

# Evaluation of the Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum English Language Development Modules

Grades 6 Through 8

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# Executive Summary

The Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum (ERWC) English Language Development (ELD) modules were developed by the California State University (CSU) for English Learner (EL) students in grades 6 through 8. The modules build on the ERWC, which the What Works Clearinghouse recognizes as an effective English language arts (ELA) curriculum for students in grade 11 (What Works Clearinghouse, 2023; Fong et al., 2022). ERWC-ELD extends this foundation through culturally inclusive topics and a rhetorical approach that gives students structured opportunities to develop and apply academic language skills through reading, writing, discussion, and analysis.

Developed under a 5-year National Professional Development grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of English Language Acquisition, the ERWC-ELD modules were implemented in classrooms during the 2024/25 school year, following an earlier pilot. WestEd served as the independent evaluator, partnering with CSU developers and participating districts to provide formative feedback throughout the grant and, in the evaluation year, to assess the curriculum through two components: a fidelity of implementation evaluation and an impact evaluation. The study involved six school districts and 37 ERWC-ELD teachers across grades 6, 7, and 8 in California.

## Implementation Evaluation

The implementation evaluation examined the extent to which ERWC-ELD teachers received the curriculum materials, taught the curriculum, and participated in professional learning. Teachers met the fidelity-of-implementation thresholds on every component: All teachers received the full set of materials, 95 percent attended all 3 days of the summer professional learning, 80 percent participated in at least five Community of Practice meetings, 80 percent received at least five coaching sessions, and 91 percent taught at least four modules with adequate fidelity. A closer look at module completion reveals a consistent pattern of decline as teachers moved through each module, with activities in the earlier reading-focused strands completed more often than those in the later writing-focused strands. Drawing on module surveys and teacher interviews, teachers most frequently cited creative writing and text engagement as successes, while the most common challenges were completing modules within available instructional time and sustaining students’ writing stamina on longer, research-intensive tasks.

## Impact Evaluation

Using a quasi-experimental design, the impact evaluation compared EL students in classrooms that used the ERWC-ELD modules with a matched group of similar EL students in classrooms that did not. Treatment and comparison students were matched on prior-year test scores and demographic characteristics, and baseline testing confirmed that the two groups were equivalent at the start of the year. The analysis found that ERWC-ELD had a positive and statistically significant effect on student achievement on both the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) summative assessment for ELA, with effect sizes of approximately 0.10 and 0.19 standard deviations, respectively.

## Discussion

Together, these findings indicate that the ERWC-ELD was implemented with fidelity and had a measurable, positive effect on EL students' English language proficiency and ELA achievement. Teachers reported that the curriculum engaged students and motivated them to take on challenging reading and writing tasks. As might be the case with any new curriculum, teachers felt more comfortable in the 2nd year of implementation than in the 1st—greater familiarity with the materials and clearer expectations for student performance allowed them to adapt lessons more effectively and provide scaffolding proactively during the evaluation year.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

This report presents the results of an evaluation of the Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum (ERWC) English Language Development (ELD) modules. Funded by a 5-year National Professional Development (NPD) grant from the Office of English Language Acquisition at the U.S. Department of Education, the California State University (CSU) developed the ERWC-ELD curriculum for grades 6 through 8. WestEd, as the independent evaluator on the grant, was tasked with (a) providing the CSU with formative evaluation data throughout the curriculum implementation to inform ongoing improvements, (b) measuring the fidelity of the curriculum implementation, and (c) assessing the impact of the curriculum on student achievement as measured by the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) summative assessment for English Language Arts (ELA).

This evaluation centers on the 3rd and 4th years of the grant, when the curriculum was implemented in classrooms and student outcome data were collected. The evaluation comprised two complementary components. The first, a fidelity of implementation evaluation, examined the extent to which teachers received the full set of curriculum materials, participated in the associated professional learning, and delivered the curriculum as intended. The second, an impact evaluation, used a quasi-experimental design to estimate the effect of the ERWC-ELD modules on the achievement of English Learner (EL) students, comparing students in classrooms that used the modules with a matched group of similar students in classrooms that did not. Together, these components were designed to answer two overarching questions: Was the curriculum implemented with fidelity? And did participation in classrooms using the ERWC-ELD modules improve EL students' performance on the ELPAC and SBAC ELA?

The study was conducted in six school districts, comprising 12 schools, located in California. These districts served sizable populations of EL students; the average share of EL students across the participating districts exceeded the national average and was comparable to the statewide average for California. A total of 37 teachers across grades 6, 7, and 8 implemented the ERWC-ELD modules and contributed data through surveys, coaching logs, and interviews.

As described in more depth in Chapter 2, the ERWC-ELD curriculum is based on the ERWC, which is a high school ELA curriculum first developed in 2003/04 by a task force of CSU faculty and high school educators to improve the academic literacy of high school students. Given California's large EL student population, the ERWC developers extended this foundation to serve EL students in the middle grades. The ERWC-ELD curriculum includes both integrated ELD

and designated ELD.<sup>1</sup> Integrated ELD is instruction in which ELD standards are used in tandem with academic content standards. Designated ELD is instruction provided during a dedicated time within the regular school day for focused instruction on ELD standards, helping EL students develop the critical English language skills necessary for academic content learning in English.

An overview of the 5-year grant progression is as follows:

- 2021/22 school year: planning year for the grant
- 2022/23 school year: ERWC-ELD modules developed
- 2023/24 school year: pilot year for the ERWC-ELD modules
- 2024/25 school year: evaluation year
- 2025/26 school year: data analysis and publication of the evaluation report

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. Chapter 2 describes the ERWC-ELD curriculum in greater detail, including its structure, materials, and the professional learning provided to teachers. Chapter 3 presents the findings of the implementation evaluation, examining the fidelity with which teachers taught the modules, engaged in professional learning, and received curriculum materials, along with teachers' perspectives on what worked well and what proved challenging. Chapter 4 presents the impact evaluation, detailing the methodology, data, and results of the analyses of student achievement on the ELPAC and SBAC ELA. The report concludes with a summary of findings.

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<sup>1</sup> The ERWC is now in its third edition. Many of the ERWC modules developed for high school students also include both integrated ELD and designated ELD.

# Chapter 2. The Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum for English Learner Students

Developed by the CSU, the ERWC has been recognized by the What Works Clearinghouse as an effective ELA curriculum for students in grade 11 (What Works Clearinghouse, 2023; Fong et al., 2022). Given California’s large EL student population, the ERWC developers decided to expand the curriculum to serve EL students in grades 6 through 8.

## ERWC-ELD Curriculum and Structure

As shown in Table 1, the CSU developed a total of 14 modules for this grant: four for grade 6 and five each for grades 7 and 8. Each module focuses on a particular genre of text, and each grade level includes at least one module featuring a novel.

**Table 1. Overview of the ERWC-ELD Modules**

Module title	Grade level	Genre of text
Booked	6	Novel in verse
Facts of Life	6	Short story
Keeping California Wild	6	Issue
The Metaverse and Me	6	Issue
My Language Journey	7	Issue
Sharing Stories, Creating Community	7	Short biographies
They Called Us Enemy	7	Graphic novel



Module title	Grade level	Genre of text
Water Protectors	7	Issue
When You Trap a Tiger	7	Novel
Bees: Technology Versus Nature	8	Issue
Living Beyond Borders, Growing Up Mexican American	8	Novel
Songs of Praise	8	Poetry
The Underground Abductor	8	Graphic novel
Our Plastic Addiction	8	Issue

All modules follow a structure based on the ERWC’s Assignment Template, which consists of three overarching domains: Reading Rhetorically, Preparing to Respond, and Writing Rhetorically. The Reading Rhetorically domain includes three strands: Preparing to Read, Reading Purposefully, and Questioning the Text. The Preparing to Respond domain includes one strand: Discovering What You Think. The Writing Rhetorically domain contains three strands: Composing a Draft, Revising Rhetorically, and Editing.

Each strand contains at least two elements, and within each element are activities—including designated ELD and integrated ELD activities—designed to help students develop their rhetorical skills as they move through the domains to a culminating activity, often a writing task. These modules are specifically designed to help EL students read purposefully; unpack meaning; discuss texts; formulate evidence-based arguments; and produce clear, organized writing suited for various purposes and audiences. Additionally, the modules foster students’ persistence in academic tasks over time.

The CSU recommends that ELA teachers teach these modules in tandem with ELD teachers. Integrated ELD activities should be taught during ELA classes, while designated ELD activities should be taught during ELD classes. Designated ELD activities are meant to prepare EL students to engage successfully with integrated ELD activities in their ELA classes and accelerate language development.

## ERWC-ELD Curriculum Materials

The ERWC-ELD curriculum materials include the following components for each module:

- **A teacher guide** is structured to support lesson planning day by day. For each day, it provides a suggested activity that follows the ERWC Assignment Template, a suggested amount of time for each activity, and step-by-step instructions on how teachers might organize and present the material. Additionally, teachers can refer to sample student responses that model expected outcomes and help inform instructional decisions.
- **A student guide** mirrors the structure of the teacher guide, with each day beginning with an activity also aligned with the ERWC Assignment Template. However, this version is streamlined for students: It contains only the activities themselves, without extra guidance on timing or examples of responses, which supports independent and focused engagement.
- **A set of student readings** includes the texts necessary for student learning, which may include journal or newspaper articles for information and analysis and full-length books selected for each grade level. These readings form the foundation for many activities and discussions within the module.

## ERWC-ELD Professional Learning

ERWC-ELD teachers participated in ERWC-ELD professional learning, which consisted of three main components:

- **A 3-day institute each summer** in 2023 and 2024 introduced participants to the English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework for California Public Schools, focusing on integrating the California English Language Development Standards with the California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy. The purpose of this institute was to build teachers' comprehension of key principles and of the ERWC-ELD resources, increase teachers' familiarity with rhetoric and ELD concepts as well as their instructional applications, and acquaint teachers with the structure and progression common to all ERWC-ELD modules.
- **Community of Practice (CoP) sessions** were offered both virtually and in person throughout the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years. These meetings, guided by curriculum developers online and coaches onsite, encouraged teachers to share their experiences, explore best practices, and collaboratively address challenges encountered during the rollout of the ERWC-ELD modules, with special focus on ELD strategies.
- **Coaching sessions** were provided to support teachers throughout the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years as they taught the ERWC-ELD modules. Coaches led discussions aimed at helping educators apply core ERWC-ELD concepts in their classroom activities.

# Chapter 3. Fidelity of Implementation of the Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum English Language Development Modules

This chapter provides findings from the fidelity of implementation evaluation that was carried out to determine whether the ERWC-ELD program components were being implemented as intended. A fidelity evaluation is essential for accurately interpreting program outcomes in the context of implementation.

The research team collected data throughout the 2024/25 school year to assess the extent to which each of the three ERWC-ELD components (access to the curriculum materials, professional learning, and teaching of the curriculum) was being implemented with fidelity by each study teacher. The research team developed data collection instruments in collaboration with the developers of the ERWC-ELD modules.

Teachers implementing the modules included both ELA teachers and ELD teachers for grades 6, 7, and 8. ELA teachers instructed students who were all in a single grade level per class period, whereas ELD teachers taught students across multiple grades within a single class period. The study was conducted in six California school districts.

## Data Collection Instruments

The research team assessed the implementation of the ERWC-ELD by developing the following data collection instruments:<sup>2</sup>

- module surveys to be completed by the teachers
- end-of-year surveys to be completed by the teachers
- coaching logs to be completed by the coaches
- a teacher interview protocol

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<sup>2</sup> Copies of the instruments are available from the authors upon request.

The following sections elaborate on these instruments, describe the methodology used for analyzing data from each to calculate fidelity of implementation, and present the results of the analyses.

## Module Surveys

Teachers participating in the implementation of the ERWC-ELD modules were asked to teach at least four modules during the school year and to complete a module survey within a week of completing each module. The module surveys included questions about the type of class (ELA or ELD) in which each module was taught, the number of periods required to complete each module, and the specific activities taught within each module. Teachers were also asked to describe any modifications they made to the activities to support EL students as well as to share their successes and challenges in teaching each module.

## End-of-Year Survey

Study teachers also completed an end-of-year survey to reflect on their experiences teaching the ERWC-ELD modules. This survey aimed to gather further insights into what worked well during the school year, what areas needed improvement, and which class periods the modules were taught in.

## Coaching Logs

As part of their implementation of the ERWC-ELD modules, participating teachers received support from instructional coaches. These coaches provided a range of assistance, from offering constructive feedback on overall teaching practices to guiding teachers on specific concepts or skills. After each coaching session, the coach completed a coaching log, which served as both a record of attendance and a narrative account from the coach's perspective.

The log asked coaches to write "visit notes." The prompts included "Planning Conversation Notes—Include the teacher's long-term and short-term goals," "Reflection Conversation Notes—Include notes on the extent to which the teacher accomplished the goals that you discussed in the planning conversation," and "Next Steps."

## Teacher Interviews

The WestEd research team conducted two sets of interviews during the evaluation year. Ten teachers participated in fall 2024, and seven teachers participated in spring 2025. During the 45-minute interviews, teachers discussed their ERWC-ELD teaching practices and professional

learning experiences. They were also asked to provide recommendations and suggestions to improve the ERWC-ELD modules.

## Findings

The research team collected data throughout the 2024/25 school year to assess the extent to which each of the three ERWC-ELD components—receiving the curriculum materials, receiving the professional learning, and teaching the curriculum—was being implemented with fidelity by each study teacher.

### Access to Curriculum Materials

Researchers assigned a fidelity score of 0 for each teacher who did not receive all of the curriculum materials and a score of 1 for each who did receive everything required. It is important to measure whether teachers received all the curriculum materials because access to the complete set of materials ensures that teachers are fully equipped to implement the curriculum as intended, which is necessary for accurately assessing fidelity and the impact of the intervention.

Through communication with teachers throughout the implementation year—via emails and phone calls—the study team confirmed that **all of the participating teachers received all the curriculum materials**. Consequently, a fidelity score of 1 was assigned for this component to all of the ERWC-ELD teachers.

### Professional Learning

Participating teachers received ERWC-ELD professional learning consisting of three individual subcomponents: a 3-day summer professional learning session, CoP meetings, and coaching sessions. WestEd researchers scored the fidelity of each subcomponent individually. The results are summarized in the list below and in Table 2.

- Teacher attendance at the 3-day summer professional learning session was documented via sign-in sheets, with teachers required to sign in each day. For this subcomponent, researchers assigned a fidelity score of 0 (not adequate) if a teacher did not attend all 3 days or a score of 1 (adequate) if the teacher did attend all 3 days. **Thirty-five of 37 teachers (95%) attended all 3 days of the summer session.**
- Teachers were assigned a fidelity score of 0 if they attended four or fewer CoP meetings over the course of the year, as recorded by CoP sign-in sheets. A score of 1 was assigned for attending at least five meetings. **Twenty-eight of 35 teachers (80%) attended five or more CoP meetings.**

- A fidelity score of 0 was assigned to teachers who received fewer than five coaching sessions during the 2024/25 school year. A score of 1 was assigned for those who received five or more coaching sessions. **Twenty-eight of 35 teachers (80%) received at least five coaching sessions.**

## Teaching of the Curriculum

The research team calculated a curriculum-taught-with-fidelity score for each teacher by determining the number of ERWC-ELD modules taught with adequate fidelity. As previously noted, a teacher needed to complete at least four modules with adequate fidelity during the 2024/25 school year. Adequate fidelity was defined as completing at least one activity in each of the module’s first five strands (Preparing to Read, Reading Purposefully, Questioning the Text, Discovering What You Think, and Composing a Draft) and one activity in either the sixth (Revising Rhetorically) or seventh (Editing) strand.

**Thirty-two of 35 teachers (91%) taught at least four modules with adequate fidelity.<sup>3</sup>**

Table 2 summarizes the results of the implementation fidelity evaluation.

**Table 2. ERWC-ELD Implementation Fidelity Evaluation Results**

Component	Number of teachers who implemented with adequate fidelity	Total number of teachers	Percentage of teachers who implemented with adequate fidelity	Percentage of teachers needed to meet the fidelity threshold for the component	Met threshold?
Received all curriculum materials	37	37	100	80	Yes
Summer professional learning	35	37	95	80	Yes
Community of Practice	28	35	80	80	Yes
Coaching	28	35	80	80	Yes

<sup>3</sup> Two additional teachers were part of the study, making a total of 37, but they were unable to participate for 1 semester due to maternity leave.



Component	Number of teachers who implemented with adequate fidelity	Total number of teachers	Percentage of teachers who implemented with adequate fidelity	Percentage of teachers needed to meet the fidelity threshold for the component	Met threshold?
Curriculum taught with fidelity	32	35	91	80	Yes

*Note.* The total number of teachers changed from 37 to 35 because two teachers took maternity leave during 1 semester of the 2024/25 school year.

Source: Survey and log data collected from study participants.

## Completion Rate Analysis

To understand the implementation of each domain, strand, and element contained within each module, the research team conducted a completion rate analysis of the 14 modules implemented during the evaluation year.

The completion rate analysis is an important way to gain a clearer picture of how thoroughly each component of the modules was enacted during implementation and of the extent to which each domain, strand, and element was addressed in practice.

All of the ELD modules are structured according to the ERWC’s Assignment Template, which includes three overarching domains, each with at least one strand. The domains are intended to be taught in the following order:

1. Reading Rhetorically domain, which comprises three strands: Preparing to Read, Reading Purposefully, and Questioning the Text
2. Preparing to Respond domain, which comprises one strand: Discovering What You Think
3. Writing Rhetorically domain, which comprises three strands: Composing a Draft, Revising Rhetorically, and Editing

In addition, each strand has several elements, and each element has several activities.

The research team calculated strand percentages based on the completion rates of at least one element within each strand across all 14 modules. For example, the percentage for the Preparing to Read strand reflects the completion rates of at least one activity in this strand among all teachers who taught any of the 14 modules. Element percentages are derived from the completion rates of at least one activity within each element for modules initiated and completed by teachers, with each module equally weighted.



## Completion Rate Findings

A pattern of decline was observed as teachers progressed through each domain. For instance, within the Reading Rhetorically domain,

- 100 percent of the modules taught included at least one activity completed in the Preparing to Read strand,
- 97 percent of the modules taught included at least one activity completed in the Reading Purposefully strand, and
- 70 percent of the modules taught included at least one activity completed in the Questioning the Text strand.

For the Preparing to Respond domain,

- 88 percent of the modules taught included at least one activity completed in the Discovering What You Think strand.

For the Writing Rhetorically domain,

- 73 percent of the modules taught included at least one activity completed in each of the Composing a Draft and Revising Rhetorically strands, and
- 53 percent of the modules taught included at least one activity completed in the Editing strand.

To provide a detailed view of implementation across domains, strands, and elements within each module, Tables 3–5 summarize the completion rates for activities as reported by teachers during the evaluation year.

**Table 3. Reading Rhetorically Domain Completion Rates for Activities, by Strand and Element**

Strand or element	Name	Percentage completed
Strand	Preparing to Read	100
Element	Setting Learning Goals for the Module	26
Element	Getting Ready to Read	77
Element	Exploring Key Concepts	75



Strand or element	Name	Percentage completed
Element	Surveying the Text	41
Element	Making Predictions and Asking Questions	56
Element	Understanding Key Vocabulary	78
Element	Creating Personal Learning Goals	27
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Reading Purposefully</b>	<b>97</b>
Element	Reading for Understanding	93
Element	Annotating, Responding to, and Summarizing the Text	53
Element	Considering the Writer's Context, Audience, and Purpose	36
Element	Identifying and Evaluating the Use of Language Resources	70
Element	Identifying Perspectives and Points of View	27
<b>Strand</b>	<b>Questioning the Text</b>	<b>70</b>
Element	Thinking Critically	60
Element	Synthesizing Multiple Perspectives	32
Element	Reflecting on Your Reading Process	16

**Table 4. Preparing to Respond Domain Completion Rates for Activities, by Strand and Element**

Strand or element	Name	Percentage completed
Strand	Discovering What You Think	88
Element	Considering Your Task and Rhetorical Situation	77
Element	Gathering Relevant Ideas and Materials	65
Element	Focusing Your Topic	21

**Table 5. Writing Rhetorically Domain Completion Rates for Activities, by Strand and Element**

Strand or element	Name	Percentage completed
Strand	Composing a Draft	73
Element	Making Choices About Your Learning Goals	72
Element	Making Choices About Content and Structure	61
Element	Making Choices About Language	20
Element	Quoting and Paraphrasing Sources	26
Strand	Revising Rhetorically	73
Element	Using Knowledge of How Language Works for Revising	32
Element	Developing and Strengthening Writing by Considering Purpose and Audience	27

Strand or element	Name	Percentage completed
Element	Gathering and Responding to Feedback	50
Strand	Editing	53
Element	Editing Your Draft	45
Element	Reflecting on Your Writing Process	18
Element	Reflecting on Learning Goals	12

### Analysis of Teacher Perspectives

This section describes the qualitative analysis of the responses to the open-ended module survey questions and the teacher interviews. It also provides a more in-depth understanding of what teachers found successful and challenging during the implementation of the ERWC-ELD modules.

Module survey data were collected from 37 teachers via the online platform Qualtrics. Teachers were sent monthly reminders during the 2024/25 school year as they completed their modules.

The WestEd research team also conducted 17 semistructured interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes each. Interviews were conducted twice during the school year: once in the fall (10 teachers) and once in the spring (7 teachers). Teachers were randomly selected to participate in the interviews.

In total, there were 37 teachers: 12 who taught grade 6 modules; 6 who taught grade 7 modules; 9 who taught grade 8 modules; 4 who taught modules in grades 6, 7, and 8; and 6 who taught modules in two grade levels.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Survey responses were coded for recurring themes, and interview transcripts underwent detailed content analysis. Data triangulation between surveys and interviews strengthened the validity of findings and provided multiple perspectives on key themes (Strauss, 1987).

### Curriculum and Implementation Successes

Through the surveys and interviews, teachers described what they found successful in their implementation of the ERWC-ELD modules:



- **Creative Writing and Expression**—success with engaging students in writing tasks, including memoirs, poems, argumentative letters, and projects such as creating graphic novels and infographics
- **Text Engagement and Literature**—successful implementation of mentor texts, including novels and poetry, with particular student engagement around graphic novels and character analysis
- **Reading Comprehension Strategies**—effective deployment of reading strategies such as annotation, text chunking, and structured reading roles that enhanced student comprehension and retention
- **Presentation and Communication**—strong student performance in oral presentations; class discussions; and creation of multimedia presentations, including slideshows
- **Collaborative Learning Structures**—successful implementation of group work, peer feedback sessions, and collaborative discussions that supported student understanding
- **Relevant Content Connections**—high engagement with topics that connected to student interests and experiences, including environmental themes such as national parks and contemporary topics such as the metaverse

Teachers' survey responses revealed strong positive sentiment toward multiple aspects of the curriculum, with creative writing and text engagement emerging as the most frequently cited successes.

Interview participants provided deeper context around the following two primary success areas that aligned with and expanded on survey findings.

### Enhanced Student Engagement and Understanding

Teachers consistently reported improved student engagement, particularly noting the effectiveness of technology-integrated activities and vocabulary development among EL students. As one teacher observed, students demonstrated increased confidence and participation in ELD classes:

“[EL students] listen. [EL students] speak better. They're writing in complete sentences. And their fluency too. ... [T]hey volunteer, and I don't even sometimes have to do a random selection. [EL students] participate voluntarily.”

### 2nd-Year Implementation Benefits

Multiple teachers emphasized how their pilot year experience significantly improved their 2nd-year implementation, allowing for more effective adaptation and preemptive scaffolding. One teacher noted success in “adapting to new teaching methods and giving students more autonomy in writing.”

## Curriculum and Implementation Challenges

Teachers also described a range of challenges they experienced in their implementation of the ERWC-ELD modules.

Survey responses revealed significant implementation challenges. Key challenge areas included the following:

- **Time and Pacing Constraints**—The most frequently cited challenge involved completing modules within allocated time frames. This challenge was particularly complicated by external testing schedules and difficulties maintaining student engagement throughout lengthy modules.
- **Student Engagement Difficulties**—Teachers sometimes struggled to maintain student interest and motivation, especially regarding certain topics, texts, presentations, and collaborative work activities.
- **Writing Task Complexity**—Teachers sometimes found that students faced significant challenges in organizing and structuring writing assignments, particularly with detailed narratives, essays incorporating dialogue, and complex writing formats.
- **Reading Comprehension Barriers**—Teachers identified various difficulties for students, including struggling with the comprehension of complex texts, maintaining reading stamina, and engaging with historical or contextual information.
- **Language and Comprehension Support**—Specific challenges emerged around language barriers for EL students, particularly a lack of translated materials and struggles with language complexity.
- **Resource Limitations**—Teachers reported insufficient secondary resources, difficulty finding appropriate supplementary materials, and a lack of adequate support resources.
- **Collaborative Learning Implementation**—Teachers sometimes had difficulty facilitating effective student collaboration, managing group dynamics, and addressing the absenteeism that affected group activities.

Interview participants provided deeper context around these implementation challenges. Interview responses strongly aligned with survey findings while also revealing additional systemic issues, such as the following:

- *Time Constraints and Scheduling* emerged as the primary concern, reinforcing the survey's top finding. Interviewees elaborated on specific timing issues, including inadequate collaboration time (often limited to lunch breaks or prep periods) and the impossibility of covering comprehensive activities within 50-minute class periods. As one teacher commented,

“There were a couple of lessons that had a time of 25 minutes but in reality, those lessons took longer than 25 minutes. ... This is also a challenge because we have to teach both the integrated and designated lessons in one 50-minute block.”

- *Student Writing Stamina and Engagement* was the second most discussed challenge, directly connecting to survey findings about writing complexity and student engagement. Teachers noted that although students showed initial interest in topics, sustaining engagement through research-intensive and in-depth writing tasks remained challenging. As one teacher commented,

“I think it was just a lot of research, and they haven’t written an essay that big.”

Both survey and interview data consistently highlighted three key areas: time constraints as the primary implementation barrier, student writing and engagement as major challenges, and collaborative learning as both a success and a challenge. While surveys pointed to broad categories of challenges and successes, interviews revealed underlying issues that were more nuanced.

The triangulation of the data across both sources strengthens confidence in the key themes identified and offers a comprehensive view of teachers’ experiences with and perceptions of the ERWC-ELD.

# Chapter 4. Impacts of the Expository Reading and Writing Curriculum English Language Development Modules on Student Achievement

This chapter provides the results of the analysis of the ERWC-ELD’s impact on student performance as measured by the ELPAC and the SBAC summative assessment for ELA. The chapter begins with a discussion of the methodology, data, and outcome measures; continues with a discussion of baseline balance testing (ensuring comparability between treatment and comparison groups); and then presents the evaluation’s findings.

## Impact Methodology

The impact evaluation used a quasi-experimental design. EL students in grades 6–8 who participated in an ELA or ELD class that taught the ERWC-ELD modules (treatment) were matched with EL students in an ELA or ELD class that did not teach the ERWC-ELD modules (comparison). Matching was conducted using the Mahalanobis distance metric (Imbens, 2015). Each student in the treatment group was matched to the four closest comparison students (“nearest neighbors”) using the matching variables, which are listed below. The matching procedure paired each treatment student with similar comparison students; comparison group students were not matched to treatment students. As a result, the impact analysis estimated the average treatment effect for the treatment group.

Matching was conducted with replacement, meaning a comparison student could be matched with multiple treatment students if that student was sufficiently similar. Additionally, matching was performed across schools and districts, allowing, for example, a treatment student at one school to be matched with a comparison student from another school. This approach was taken because the ELPAC and SBAC are standardized assessments taken by students across California.

All students included in the study—both those in the treatment group and those in the comparison group—were drawn from school districts that participated in the study. The treatment and comparison students were matched based on the following student-level

characteristics: grade level, gender, race/ethnicity, special education status, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, and prior summative ELPAC score. Prior ELPAC scores were used to establish baseline equivalence. After completing the matching process and confirming baseline equivalence, the study assessed the impact of the ERWC-ELD on students' summative ELPAC and SBAC ELA scores.

Matched treatment and comparison students were then included in an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model to assess whether ERWC-ELD participation was positively correlated with the outcome variables. The covariates included in the OLS model were identical to those used in the matching procedure, supporting the robustness of the analysis and reducing the risk of model misspecification (Imbens & Wooldridge, 2009). The following model was specified to estimate the impact of the ERWC-ELD program on summative ELPAC scores:

$$ELPAC_i = \alpha + \beta_1(ERWC/ELD_i) + \beta_2(ELPAC\_P_i) + \beta_3(StudChar_i) + \varepsilon_i$$

where  $ELPAC_i$  is student  $i$ 's ELPAC score;  $ERWC/ELD_i$  is a binary variable equal to 1 if student  $i$  participated in a class where their ELA or ELD teacher taught the ERWC-ELD modules, or 0 if the student did not participate in such a class (comparison group);  $ELPAC\_P_i$  indicates the student's summative ELPAC score from the prior year, before the study period;  $StudChar_i$  is a vector capturing student characteristics including grade level, gender, race/ethnicity (categorical), special education status, and free or reduced-price lunch status;  $\alpha$  is the model intercept;  $\beta_1 - \beta_3$  are parameters to be estimated from the data; and  $\varepsilon_i$  is the independent and identically distributed error. In this model,  $\beta_1$  estimates the average difference in the ELPAC score between students who did or did not enroll in an ERWC-ELD classroom.

In the regression analysis, each treatment student was assigned a weight of 1, while each matched comparison student received a weight proportional to the number of times they were matched with a treatment student. Since four comparison students were matched to each treatment student, each comparison student was weighted 0.25 for each time they were matched to a treatment student. For instance, if a comparison student was matched to three different treatment students, their total weight in the regression analysis would be 0.75 ( $0.25 \times 3$ ). After applying these weights, the weighted sample sizes of the treatment and comparison groups were the same. To account for potential intragroup correlation at the individual level, cluster-robust standard errors were used at the individual level (Hill & Reiter, 2006).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "For QEDs [quasi-experimental designs], the WWC [What Works Clearinghouse] generally defines the unit of assignment as the largest study unit that contains members of only one condition" (What Works Clearinghouse, 2023, p. 36). Given that students were enrolled in multiple classes in middle school that either had a teacher who taught the ERWC-ELD modules or not (i.e., students took both an ELA class and an ELD class, and one of those classes could have been taught by a teacher using the ERWC-ELD modules and the other class by a teacher not using the ERWC-ELD modules), the largest study unit that contained members of only one condition was at the individual level.

A similar model was applied to measure ELA outcomes using the summative SBAC ELA assessment for students who participated in ELA and ELD classes in which teachers implemented the ERWC-ELD modules.

## Data

A total of six school districts, comprising 12 schools, participated in the study. This sample included six K–8 schools and six middle schools. The average percentage of EL students in these districts was higher than the U.S. average and similar to that of California as a whole (Irwin et al., 2021). The school districts’ ELPAC proficiency rates ranged from 6 percent to 37 percent (see Table 6).

The final impact analysis includes five school districts and nine schools because one district was unable to provide the required student-level data for the analysis.

**Table 6. Characteristics of Participating Study Sample**

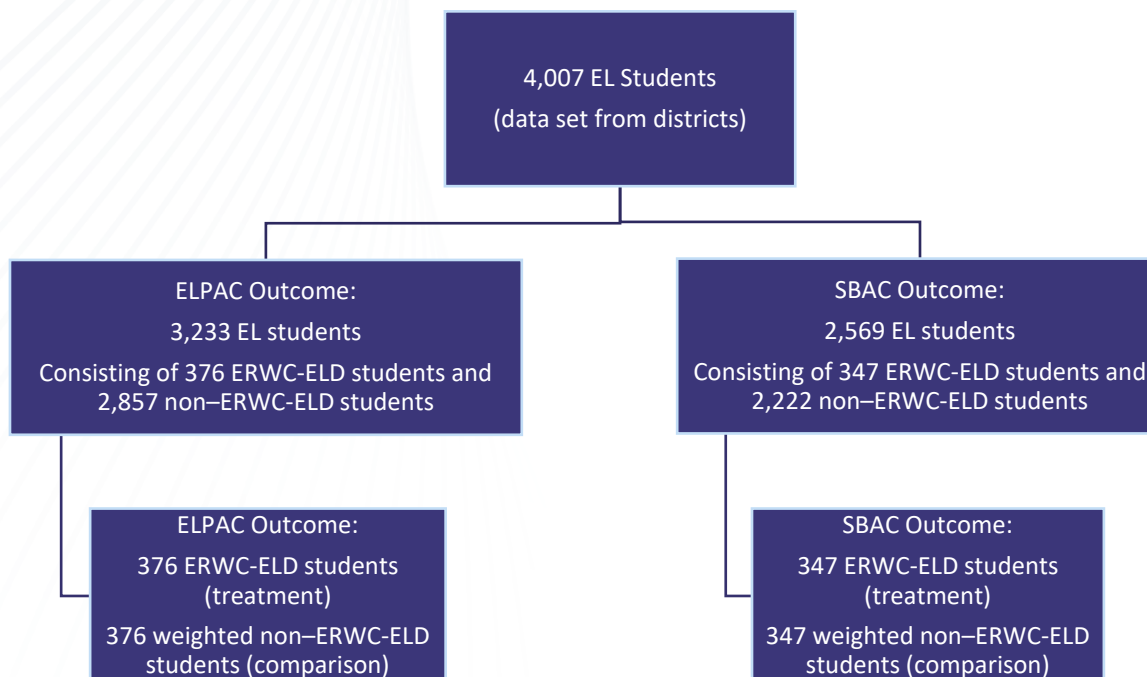
Characteristic	Contextual detail
Grades served	6, 7, and 8
School type	Six K–8 schools and six middle schools
School enrollment	Range: 265–1,010 Mean: 550 EL students’ mean: 136
Percentage EL students	Range: 5%–45% Mean: 26%
Percentage ELPAC proficient	Range: 6%–37% Mean: 17%

*Note.* The schools that participated are all located in California.

Figure 1 provides a consort diagram for students included in the analysis from the participating school districts.



**Figure 1. Consort Diagram for Student Sample**



Data collected from the school districts in the final sample included 3,233 unique EL students who were in grades 6–8 in the 2023/24 school year and who had taken the ELPAC in 2023/24 and 2024/25 (see Figure 1). Of these 3,233 students, 376 were enrolled in ELA and/or ELD classes using ERWC-ELD modules in 2024/25, and 347 had SBAC ELA scores in 2023/24 and 2024/25. The final analytic sample for the ELPAC outcome consisted of 376 ERWC-ELD (treatment) students and 935 non-ERWC-ELD (comparison) students who were weighted as 376 comparison students. And the final analytic sample for the SBAC outcome consisted of 347 ERWC-ELD (treatment) students and 828 non-ERWC-ELD (comparison) students who were weighted as 347 comparison students.

## Outcome Measures

The first of the two outcome measures used for the impact evaluation is students’ scale scores on the summative ELPAC, California’s statewide assessment for English language proficiency among EL students. Students who may require EL services first take the initial ELPAC, which determines their EL status and assesses their English language proficiency level: novice EL, intermediate EL, or initial fluent English proficient. Those classified as novice or intermediate EL students must take the annual summative ELPAC until they are reclassified as fluent English proficient.

The summative ELPAC is administered to all identified EL students in grades K–12 and covers four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This assessment has two primary purposes: (a) determine the level of EL students’ English language proficiency and (b) assess EL students’ progress in acquiring the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. The content of the summative ELPAC is aligned with the 2012 California ELD standards.

The second outcome measure used in this study is student performance on the SBAC ELA. The SBAC is a statewide, computer-based assessment given annually to students in grades 3–8 and grade 11. It is designed to measure student achievement in reading, writing, listening, and research/inquiry skills, and the ELA portion is aligned with the California Common Core State Standards for ELA. The SBAC ELA includes a variety of item types, such as selected-response, constructed-response, and performance tasks that require students to analyze texts and write extended responses. Scores from the SBAC help determine students’ progress toward college and career readiness.

## Baseline Balance Testing

After the matching of treatment and comparison students, baseline balance testing was conducted on the final analytic sample for the ELPAC outcome to ensure the treatment and comparison groups were equivalent. Table 7 shows the baseline balance, after applying weights, for gender, race/ethnicity, and grade level.

**Table 7. Baseline Balance for Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Grades 6–8 Enrollment for ELPAC Analysis**

Student characteristic	ERWC-ELD students	Non-ERWC-ELD students
Female	186	186
Male	190	190
Asian	49	49
Hispanic	295	295
White	27	27
Other	5	5



Student characteristic	ERWC-ELD students	Non-ERWC-ELD students
Grade 6 enrollment	113	113
Grade 7 enrollment	117	117
Grade 8 enrollment	146	146
Total observations	376	376

Note. The numbers of non-ERWC-ELD students reported are weighted numbers.

Source: Student records data collected from school districts in the final study sample.

Similarly, Table 8 shows the final analytic sample after matching treatment and comparison students for the SBAC ELA outcome.

**Table 8. Baseline Balance for Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Grades 6–8 Enrollment for SBAC ELA Analysis**

Student characteristic	ERWC-ELD students	Non-ERWC-ELD students
Female	175	175.25
Male	172	171.75
Asian	42	42
Hispanic	278	278
White	22	22
Other	5	5
Grade 6 enrollment	108	108
Grade 7 enrollment	106	106



Student characteristic	ERWC-ELD students	Non-ERWC-ELD students
Grade 8 enrollment	133	133
Total observations	347	347

Note. The numbers of non-ERWC-ELD students reported are weighted numbers.

Source: Student records data collected from school districts in the final study sample.

Table 9 presents the baseline balance for the ELPAC scale score and the SBAC ELA score from the 2023/24 school year, after applying weights. Baseline equivalence on the ELPAC and SBAC ELA scores for the 2023/24 school year shows that the treatment and comparison groups were similar, with a standardized mean difference of less than 0.05 standard deviations.

**Table 9. Baseline Balance for ELPAC and SBAC ELA**

Baseline outcome	ERWC-ELD students	Non-ERWC-ELD students	Standardized mean difference (Hedges' <i>g</i> )
ELPAC 2023/24 average score	1,513.81 (20.964)	1,512.92 (23.19)	0.018
SBAC ELA 2023/24 average score	2,396.33 (21.62)	2,396.93 (23.19)	0.008

Note. Each ELPAC 2023/24 average score and SBAC ELA 2023/24 average score is followed by the standard deviation in parentheses. For the ELPAC 2023/24, there are 376 observations in each group, and the number of non-ERWC-ELD students is weighted. For the SBAC ELA 2023/24, there are 347 observations in each group, and the number of non-ERWC-ELD students is weighted.

Source: Student records data collected from school districts in the final study sample.

## Impact Results

Table 10 presents the results of the OLS regression analysis that uses the ELPAC scale score as the outcome measure. The coefficient for the ERWC-ELD variable reflects the quasi-experimental design impact of enrolling in a course that used the ERWC-ELD modules. The analysis indicates a positive effect (5.557) on student achievement—as measured by the ELPAC scale score—which is significant at the 5 percent level and has an effect size of 0.102 standard deviations (see Appendix A for more details on the effect size).



**Table 10. OLS Regression Analysis Showing the Impact of the ERWC-ELD on Student Scores on the ELPAC**

Student characteristic	Estimate	Cluster-robust standard error	t-statistic	p-value
ERWC-ELD	5.557**	2.800	1.98	0.048
Female	8.618***	2.359	3.65	0.000
Asian	21.23***	6.115	3.47	0.001
Hispanic	20.14***	5.723	3.52	0.000
White	30.26***	7.368	4.11	0.000
Special education	-11.88***	3.005	-3.95	0.000
Free or reduced-price lunch	0.841	3.504	0.24	0.810
Grade 7	7.155**	3.576	2.00	0.046
Grade 8	7.989**	3.362	2.38	0.018
ELPAC 2023/24 scores	0.771***	0.044	17.47	0.000
Intercept	341.3***	67.090	5.09	0.000

Note. To run the regression analyses, one of the categories had to be omitted for each categorical variable. With respect to race/ethnicity, Other was the omitted category due to it being the smallest. With respect to grades, grade 6 was the omitted category.

\*\* denotes statistical significance at the 5 percent level. \*\*\* denotes statistical significance at the 1 percent level.

Number of observations (weighted): 752.

Source: Student records data collected from school districts in the final study sample.

Similarly, Table 11 presents the results of the OLS regression analysis that uses the SBAC ELA as the outcome measure. The coefficient for the ERWC-ELD variable reflects the quasi-experimental design impact of enrolling in a class that used the ERWC-ELD modules. The analysis indicates a positive effect (14.87) on student achievement where it is measured by the



SBAC ELA. The coefficient is statistically significant at the 5 percent level, and there is an effect size of 0.191 standard deviations (see Appendix A for more details on the effect size).

**Table 11. OLS Regression Analysis Showing the Impact of the ERWC-ELD on Student Scores on the SBAC ELA**

Student characteristic	Estimate	Cluster-robust standard error	t-statistic	p-value
ERWC-ELD	14.87***	4.686	3.17	0.002
Female	1.013	4.393	0.23	0.818
Asian	28.16***	9.295	3.03	0.003
Hispanic	21.93***	7.988	2.75	0.006
White	36.20***	11.06	3.27	0.001
Special education	-24.57***	4.987	-4.93	0.000
Free or reduced-price lunch	8.067	6.108	1.32	0.187
Grade 7	-10.56	5.700	-1.85	0.065
Grade 8	-5.063	5.572	-0.91	0.364
SBAC ELA 2023/24 scores	0.598***	0.0319	18.76	0.000
Intercept	971.4***	76.12	12.76	0.000

*Note.* To run the regression analyses, one of the categories had to be omitted for each categorical variable. With respect to race/ethnicity, Other was the omitted category due to it being the smallest. With respect to grades, grade 6 was the omitted category.

\*\* denotes statistical significance at the 5 percent level. \*\*\* denotes statistical significance at the 1 percent level.

Number of observations (weighted): 694.

Source: Student records data collected from school districts in the final study sample.



# Chapter 5. Conclusion

This report details findings from an evaluation of the implementation and impact of the ERWC-ELD modules among EL students in grades 6 through 8 during the 2024/25 school year. Developed by the CSU under a federal NPD grant, the curriculum was implemented by 37 teachers across six school districts in California. WestEd, the independent evaluator, examined the curriculum through two complementary components: a fidelity of implementation evaluation and a quasi-experimental impact evaluation that compared EL students in classrooms using the ERWC-ELD modules with a matched group of similar EL students in classrooms that did not.

The implementation evaluation found that teachers delivered the curriculum and engaged in its professional learning with strong fidelity, meeting the established thresholds across every component: obtaining the full set of materials, attending the summer professional learning, participating in CoP meetings, receiving coaching, and teaching the modules. Teachers consistently reported that the curriculum engaged students, but they also identified challenges related to instructional time and students' stamina for longer writing tasks. A review of module completion showed that activities in the earlier reading-focused portions of each module were completed more often than those in the later writing-focused portions.

The impact evaluation found that students in classrooms using the ERWC-ELD modules scored higher, on average, than comparable students in non-ERWC-ELD classrooms on both the ELPAC and the SBAC summative assessment for ELA ( $p < 0.05$ ), with effect sizes of approximately 0.10 and 0.19 standard deviations, respectively.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the ERWC-ELD was implemented as intended and had a positive, measurable effect on EL students' English language proficiency and ELA achievement. The convergence of strong implementation fidelity with significant gains on two statewide assessments strengthens confidence in the curriculum contributing to improved student outcomes.

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# Appendix A. Effect Size and Missing Data

## Calculating Effect Size

The estimated effect size is calculated using the regression-adjusted mean difference between treatment and comparison students. The effect size for the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) outcome is 0.102, and the effect size for the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) summative assessment for English Language Arts (ELA) outcome is 0.191 (Table A1).

**Table A1. Estimated Effect Size of ERWC-ELD on the ELPAC and the SBAC ELA**

Outcome	ERWC-ELD group mean	Non-ERWC-ELD group mean	Number of students per group	Pooled within-group standard deviation	Adjusted mean difference	Estimated effect size
ELPAC score	1,542.151	1,536.595	376	54.281	5.557	0.102
SBAC ELA score	2,439.870	2,424.999	347	77.807	14.871	0.191

*Note.* The number of non-ERWC-ELD students represents the weighted number of students, based on the number of times each non-ERWC-ELD student was matched to an ERWC-ELD student; the adjusted mean difference is the estimated regression coefficient for ERWC-ELD from Tables 10 and 11 using the regression coefficient controls for the covariates that were included in the regression model.

Source: Student records data collected from school districts in the final study sample.

## Handling Missing Data

Most of the data provided to the evaluation team included all gender and race/ethnicity data because the test data set included those variables. However, the free or reduced-price lunch variable was missing for 35 observations. For each missing value, an imputation was conducted using the Stata command *mi impute chained*. A logistic regression model was used to account for the binary nature of the missing variable. Each missing free or reduced-price lunch value was replaced with one imputed value based on the regression model. Students with missing outcome data or missing baseline test data were excluded from the analysis, and no outcome data or baseline test data were imputed in the analysis.

