establish clear processes for communication, dialogue, and feedback to ensure that ideas are heard, challenges are thoroughly addressed, and all community members remain engaged. Be sure the needs of students and families, especially the most vulnerable, as well as the voices of teachers, school leaders, and staff, are incorporated throughout the process of developing your approach to learning acceleration. To learn more about establishing authentic community partnerships for systems change, check out the CCEE's Community Engagement Initiative's Learning Modules.

3. **Ongoing and sustainable data use to drive continuous improvement**
   Learning acceleration — both at the classroom and system levels — requires careful and regular analysis of data to determine next steps. All partners need to be able to answer questions such as *What outcomes are we trying to achieve?* And *how will we know our efforts are making a difference?*

   Start by assessing your current state. *Where is your system in relation to your goals? Where are your strengths? What do you already have in place? Where do you need to focus? Who is experiencing success and who is not?* Ask educators, leaders, students, and families for input, walk through classrooms to understand what is happening in instruction now, and review current data, materials, lessons, and resources in use to gain a clear picture of where your system stands.

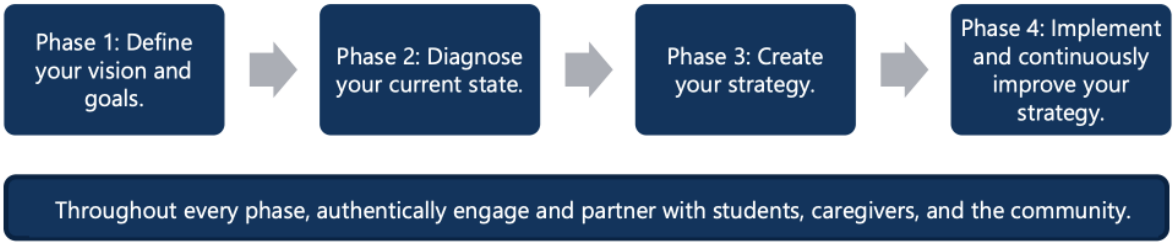
   Create a sustainable data collection system. Know what implementation and impact data you need to collect and from which sources, and build pathways to ensure you can access and use that data in a timely manner. If you can utilize existing data sources to gather this information, it can reduce user fatigue and increase the sustainability of your data collection efforts. Remember that data collection takes time and several sources to fully understand what is happening. Start with what you have and build sustainably from there.

   Then, set regular times for your team to review, analyze, reflect on, and act on the data to support quick course corrections. Create structures to review, synthesize, and analyze the data. Set aside time with the appropriate partners at strategic points to review the findings, ask questions, make adjustments, and determine next steps. Ensure the process is straightforward and transparent to all parties involved. Determine when and how you will share your findings with others. Sharing and including appropriate partners in the creation of your plan helps make everyone accountable.

Use the data to create a roadmap to success that is aligned with goals and incorporates input from engaged participants. Be sure to include clear deliverables at each step to help everyone stay on track and ensure a smooth process. Create space for the team to meet regularly to update the process, problem-solve, and share ideas as new data becomes available.

Commit to continuous improvement. Signal to engaged participants early that this will be an interactive and iterative process linked to real-time data. This means changes will be made as your team learns, so flexibility will be a critical mindset for success. Frameworks can help your team develop a common language and a clear vision of the process, making the work more efficient and collaborative. Consider using existing continuous improvement models and resources to help ease the burden, such as those listed on CDE's Continuous Improvement Resources webpage.

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) developed this graphic as part of their Learning Acceleration Guide to illustrate the components of a learning acceleration strategy that may be useful in visualizing the process described above.



For more on utilizing a systems thinking approach to engage in continuous improvement for the purposes of learning acceleration, explore the following resources:

- Policy Analysis for California Education's (PACE) report on CCEE's Intensive Assistance Model pilot, "*What Does It Take to Accelerate the Learning of Every Child?*"
- CCEE's Levers for System Change self-assessment tool
- CCEE and Dr. Douglas Reeves: The New Model of Change Leadership
- CCEE and TNTP: Video: Developing and implementing a Learning Acceleration Plan

Invest in Essential Resources for Effective Acceleration

Building learning acceleration-centric systems requires investment in the resources necessary to create healthy working conditions for both adults and students within the system. In alignment with the adopted learning acceleration strategy, systems need to:

1. **Allocate funding toward the acceleration strategy.**
   If learning acceleration is at the center of education system decision-making, funding should follow. High-impact tutoring, high-quality instructional materials, instructional coaching, professional learning, and education technology to support personalization all require funding to begin and sustain over time. Collaborate with your team to explore potential repurposing of funding to support learning acceleration efforts. Systems may also want to examine existing resources that can be leveraged to support learning acceleration, like the

Learning Recovery Emergency Block Grant. Accessing these funds requires completing a system needs assessment that can be organized around similar goals to learning acceleration. Aligned with resource prioritization, improvement, and accountability plans, like the Local Control Accountability Plan, should be developed so goals reflect a commitment to learning acceleration.

2. **Invest in High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) for all grade levels and courses.**
   Research has consistently shown that learning acceleration is more successful when educators have access to grade-level-aligned, culturally relevant, and high-quality instructional materials, along with the accompanying assessments and learning progressions that support the design of impactful and targeted instruction. Systems can ensure educators and tutors have the tools to assess student understanding and identify areas where prerequisite skills need to be addressed. Visit the Strategic Content Instruction section for more on this topic.

3. **Get creative about time and structures.**
   Finding the time during the school day to offer flexible learning without taking away from core instruction will require some creativity. Research has shown that when teachers and schools adopt new models and structures for organizing student learning, which often involve a bold rethinking of time, grouping, and staffing models, students make rapid gains. Systems can work with school leaders and educators to review data alongside contextual and community needs and preferences to rethink:

   - The daily schedule. How might you rework the daily schedule to integrate Tier 2 and 3 supports and personalized acceleration structures into the school day? Does your schedule allow for cross-class or grade groupings?
   - Access to high-impact tutoring. Tutoring is most effective when students work with the same highly effective tutor at least three times a week for 30-60 minutes during the school day. School systems can be strategic about planning when tutoring will happen and how. For more on this topic, visit the Conditions for Personalized Learning section.
   - The school calendar. How might before- or after-school opportunities, summer programs, or extended-year supports provide additional opportunities for every student to access the personalized learning opportunities they need to accelerate their progress? How can the system ensure every student can access these opportunities?
   - Staffing. How can decisions about retention, assignment, and recruitment be developed based on data about student needs and educator strengths to maximize this important resource?

4. **Partner with organizations with demonstrated expertise.**
   School systems do not need to reinvent everything required to implement learning acceleration effectively. To ensure all students receive tailored learning, consider partnering with carefully vetted organizations that have expertise in your curriculum, high-impact tutoring, or other areas of need. For example, partner with a local college or university to

offer students work-study funding to serve as tutors. Or, select a company that offers high-quality tutors using this guidance for tutor provider selection created by the National Student Support Accelerator. Similarly, your organization may want to consider where instructional materials are selected and how educators learn to use them effectively. For example, your organization may want to consider using guidance offered by the California Curriculum Collaborative or partnering directly with them to plan your approach.

Additionally, consider forming connections with community-based organizations (CBOs) that are committed to supporting students' learning. Partnering with organizations that may already be working with students in after-school programs, for example, can help with knowledge development, resource alignment, and staffing are all crucial parts of a learning acceleration success plan. If your school is looking to refine or expand those partnerships, county offices of education often have lists of approved service providers that may provide a good starting point.

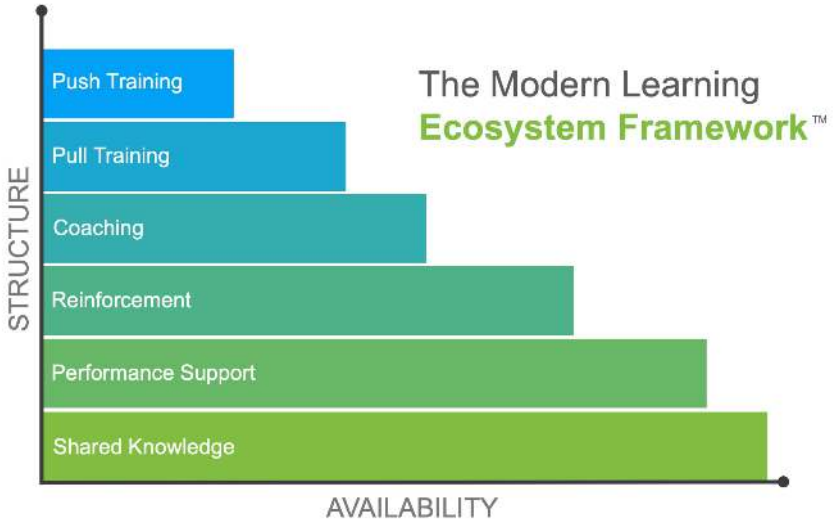
5. **Select technology that supports learning acceleration for educators and students.** Thoughtfully selected technology can enable enhanced personalization and engagement for students, creating more supportive and equitable learning cultures in schools and districts. It can also expedite the process of data collection and analysis for educators, thereby creating more time for them to focus on personalized planning and adaptation – all crucial aspects of learning acceleration. Adopting personalized learning technologies that align with the school or district's vision of personalization for learning acceleration and supporting educators in creating content for blended learning, playlists, or flipped instruction is a positive step school systems can take to enhance learning acceleration efforts. As systems consider technology, it is also essential to consider issues of equitable access. For example, if educators are transitioning to a flipped instruction model, how will schools ensure that every student can access the material at home? Reducing barriers to technological use is just as important as investing in the technology itself.

Collectively, these investments ensure the conditions for learning acceleration exist at the systems level and allow educators and leaders to focus on the work of personalizing learning for students, thereby decreasing the time it takes to establish a successful learning acceleration system.

Support Educators As They Implement Acceleration

Educators will need consistent time, professional learning, and support to effectively make the shift to learning acceleration. Remember, learning acceleration requires all educators to teach in new ways —relying on a shift in mindset and practice—so everyone will need support in making this change. Remember that change is part of the improvement process journey. Our work in education is always evolving in response to what we learn about students' needs, new research on learning, etc. So, building systems that expect and support adaptation to ensure teaching and learning reflect current understandings and best practices is essential. These systems should include scaffolded supports for educators to ensure that every educator develops the necessary knowledge, confidence, and skills to make lasting change.

The Modern Learning Ecosystem (MLE) Framework, illustrated in the image, provides a model for the type of layered professional support that effectively fosters lasting change. The model emphasizes the importance of offering layered support through a range of structures, from formal to informal, and with varying availability, from time-bound to on-demand. This model can help systems think about what effective professional learning support for educators will need to include, from one-time mandatory training to opportunities each day to share knowledge with colleagues. Intentionality around the array of job-embedded support ensures transfer of knowledge to inform sustained change in practice.



However, the MLE Framework is only one model for designing learning and development structures. Regardless of the model, addressing the following tenets as you design professional learning support is critical:

1. **Identify priority knowledge and skills for adults.**
   Like the learning acceleration system as a whole, systems will need to map out the adult learning competencies necessary for effectively meeting their accelerated learning goals. Use the topics described in this playbook to guide your thinking and assess the current assets and needs of your community. Then, prioritize key needs and offer professional learning to address identified knowledge gaps.

2. **Offer targeted, high-quality, and ongoing professional learning.**
   Provide high-quality professional development focused on topics such as strategically selecting content, designing effective instructional strategies, using data to inform instruction, personalizing learning, supporting diverse needs of learners, and creating effective learning environments (see other areas of this PAL for specifics). If the system utilizes high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), it is also crucial that professional learning be designed to support educators in understanding why these materials are useful and how to effectively use them in their contexts. Review the essential elements of curriculum-based professional learning and align professional learning plans to them. This can be delivered in both a "push" format (formal, time-bound professional learning) and a "pull" format (on-demand learning).

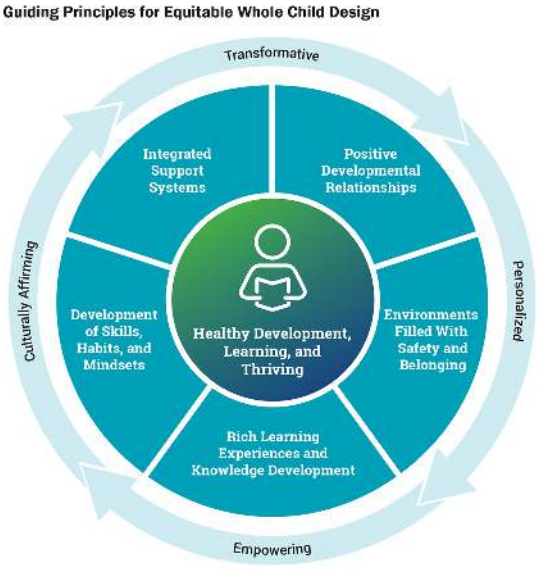
   Regardless of the format, it is imperative that professional learning is of high quality. According to California's Quality Professional Learning Standards, high-quality professional learning is:

- Rooted in student and educator needs demonstrated through data
- Focused on content and pedagogy
- Designed to ensure equitable outcomes
- Designed and structured to be ongoing, intensive, and embedded in practice
- Collaborative with an emphasis on shared accountability
- Supported by adequate resources
- Coherent and aligned with other standards, policies, and programs

3. **Support educators with application.**
   Even the best professional learning is not enough to help educators make big changes. Like the students they support, educators need personalized learning. This comes from highly-trained instructional coaches and mentors who can offer educators the just-in-time one-to-one support educators need to enact new ideas in their own context, grow their knowledge and skill quickly, and create sustainable new ways of work that are aligned with learning acceleration goals. Coaching can be utilized to meet the middle three elements of the MLE Framework: "Coaching", "Reinforcement", and "Performance Support."

4. **Build collaboration structures**
   As systems work to reorganize the school schedule, consider how to reconfigure time to allow educators to collaborate and support one another as they work to learn about, design, implement, test, refine, and support one another in utilizing personalized learning approaches and technologies. Structures like Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Lesson Study can be helpful when well-designed and facilitated. Develop flexible schedules that provide grade-level and subject-matter teams with substantive time each week to review the curriculum, practice selected lessons, plan for their students, and reflect on their progress. This structure can also support the bottom three elements of the MLE framework, "Shared Knowledge," "Performance Support," and Reinforcement."

Highly impactful professional learning is ongoing, layered, and aligned with outcomes. Because highly effective educators are central to the success of learning acceleration efforts, professional learning that includes all elements of the MLE framework and meets the guidance outlined above is necessary for success.



Focus on the Whole Child

Effective acceleration is a student-centered strategy that takes into account the needs of each child as a whole individual, academic, social, and emotional. As a foundational component, schools and educators should:

- Prioritize the development of positive professional relationships and trust with and among students and staff.
- Align Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and learning acceleration efforts and structures to ensure students have wrap-around support.
- Utilize strategies like Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiated instruction, and small group instruction tailored to students' needs.
- Leverage high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) to increase relevancy and meaning for students.
- Adapt lessons to students' culture and communities.
- Create structures that allow each student to receive individualized attention and support, such as small-group or one-on-one tutoring with trained staff.
- Ensure educators have the knowledge and skills to create learning environments that are safe and welcoming.

This graphic from the Learning Policy Institute outlines the key components of what designing for the whole child entails. Refer to the "Create the Conditions for Learning Acceleration" section of this PAL for additional guidance on this topic.

Engage Families and Other Partners in the Acceleration Process

Recent studies confirm the crucial role families play in students' academic progress. Students who attend schools that actively and authentically engage families as partners see greater success both in school and later in life, according to the Carnegie Corporation of New York. There is a particularly strong connection between family involvement and academic achievement in mathematics and English/language arts. Therefore, collaborating with families is more than a courtesy–it is a key factor in learning acceleration success. California's Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) offers free resources and a space for schools to discover ways to increase cultural relevance and meaning for students from their families and community. The CEI leverages the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships to cultivate active and authentic involvement of families and community organizations. Furthermore, the Carnegie Corporation of New York highlights the vital role families play in student success and accelerated learning. Successful learning acceleration efforts have used the following components to engage families:

1. **Build home-school communication structures into the architecture.**
   Utilize Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to build communication with families. For example, consider structures and technologies that would allow parents or caregivers who are least able or likely to connect to engage and communicate with ease. For example, *What systems or technologies would allow multilingual families to easily communicate with teachers in real time? How can families who are unable to attend in-person teacher conferences still connect? Is the information we are sharing clear and free of jargon that might confuse families? How are we attending to different cultural communication styles and preferences?* Then, set goals to ensure every family connects with their students' teacher at least once a quarter in a meaningful way. Schools might also consider how teams can leverage existing systems, such as student support teams, to support the parent-teacher partnership. By utilizing these interactions, teams can build authentic parent partnerships, discuss learning, and assess family needs.

2. **Communicate what students should know and be able to do.**
   Strong home-school partnerships are built on a common understanding of goals, expectations, and processes. When parents understand what educators are doing, they are more empowered to support and help their students succeed. Consider sharing family-friendly, grade-level learning overviews or instructional roadmaps in multiple languages, or on a website that offers translation services. If the school is offering high-impact tutoring, communicate with families about the structure, what to expect, and how they can help.

   Some parents may be unclear about their students' progress toward grade-level goals. Regularly sharing students' academic data with caregivers helps them understand where their child is in relation to those targets, what the student needs to do, the educator's plan for support, and how caregivers can help. Here is an example of how one school is sharing data with parents.

3. **Offer training and resources to help.**
   Caregivers often want to help their student, but sometimes don't know how. Consider hosting workshops or recording videos explaining classroom content before it is covered, and explain how parents can effectively support student learning both at home and in the classroom. Sites like Be A Learning Hero offer activities and tools for families that might offer good examples. Educators can also provide guidance on other ways to support students' success beyond helping with schoolwork, such as encouraging families to ask questions about what students are learning, promoting strong school attendance, or ensuring students complete their assignments by offering support on how to navigate the school's learning management system. The CEI's learning module on "Parents, Families, and Caregivers as Equal Partners" may inspire additional ideas.

4. **Intentionally design at-home work so students can complete it independently.**
   Even if families are well-versed in what students are learning, it is not always reasonable to expect that they will be able to assist students with their homework. Educators should be mindful of what they send home and ensure that students can complete it independently.

Making use of blended learning strategies, such as flipped instruction, can allow students to gain early exposure to new content by watching a teacher's recorded lecture or exploring web-based resources that will build background knowledge needed for the next day's lesson. Personalized playlists can also be created to support students in practicing specific skills learned during class that they are ready to work on at an independent level. Utilizing these tools ensures students are able to successfully complete learning experiences independently, provide targeted learning that accelerates each student's learning, and reduce expectations that families will be able to assist students with at-home learning. Systems will also want to consider technology or internet connectivity needed to complete any at-home assignments and ensure all students have what they need to do the work.

5. **Find out what families want and need.**
   Like good differentiated instruction, collecting data and utilizing the findings to further adapt the school or classroom approach to family partnerships is crucial for success. Consider designing a survey, conducting structured interviews, or holding focus groups to better understand what families understand, use, and need from their students' teachers and schools. Share back findings from those data collection efforts in a transparent way and use that information to adjust your communication approach, support, and offerings.

Accelerating learning is a comprehensive approach that takes system-wide time, vision, and leadership to implement effectively. According to the Brookings Institute, when the components of a system are misaligned, changes in one component (e.g., curriculum reform) may yield few improvements in student learning if the other parts of the system are not similarly adjusted. Accelerating progress requires changing the way teaching and learning occur, and changes will not be successful if the whole team is not committed to leaving business as usual behind.

In this video, CCEE's Executive Director explains why this type of transformation takes time. The key to acceleration is a system's ability to focus on what's essential in this moment and its unique context. To accelerate learning, successful systems concentrate their attention on creating the conditions for learning acceleration by attending to the elements outlined in this section of the Playbook. By implementing these structural changes, schools can create a system that fosters accelerated learning for all students, ensuring they have the support and resources needed to reach their full potential.

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