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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State School Superintendent Jack O’Connell again fails to recognize the lack of academic progress for 25% of California’s students. For the sixth consecutive year, he offers no solutions to address or improve student performance.

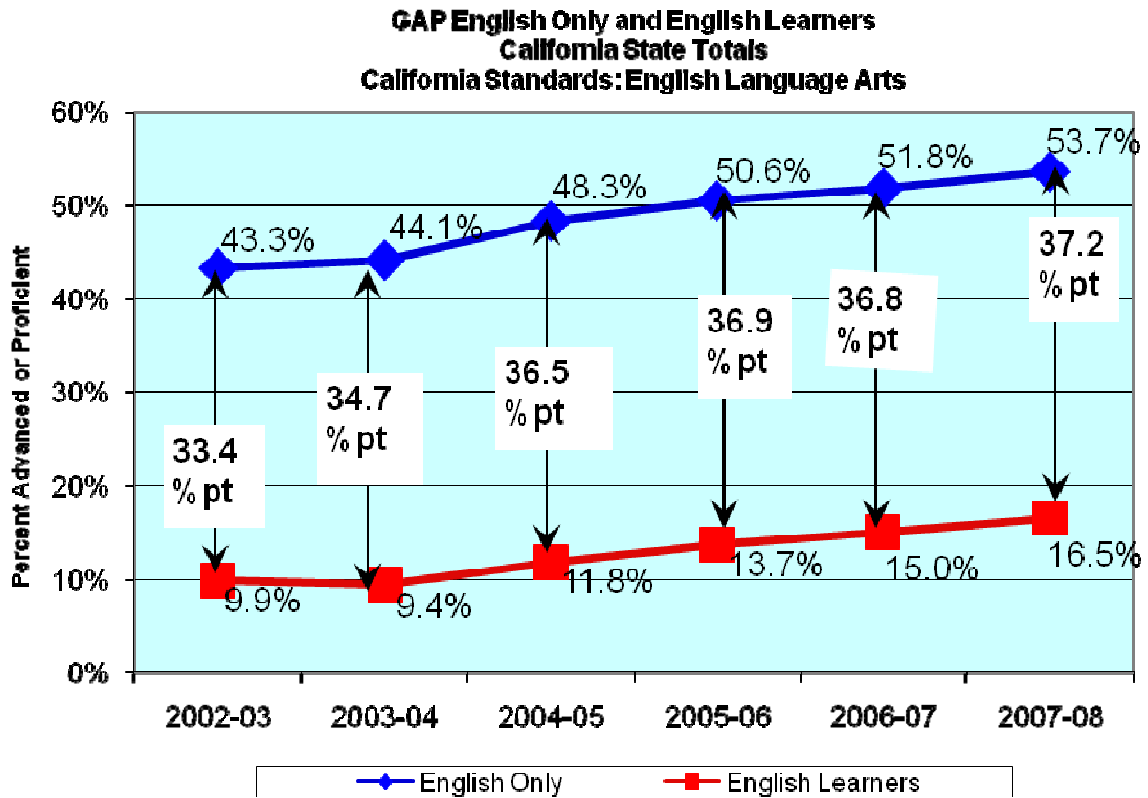
School Districts across the state will continue to be deemed as failures because of the large number of “misassigned” teachers, ineffective resources and inappropriate programs for English Learners.

West Covina, CA (August 14, 2008) – Superintendent of Instruction Jack O’Connell continues to make claims of statewide academic progress in California while close to 1.6 million English Learners and their teachers find their efforts undermined by the lack of appropriate resources and a “one-size-fits all” approach and programs that fail to meet the instructional needs of one quarter of California’s students.

Parents and school administrators of English Learners are impatient with this yearly lament over the persistent achievement gap and the failure to offer practical solutions to reverse the negative trend in the academic achievement of English Learners. This fact is irrefutable based on the data released today by the Department of Education, where in 7 out of 10 grade levels English Learners either made no progress or decreased in their academic performance.

It is very alarming that Superintendent O’Connell continues to ignore the achievement gap between California’s English Only and English Learners even though this gap has increased by close to 3 percentage points in the last six years. Since 2003 to 2008 this gap has grown from 33.4% to 37.2%, respectively (Table 1 below). The failure to mention this subgroup’s academic performance only emphasizes the state’s lack of leadership in addressing one

of its major challenges - educating its English Learners who represent 25% of the student population in California.



“With this rate of progress, it would take 55 years for all of our current English Learners to become proficient,” states Rosalia Salinas, President Californians Together. “California’s position in the world requires that everyone be committed to improving the academic performance of every student and we must focus our attention to and provide English Learners and their teachers with the appropriate tools to accelerate student achievement. Each child in California’s schools needs to be prepared to compete and succeed in today’s national and international arena.”

School districts and teachers are working diligently and under great scrutiny to meet the federal No Child Left Behind proficiency standards, but the state leadership’s unwillingness to adopt different strategies that meet the diverse educational needs of the state’s student body only makes students’ efforts futile and unrewarding, as indicated in the high drop-out rates of high school students.

“As teachers and administrators, we recognize that the right tools and the right teacher can make the difference to increase each student’s performance,” states Karling Aguilera-Fort, CAFE President. “Repeatedly, research indicates that teachers have the greatest impact on student academic achievement, yet the recent Commission on Teacher Credentialing Report confirms that the majority

(53%) of the ‘misassigned’ teachers are instructing English Learners – which means that nearly 12,000 classrooms are led by teachers who lack the appropriate certification and skills to teach our English Learner students. This is an educational crisis.”

After six years of ineffective performance, parents, teachers and administrators across California urge state leaders to consider the increasing academic gap among English Learners as the key factor to ensure California’s future as an economic power in our country and the world. It is now time for a statewide action plan to align resources, use equitable instructional approaches and have a steadfast commitment to end the academic disparity affecting English Learners and students of color who together comprise close to 60% of California’s student population and future workforce.

For years, CAFE and Californians Together have presented practical proposals to the California’s legislative and policy bodies. School districts and parent groups throughout the state have vetted many of these solutions. Based on the current academic trend and pace, failure to take immediate and significant action will only bring years of continual laments and missed opportunities to prepare our future workforce.

CAFE is a statewide organization with over 5,000 members and 50 chapters/affiliates who firmly believe in the learning of English, high quality educational programs and respect for diversity of California’s students and parents. CAFE supports research, planning and learning to guide equitable instructional programs and practices for English Learners. www.bilingualeducation.org

Californians Together is a statewide coalition of parents, teachers, and education advocates and civil rights organizations committed to securing equal access to quality education for all children. Californians Together founded in 1998 as a non-profit organization after the passage of Proposition 227. Californians Together, in conjunction with many of its affiliates, strive to foster full participation in a democratic society through quality education for children and parents from underserved communities.

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