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AB 2268 (Muratsuchi) – English learners: English language proficiency assessment

SUMMARY

AB 2268 will ensure that the language proficiency of the state’s youngest emerging bilingual students is not evaluated with developmentally inappropriate assessments.

BACKGROUND

By 2025-26, California will become the state with the largest universal preschool program in the nation with the expansion of California’s Transitional Kindergarten (TK) program. The state is home to the largest percentage of children ages 0-5 who speak or are exposed to multiple languages in their homes. Emerging bilingual students entering TK must be appropriately identified and supported in ways that promote their unique linguistic and cultural assets.

As defined in current law, TK is the first year of a two-year kindergarten program. As a result, kindergarten-specific state and federal mandates apply to TK. Specifically, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) includes a number of requirements for the education of English Learners (ELs), including standardized criteria for identifying and evaluating EL students through the use of an English language proficiency assessment. California uses the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) assessment, which assesses children’s listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English.

ISSUE

Research and analysis suggest that the current application of the ELPAC in TK settings is not developmentally appropriate, may not be a valid instrument for assessing language acquisition, and perhaps most importantly, may have unintended long-term consequences on the students the universal TK program is intended to benefit.

The ELPAC assessments were developed specifically for students who are five years old or four-year-old students who would turn five by December 2. As California makes progress toward universal TK, an increasingly younger population of four-year-olds is required to undergo the assessment to be identified as ELs.

The ELPAC requires a child to be able to write letters and read and write simple words. TK students are typically navigating the early stages of language development, including beginning to master pre-literacy skills, such as recognizing letters and sounds. Using assessment instruments designed and intended for older students invalidates assessment results and can lead to placing TK students on educational tracks that may not correspond to their abilities and needs.

SOLUTION

AB 2268 seeks to exempt TK students from being administered either the initial or summative ELPAC for the purposes of English Learner identification. This solution will allow the state to work to identify a long-term solution for identifying and supporting multilingual children in TK programs that is developmentally appropriate.

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SUPPORT

Early Edge California (co-sponsor)
Californians Together (co-sponsor)
California Association for Bilingual Education (co-sponsor)