

# Chula Vista Elementary School District

Chula Vista, California

## Summary:

Chula Vista Elementary School District (CVESD) uses LAS Links<sup>®</sup> to measure the language proficiency of English language learners (ELLs), monitor student progress, and inform instructional decisions. With the integrated suite of English language proficiency assessments, the district reports improved student performance and greater accountability districtwide. From 2009 to 2011, English language learners achieved steady gains on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and California Standards Tests (CSTs), and double-digit increases on the Academic Performance Index (API).

## English Language Learners Improve Performance on State Tests and Surpass California Growth Targets

### Challenges

- Considerably more English language learners than the County of San Diego or State of California
- Lack of benchmark assessments in English Language Development

Located between the City of San Diego and the United States/Mexico international border, CVESD is the largest K–6 district in California. The suburban district enrolls more than 27,000 students in 45 schools in Chula Vista, Bonita, Sunnyside, and South San Diego.

CVESD has 40 percent more English language learners than either the County of San Diego or State of California. More than 10,000 students are English language learners and over 11 percent of these students are Long Term English Learners (LTEL). An LTEL is an English language learner who has been enrolled in the district for three or more years, but is struggling academically and has not made the annual expected progress in English Language Development for three or more years.



### District statistics:

Schools: 45  
Students: 27,500  
Grades: K–6

### Website:

<http://www.cvesd.org>

### Student population:

4% African-American  
3% Asian/Pacific Islander  
12% Caucasian  
10% Filipino  
63% Hispanic  
8% Other

49% Free and reduced meals  
36% English language learners

These statistics are from the 2009-2010 school year.



*Today, LAS Links is part of our comprehensive model for helping English language learners at every stage of the learning process.*

CVESD set out to find a formative assessment solution in 2009 to accurately assess the language proficiency of English language learner students and to give teachers easy-to-understand data to inform their instruction.

“At the time, we had benchmark assessments for students in every subject area except English Language Development,” said Emma Sanchez, executive director of language acquisition and development for CVESD. “We surveyed principals to see how they were monitoring student progress in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English, and we found they had no formative assessments in these areas. The CELDT, which is administered once a year, was the only assessment they had.”

### **Solutions: LAS Links Benchmark Assessments, LAS Links Forms A and B, and LAS Links Español**

Addressing these needs, CVESD began using LAS Links in fall 2009. LAS Links is a comprehensive, integrated system of assessment, instructional placement, instructional guidance, and support for all English language learners.

“I’ve worked in language acquisition for a while so I was very familiar with LAS Links,” said Sanchez. “We knew it was an established, valid and reliable assessment, used nationally and internationally. Because the format, content, and scoring are aligned to the CELDT, we also knew it would provide us with valuable information about the areas in which our students are assessed. Today, LAS Links is part of our comprehensive model for helping English language learners at every stage of the learning process.”

### **LAS Links Benchmark Assessments**

CVESD administers LAS Links Benchmark Assessments twice a year to all students who scored in the beginning, early intermediate, or intermediate performance levels of the CELDT. With these assessments, teachers can monitor each student’s progress in acquiring English language skills, and adjust the curriculum to address areas of student need and build upon areas of strength.

“LAS Links Benchmark Assessments have changed the way our teachers think about assessment,” said Sanchez. “Previously in our district, the CELDT was usually administered by instructional assistants. But from the beginning, we required that teachers administer LAS Links to their students. Because the benchmark assessments are so closely aligned with the CELDT, this demystified the CELDT for our teachers. Now, teachers want to administer the CELDT. LAS Links opened teachers’ eyes about how they can prepare their students for the CELDT, which has helped us advance to where we are now in terms of student achievement.”



CVESD administers the CELDT between July and September. The state provides the results in January. “We didn’t want to wait several months to get our CELDT results back, so our district created a data system that allows us to score the CELDT and collect the preliminary data. This way, teachers can immediately use that information to adjust their instruction and accelerate the interventions,” said Sanchez.

Helping teachers continue to track English language learners’ progress throughout the school year, every school administers the first LAS Links Benchmark Assessment between November and December. The second assessment is conducted between February and March.

“LAS Links Benchmark Assessments give us a better understanding of our students’ progress,” said Sanchez. “They provide valuable insights into students’ skill levels, which helps teachers differentiate their instruction to target the areas where students are having difficulty. This is essential not only to each student’s individual growth, but to fulfill our Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs), as required by Title III.”

California AMAO 1 requires that students are making annual progress in learning English. AMAO 2 requires that students are attaining the English proficient level on the CELDT. AMAO 3 requires that the district and schools are meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements for the English language learner subgroup.

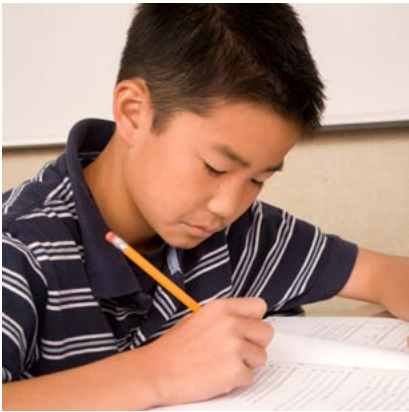
“LAS Links Benchmark Assessments allow teachers and administrators to see exactly what our students can and cannot do in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. This has raised the level of awareness about what is expected of students on the CELDT, which has positively impacted our performance on the AMAOs,” said Sanchez.

### LAS Links Forms A and B and LAS Links Español

Gaining additional insight into students’ language proficiency, CVESD schools use LAS Links Forms A and B with all ELLs, and LAS Links Español with Spanish-speaking students.

The research-based assessments measure students in listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension. In addition, the LAS Links Español test scores are comparable to the English assessment, making it easy to compare students’ proficiency in both languages. “Schools use these assessments when they want to gather additional information for placement purposes or for instructional purposes,” said Sanchez.

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## Data Analysis and Accountability

Supporting teachers and administrators in their decision making, LAS Links offers a number of informative reports that present data in concise, visually appealing, and easy-to-read formats. CVESD makes these reports available to educators through the district’s own Online Assessment and Reporting system.

“The visual format of the LAS Links reports makes it easy for teachers to interpret and act upon the data. In fact, one of the reasons teachers embraced LAS Links right away was that it was so easy to read and analyze student data,” said Sanchez. “The classroom reports are very helpful because they allow teachers to look at the data vertically and horizontally. From a vertical perspective, teachers can see their class as a whole, so they can determine where students are experiencing difficulty and decide where to focus their classroom instruction. Looking at the data horizontally, teachers can see which skill areas individual students are struggling with, so they can provide targeted support or small group interventions. Teachers also use these reports in grade-level team meetings, so they can identify areas for improvement, set goals, and collaborate on strategies to reach those goals.”

Additionally, administrators can generate LAS Links reports by teacher, classroom, grade level, school, or for the entire district. “It’s incredible because I can do a quick spot check of a school, or do a detailed analysis at any level,” said Sanchez. “The data from LAS Links and the CELDT also help us plan professional development with our teachers, so we can connect them to the resources and support they need to address our students’ needs.”

Throughout the district, educators are excited about the progress they are seeing, thanks to their use of data. “Accountability is huge in our district,” said Sanchez. “Every month, four of our schools have to appear in front of the Board of Education. One of the areas they must report on is the progress of English language learners, because our Board holds us accountable for this. The LAS Links data help our teachers and administrators show the Board exactly how they are improving outcomes for this group of students.”

### Results

- Improved performance on the CSTs in English-language arts and math
- Improved performance on the CELDT
- Achievement of AMAO targets
- Increased API scores
- Increasing number of students reclassified to Fluent English Proficient

Thanks to the outstanding work of students, parents, teachers, and administrators, CVESD has achieved significant gains across several accountability measures.

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**Chula Vista Elementary School District**  
California Standards Tests (CSTs)

	ELA	Math	Grade 5 Science	% Who Are ELL Students
<b>CVESD</b>	66%	74%	68%	37%
<b>County of San Diego</b>	60%	54%	62%	25%
<b>State of California</b>	56%	58%	57%	24%

“LAS Links has played an important role in helping us to achieve these gains because it provides a very focused lens on our English language learners. It gives us information about where our students are making progress, so we can focus our instructional strategies and interventions,” said Sanchez. “This ongoing monitoring also boosts accountability. It helps us hold all of our schools accountable for English language learners meeting their goals.”

**Chula Vista Elementary School District**  
Title III Federal Accountability and Reporting  
2010–2011

AMAO	Target Goal	CVESD
<b>1 . Making annual growth on CELDT</b>	54.6%	61.2%
<b>2. Attaining English proficient level on CELDT (Levels 4 &amp; 5)</b>	< 5 Years* 18.7% > 5 Years** 43.2%	28% 47.2%
<b>3. Meeting AYP requirements</b>	<b>English-language arts – 67.6%</b> <b>Mathematics – 68.5%</b>	<b>54% (Safe Harbor)</b>

\* Percentage of ELLs in language instruction educational programs for 5 years or less

\*\* Percentage of ELLs in language instruction educational programs for 5 years or more

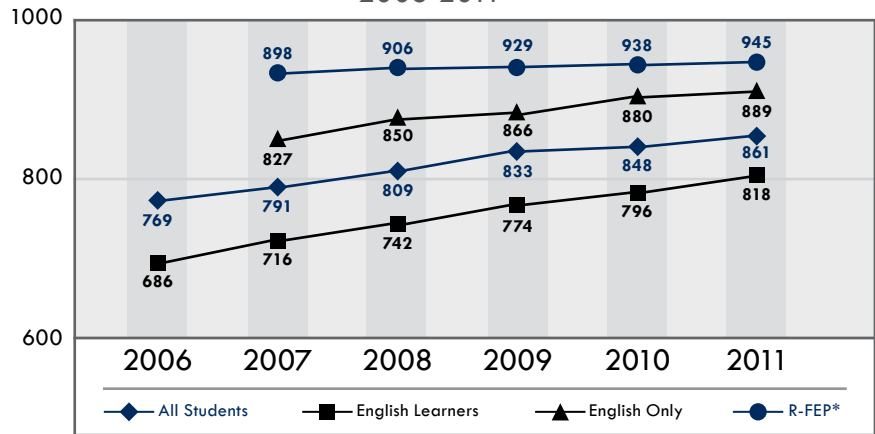
“LAS Links has been instrumental in giving us the data we need to identify and target areas of improvement. As a result, we’re narrowing the achievement gap between English-only students and English language learners,” said Sanchez. “Our API scores for English language learners show we’re making steady progress. In 2011, the API score for our English language learners was 818—that’s unheard of! We also have schools with very high English language learner populations achieving scores in the high-800s and 900s. It all comes down to very careful monitoring, and using data to focus our instruction and emphasize accountability.”



### Chula Vista Elementary School District

#### Academic Performance Index (API)

2006-2011



\*R-FEP - Students reclassified to Fluent English Proficient



*In our district, we've worked very hard to create a data-driven culture for achievement and these new forms will give us another important tool to monitor and improve the outcomes of our English language learners.*



### API – California Growth Model

K-6 Only

	2011 API	Gain (in points) from 2011
CVESD	861	13
San Diego County	804	10
State of California	778	10

“Our students’ achievement is in partnership with all the people we work with and DRC has truly been a partner in education in our district,” said Sanchez. “They’ve provided us with valid, reliable, and timely assessments that provide useful data on our English language learners’ listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension skills.

#### Looking Ahead

CVESD is also piloting a new solution, LAS Links Forms C and D, which align to the College and Career Readiness Standards and adds measures of student performance in Academic English.

“I was excited to see the rigor of the new LAS Links items because it will give our teachers the capacity to support our English language learners in the era of Common Core,” said Sanchez.

**For more information on LAS Links, visit [laslinks.com](http://laslinks.com) or call 800.538.9547 to schedule an in-person demonstration.**