



## Viewpoints

# The Challenges Facing Long Term English Learners



Long-term English learners (LTELs) in public schools significantly impact educational systems and outcomes. LTELs are students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years but still lack proficiency in English. These students often face numerous academic challenges, such as lower test scores and higher dropout rates, compared to their native English-speaking peers and even compared to other English learners who achieve proficiency more quickly. This gap in academic achievement can strain school resources, as additional support services, specialized instruction, and interventions are required to help LTELs succeed. Schools must allocate significant funding and time to address these needs, often diverting resources from other areas.

The presence of LTELs highlights the need for early language support and tailored and effective instructional strategies. Educators and administrators must critically evaluate and adjust their approaches to teaching English learners, ensuring that students receive adequate language development support from the outset. This includes



professional development for teachers, incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices, and fostering an inclusive learning environment. Addressing the needs of LTELs not only benefits the students themselves but also promotes overall school improvement and equity, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed academically and socially.

**Long-term English learners who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for more than six years without becoming proficient in the language do worse on California's math and English language arts tests than English learners who have been enrolled for fewer than six years.**

**California released data for the first time on long-term English learners' achievement in standardized tests in math, English language arts and science for the 2022-23 school year, after a bill signed in 2022 required it. Long-term English learners are students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for six years or more but have not advanced on the English proficiency test in two or more years.**

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## Professionals

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