

Alerta: Publishers Must Prioritize High-Quality Spanish Language Arts Materials



Just one year from now, the California State Board of Education (SBE) will lead the 2026 ELA/ELD Instructional Materials Follow-up Adoption to ensure that instructional materials align with the latest research and standards. In the context of this adoption, the state's 1,000+ bilingual education programs urgently need high-quality Spanish Language Arts to ensure parity in both languages.

Our students and teachers deserve the best opportunities to develop both languages and cultures. For many districts, including ours, the presence and quality of the Spanish Language Arts materials will drive decisions in our adoption criteria and processes. To stay relevant in the California market (in 2026 and beyond), educational publishers must prioritize high-quality Spanish Language Arts materials.

A Wake-Up Call: The California Market Is Raising the Bar

We drive the work serving multilingual learners in three key districts in the California market: Oakland Unified, San Diego Unified, and Fresno Unified. As strong advocates for multilingualism in California, our adoption decisions will be guided by a thorough review of the Spanish instructional materials included by publishers. We are collectively committed to ensuring that high-quality Spanish curricula are intentionally designed to elevate the many dual language programs in our districts and across our state. This approach reflects our dedication to educational equity and excellence for all students and families.

Based on previous adoption cycles, we and many of our California colleagues are concerned that publishers may not pay enough attention to the quality, rigor, and research base of Spanish core literacy and foundational skills materials. Districts are waking up to the need for parity in the quality of materials in both languages and to what high-quality instructional materials in Spanish must include. We're raising the bar, collaboratively urging publishers to lean into this crucial work on behalf of our students.

The Demographics and Research Drive District Demands

California represents a huge market for educational publishers. According to the California Multilingual Support Division, 3 in 10 California districts, and over 1,300 schools, offer one or more multilingual programs. The majority of those are Spanish-language. Since 2011, the number of multilingual programs in our state has grown almost 600%. Currently in California, 103,719 English learners are enrolled in full-day multilingual programs.

Language development research indicates that if bilinguals have the opportunity to fully develop both of their languages, they will be well on their way to being whatever they want to be. Language is a resource that already exists in these young people; developing that resource fully serves them and society. For California's multilingual learner population, Spanish is the most prevalent home language. Yet too often, publishers treat high-quality Spanish Language Arts materials as an add-on.



Districts and Publishers Must Build a Shared Vision for High-Quality SLA Instructional Materials

What do we mean by High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) in Spanish Language Arts? As district leaders working closely with students and teachers, we value the guidance of the English Learners Success Forum (ELSF)—a collaboration of researchers, teachers, district leaders, and funders passionate about improving the quality and accessibility of instructional materials for English learners. They articulate five specific benchmarks for quality in Spanish Language Arts:

- **BENCHMARK 1: Honoring the Spanish Language:** Prioritizing classical and contemporary materials from the Spanish-speaking world
- **BENCHMARK 2: Spanish Literacy: Foundational to Advanced:** Following the structures of the Spanish language from K-5, including addressing the specific needs of foundational skills in Spanish
- **BENCHMARK 3: U.S. Students' Linguistic Backgrounds:** Recognizing students' bilingualism
- **BENCHMARK 4: Sociocultural and Linguistic Hybridity:** Comparing languages and cultures
- **BENCHMARK 5: Linguistically Inclusive Assessments:** Assessments based on students' linguistic profiles

SLA materials must be more than just a mirrored or watered-down version of the ELA product. High-quality materials in SLA lay the foundation for success in advanced literacy in English.



Call to Action

All of the shifts we seek from content developers may not be possible in time for the 2026 adoption. Yet publishers who want to remain relevant in the California market must commit to this work and start investing deeply now. Then they must sustain that commitment for years to come. As leaders with nearly 40 years of combined experience driving district work, we know what multilingual learners need in a dual language program that includes high-quality Spanish Language Arts. We want more than mirroring or translations of an English product. Publishers must invest in a comprehensive SLA product that uses authentic Spanish language texts.

Our trusted partners at ELSF have helped us hone our eye for quality. They willingly offer publishers guidance and can review existing materials. By working together, educators, district leaders and publishers can develop a shared vision that honor our students' languages and cultures, and provide them with the means to succeed in school and in life.

The Bottom Line

The 2026 adoption process offers districts a pivotal opportunity to choose materials that equip our teachers to fully realize the promise of dual language instruction. We understand that some publishers may hesitate to invest in developing and refining Spanish Language Arts curriculum due to concerns about return on investment. Yet this investment is both good business and the right thing to do—a true commitment to equity, inclusion, and educational excellence for all students. Publishers who lead in this space will be recognized as champions of innovation, excellence, and social impact.

We invite you to join us in shaping a future where every student, regardless of language background, has access to high-quality resources that reflect their linguistic and cultural strengths. This is a moral, educational, and business imperative. Together, we can build a more inclusive and multilingual educational landscape.

Signed,

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Join us by signing on
to this statement

