

# English as a Second Language at California's Community Colleges

## An Early Examination of AB 705 Reforms

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Olga Rodriguez, Laura Hill and  
Daniel Payares-Montoya  
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# California's future is tied to the success of English Learners

- California Community Colleges (CCCs) educate a large number of English Learners with a wide range of goals
  - About one-third of all ELs intend to pursue a degree or transfer to a four-year college
- English proficiency is related to economic mobility
- Effective and equitable English as a Second Language (ESL) pathways at the CCCs are key
  - ESL placement policies and lengthy ESL course sequences can create barriers to degree- and transferring-intending students

## **Assembly Bill 705 (AB 705) mandates equity-centered reforms to ESL placement and curricula**

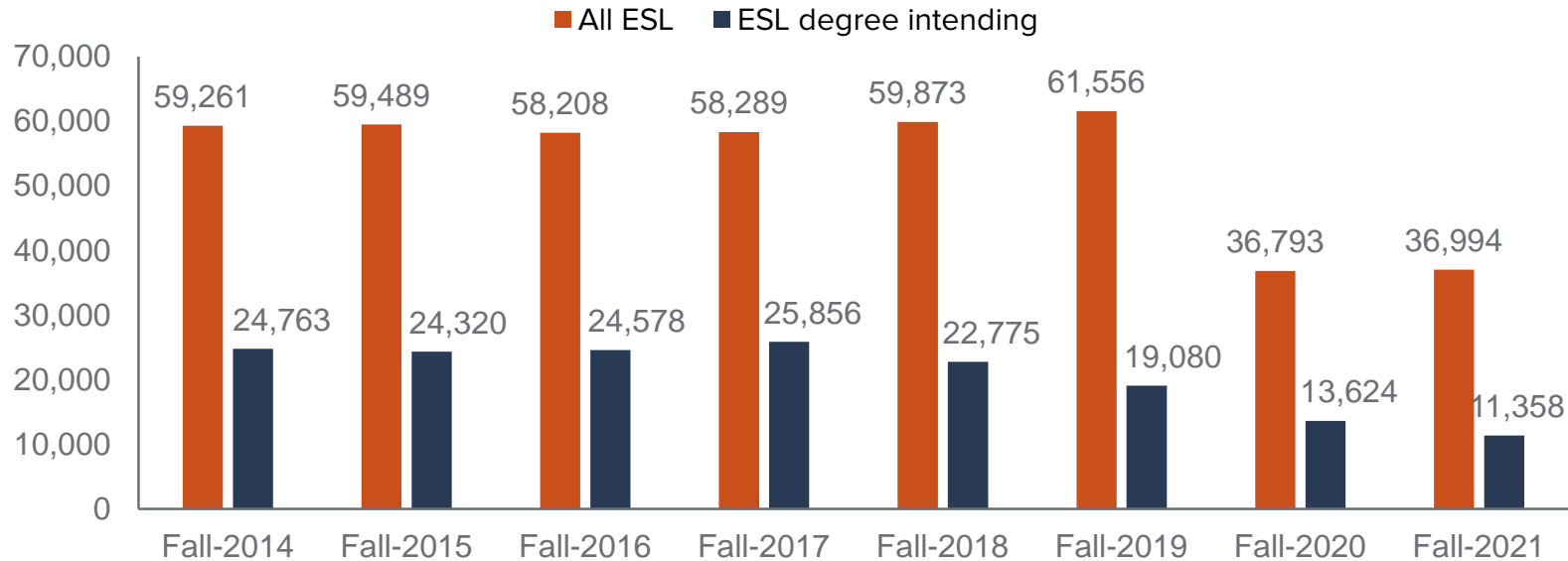
- Requires colleges to maximize the probability that ESL students complete transfer-level English within three years
- Requires colleges to use high school records as the primary criteria for ESL placement
- Clarifies that ESL is distinct from remediation in English
- Implementation of AB 705 ESL reforms began in fall 2021
  - Delayed for a year by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic

# Examining early implementation efforts can improve ESL reform

- PPIC assessed changes to ESL placement and course sequences in the first year of AB 705 implementation
  - College websites and documents
  - Student-level data from all 115 colleges
  - Interviews with ESL faculty and department chairs
- We find that AB 705 has led to remarkable changes to placement and credit ESL course sequences
- However, it is challenging to disentangle the effects of the pandemic from the impact of AB 705

# The pandemic accelerated pre-existing enrollment challenges

Number of students enrolled in the fall term



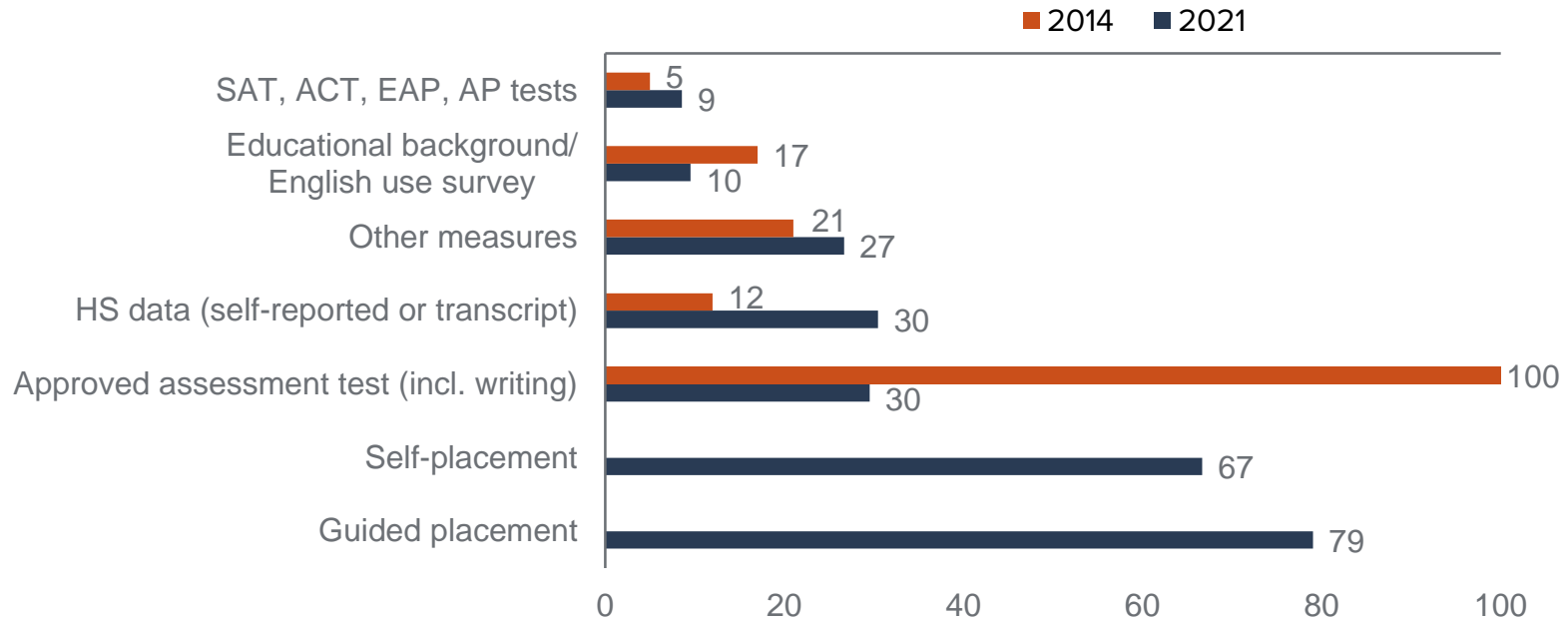
# ELs have several pathways to college composition

- **Transfer-level English (TLE):** The lowest-level English courses that are transferable to the University of California and/or to the California State University systems, based on articulation agreements
- **Transfer-level English for ESL students (TLE-ESL):** Freshman composition courses offered by ESL departments and that also qualify as gateway courses
- **Transfer-level English for Multilingual speakers (TLE-Multi):** TLE courses designed to provide additional language support for ELs in the classroom or through corequisite courses

# Colleges made great strides in implementing AB 705 despite COVID-19 challenges

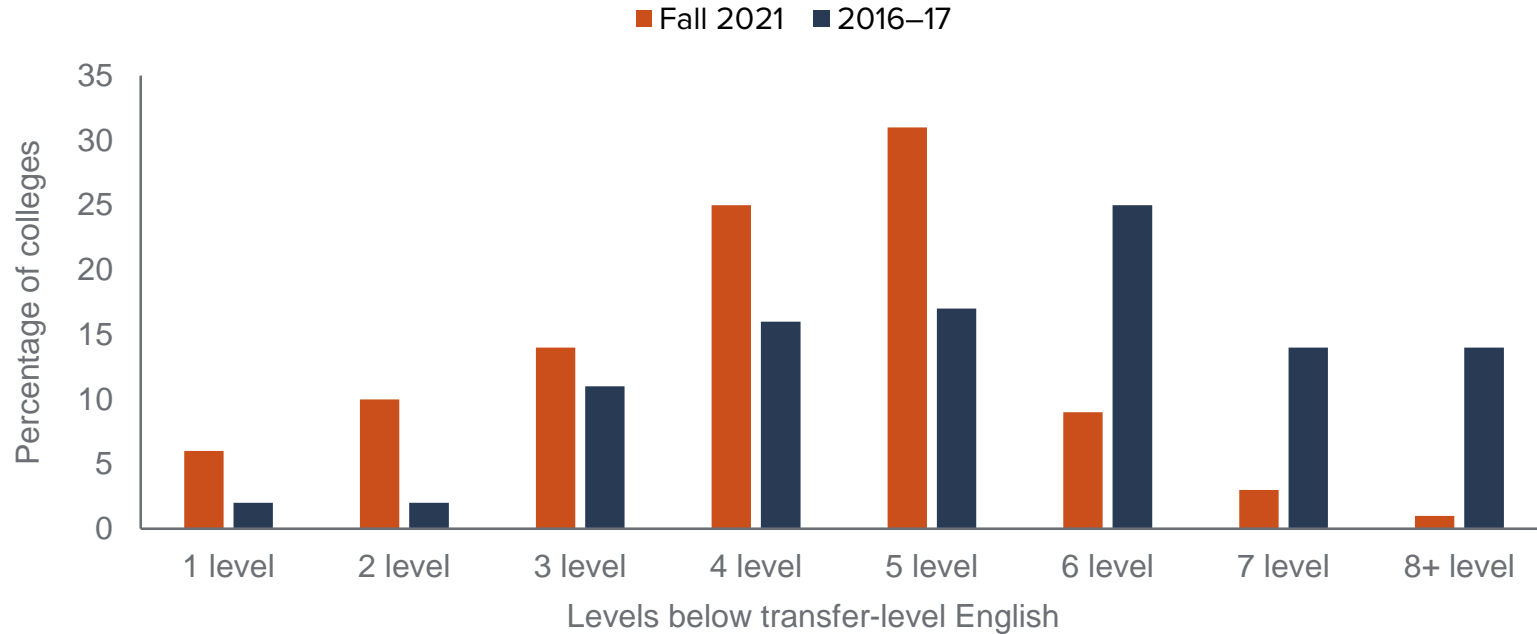
# Most colleges have moved away from standardized tests for ESL placement

Placement policies used by community colleges

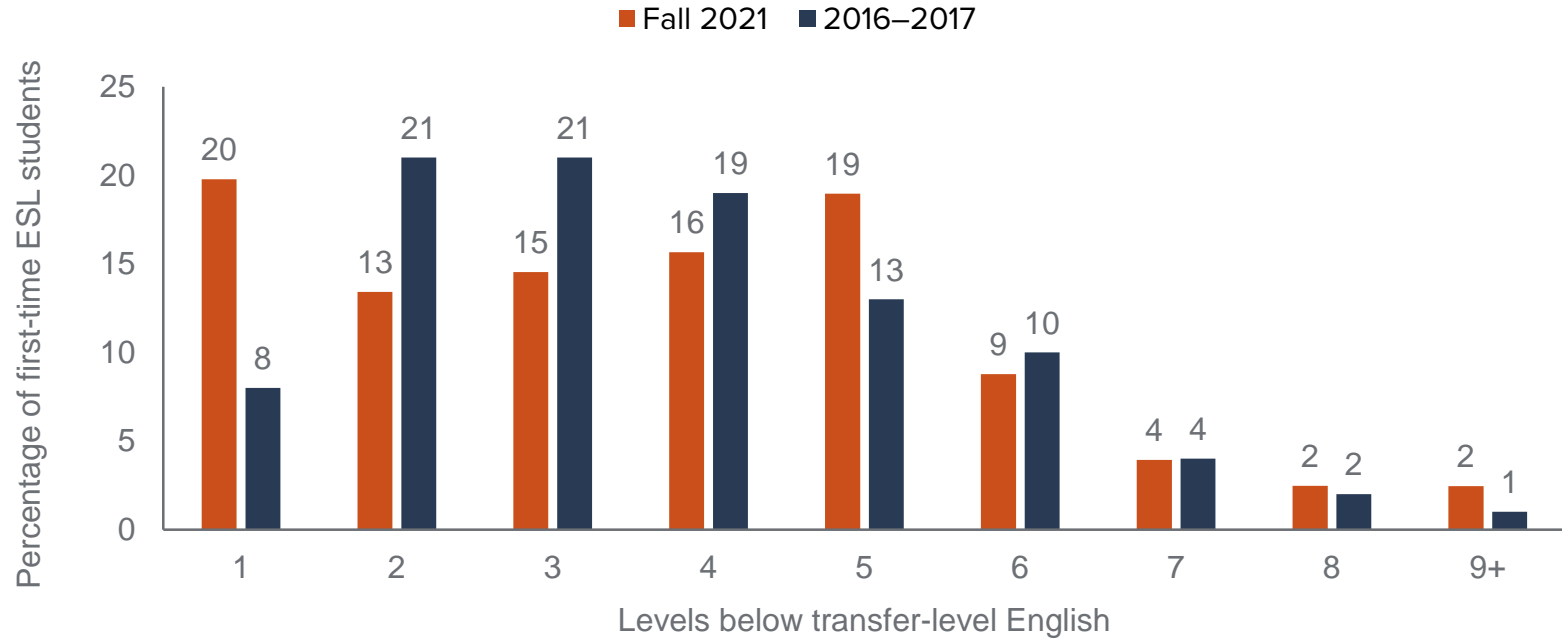




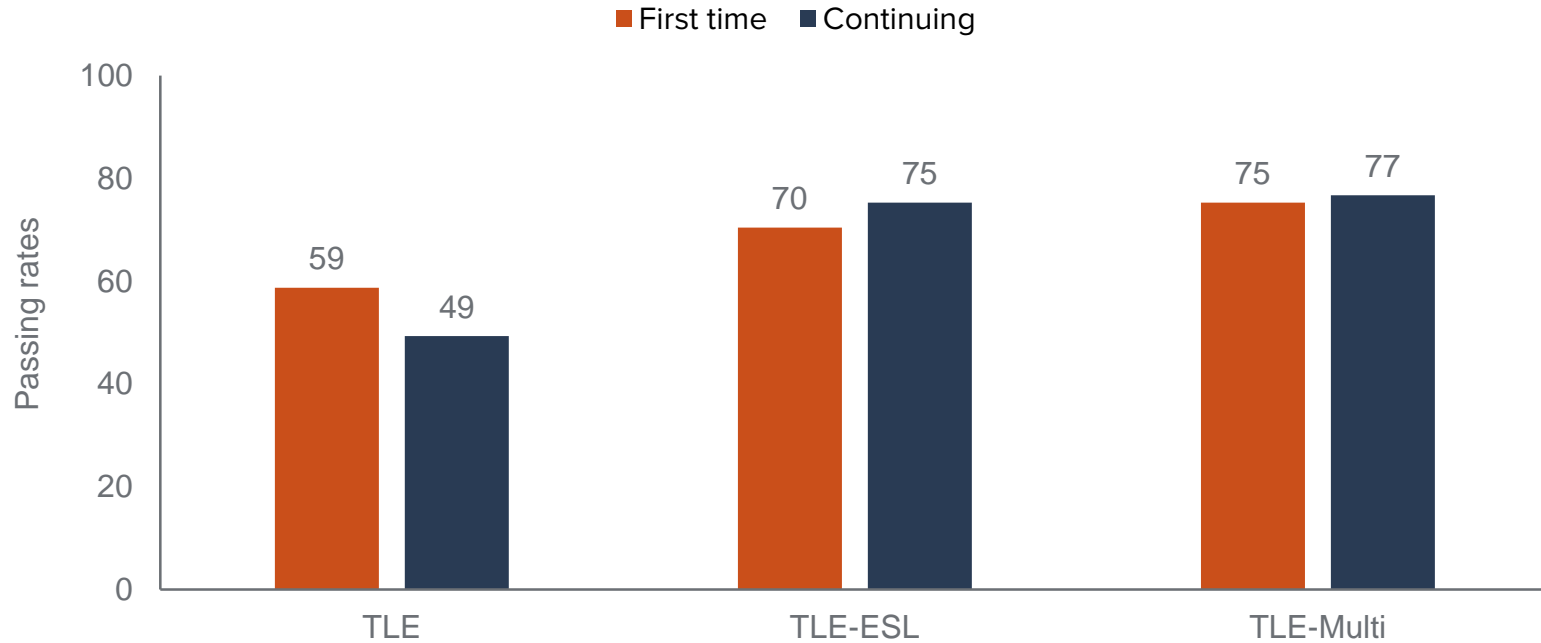
# Most ESL course sequences are now four levels or less



# Under AB 705, first-time ESL students are more likely to start one level below TLE

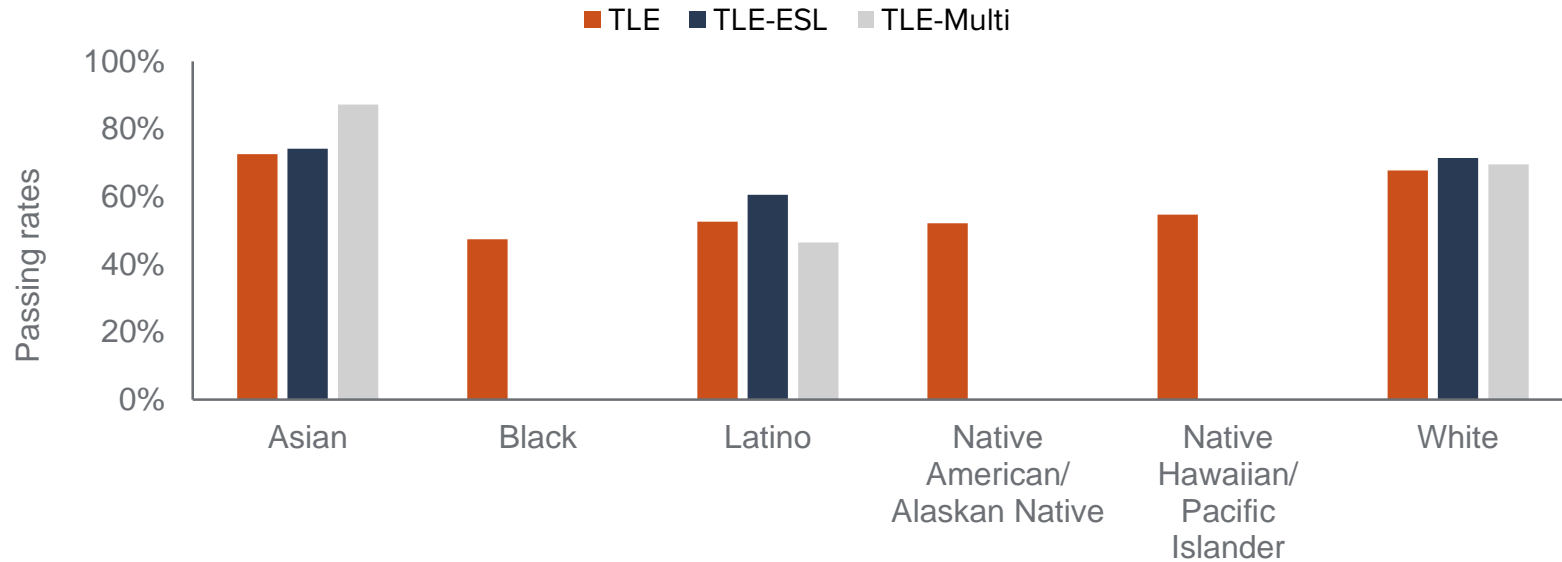


# Passing rates are higher in courses designed for ESL or multilingual students



# TLE-ESL passing rates are higher than TLE passing rates for all racial/ethnic groups

Passing rates for first-time students in transfer-level English



# Outcomes vary across academic backgrounds and citizenship statuses

- US citizens are more likely to pass a standard TLE course
  - Passing rates are very similar for US high school graduates in TLE and TLE-ESL, and 7 to 8 percentage points higher in TLE-Multilingual
- Permanent residents and student visa holders are the most likely to pass TLE-ESL courses
- International high school graduates in TLE-Multilingual classes outperform those in TLE-ESL

# Policy recommendations

- Expand access to college composition to all English Learners
- Monitor the validity and effectiveness of placement rules
- Make connections between ESL reforms and other systemwide initiatives
- Provide guidance and information to support ongoing implementation efforts
- Establish a longitudinal data system that identifies ELs across educational systems

## Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

Olga Rodriguez (rodriguez@ppic.org)

Laura Hill (hill@ppic.org)

Daniel Payares-Montoya (payares@ppic.org)

Thank you for your interest in this work.