



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

JACK O'CONNELL
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

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STATE SCHOOLS CHIEF O'CONNELL ANNOUNCES SIGNIFICANT GAINS IN PERCENTAGE OF ENGLISH LEARNERS REACHING PROFICIENCY

SACRAMENTO—State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell today released the results of the 2003 administration of the annual California English Language Development Test (CELDT) taken by 1.4 million English learners.

The preliminary results show that 43 percent of California English learners scored at early advanced or advanced in overall English proficiency (See Attachment A), compared to 34 percent scoring at the same level in 2002 and to 25 percent in 2001 – an increase of 18 percent in three years (See Attachment B).

“The positive results of this year’s CELDT indicate that California’s standards-based instruction is working for all our students,” said O’Connell. “As English learners attain higher levels of English proficiency, they are more likely to reach higher levels of academic achievement. These results provide more evidence that we must stay the course with our high standards and accountability program in California.”

Among those making noteworthy gains on the CELDT were California’s English learners who have been in the United States for less than a year. Of the 78,364 English learners who first enrolled in school in 2002-03, the current CELDT results show that there were 22 percent fewer students scoring at “beginning” than when they took the test for the first time (See Attachment D).

School, district, county, and state results of the 2003 CELDT administration are now available on the California Department of Education (CDE) DataQuest Web site at <http://celdt.cde.ca.gov>.

This is the third year the state has required school districts to assess all English learners annually with one state-approved test during a specified period. The testing window for the third annual administration was July 1, 2003 through October 31,

2003. There has been an increase of 99,932 in the number of students taking the annual CELDT assessment since its first administration in 2001 (See Attachment C).

“Compared to the rest of the nation, California has the greatest number of students whose primary language is not English,” O’Connell said. “There is still much to be done to meet the educational needs of our English learners, but we should be quite heartened by the progress that indicates California is on the right track.”

The CELDT is aligned with state-adopted English Language Development Standards and covers listening and speaking skills for kindergarten and first grade, and listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills for grades two through twelve.

The State Board of Education has approved guidelines for reclassification. The CELDT is the primary measure for determining English proficiency; other criteria include teacher evaluation, parent opinion and consultation, and performance on the California Standards Test in English-language arts (part of the Standardized Testing and Reporting [STAR] Program). Using these guidelines, each district establishes a process for reclassifying English learners to fluent English proficient.

In addition to state law, annual CELDT administration also meets the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirement that English learners must take an English proficiency test annually until they are reclassified as fluent English proficient (FEP). More information about increases in English proficiency from 2002 to 2003 will be made available in late summer. This information will indicate the number of English learners whose growth in English proficiency meets California’s NCLB targets for English learners.

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Attachments A, B, C, and D