



California ELA:

From Framework to Follow-Up Adoption

For more than a decade, California has been building toward a structured literacy future through a series of policy changes and research developments. With the 2026 follow-up adoption, that future becomes finalized.

The first such change was the 2014 adoption of an updated ELA/ELD Framework, notable for combining guidance on both the California Common Core State Standards and the California English Language Development Standards. This shift in framework led to an ELA curriculum [adoption](#) in 2015.

Although the 2014 ELA/ELD Framework was grounded in decades of research on structured literacy ([The Reading League](#) describes the framework as an integrated, evidence-based literacy model including phonics, phonemic awareness, decoding, and language comprehension skills), these principles had not yet entered the broader educational conversation. Widespread attention to the [science of reading](#) (SOR) emerged later, [fueled by low state and national reading assessment scores](#) juxtaposed with significant student achievement gains in [Mississippi](#) following the state's 2013 science of reading law mandating structured literacy. States began to follow Mississippi's example, and by 2020, [16 additional states had enacted similar legislation](#).

California introduced the first of its science of reading legislation in 2021. That [legislative arc](#) was completed in October 2025 with the passage of [AB 1454](#), which required all adopted instructional materials to align with state standards and the ELA/ELD Framework—and also applied these requirements to off-list adoptions.

On-List Versus Off-List

“On-list” or “off-list” are terms used to refer to district curriculum selections. Materials present on state lists are noted as being “on-list”, while districts who select materials not on their state’s list are “off-list”. Not all states create adoption lists, but processes vary between those that do—ranging from highly prescriptive to loose recommendations. In California, districts may choose to adopt off-list, but must submit evidence of standards alignment to do so.

This legislation has resulted in a 2026 “follow-up adoption,” building on the existing ELA/ELD framework and any newly approved materials will be added to the current adoption list. This update reflects the growing demand for materials that support students to learn from structured literacy approaches. Additionally, the follow-up adoption has been expanded [to include transitional kindergarten \(TK\)](#) curricular materials.

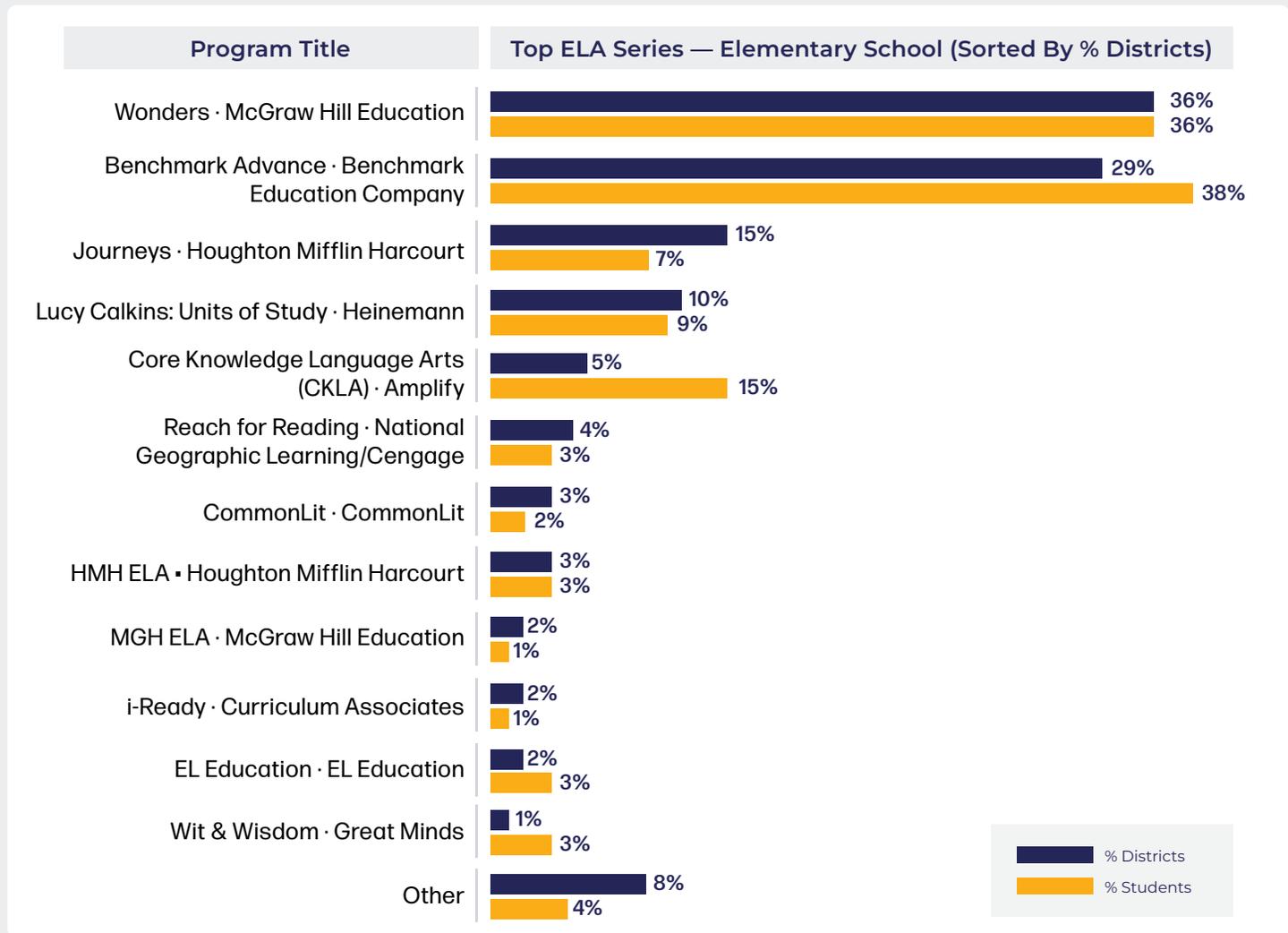
Despite the fact that the 2026 adoption is a follow-up adoption rather than a full adoption, the impact is still likely to be large. CEMD analysis shows that **over 440 California districts currently have core ELA products from 2018 or earlier**—products that may not align with research-based evidence, and don't have the supports present in products today. This number highlights the potential for not only enormous market change, but also student growth potential (when paired with aligned assessments and robust curriculum-based professional learning). To fully understand the impact of the upcoming follow-up adoption, however, it is helpful to examine the current ELA curriculum landscape in California.

A Concentrated Market

The elementary ELA market in California is diverse, yet concentrated, with the majority of districts selecting a series from the most prevalent five series statewide. This can be attributed to two compounding factors: during the previous adoption in 2015, the market had fewer providers and had not yet experienced the diversification and fragmentation that is being seen in the [current California math adoption](#). Additionally, it may be reflective of the established [district pattern](#) of waiting until state adoptions occur to change curricula.

FIGURE 1

Most-Selected ELA Series, Grades K-5



Represents 478 districts in California included in the CEMD sample.
 Note: Sorted by district percentages; percentages add to over 100 due to districts selecting multiple materials.
 Note: We hypothesize that districts that have indicated they use “HMH ELA” or “MGH ELA” have selected Journeys and Wonders, respectively; however, we cannot confirm this hypothesis and have kept the district self-reported data as-is.
 Source – CEMD School Year 2024–25 Data Collection



EL Education and Wit & Wisdom appear within the most-selected series due to the large number of students, rather than districts, accessing them. Both series were released after the 2015 adoption—reflecting the trend seen across the state in both math and ELA, that larger districts tend to move ahead of the state review and adoption of new materials.

Large Districts Move Ahead

CEMD's analysis of curriculum adoption across California reveals that larger districts tend to adopt new instructional materials ahead of the state's official adoption timeline. This trend appears in both the most recent math adoption and the upcoming ELA adoption.

For math, California's most recent adoption followed a prior cycle in 2014. In CEMD's 2024–25 data, districts selecting math products with a 2017* or newer copyright had an average enrollment of **roughly 11,000 students**, compared to **roughly 7,500 students** across all districts with core math selections. A similar pattern emerges in ELA. Following the 2015 ELA adoption, districts selecting products copyrighted 2018* or newer averaged **roughly 10,500 students**, while the statewide district average was **roughly 7,500 students**.

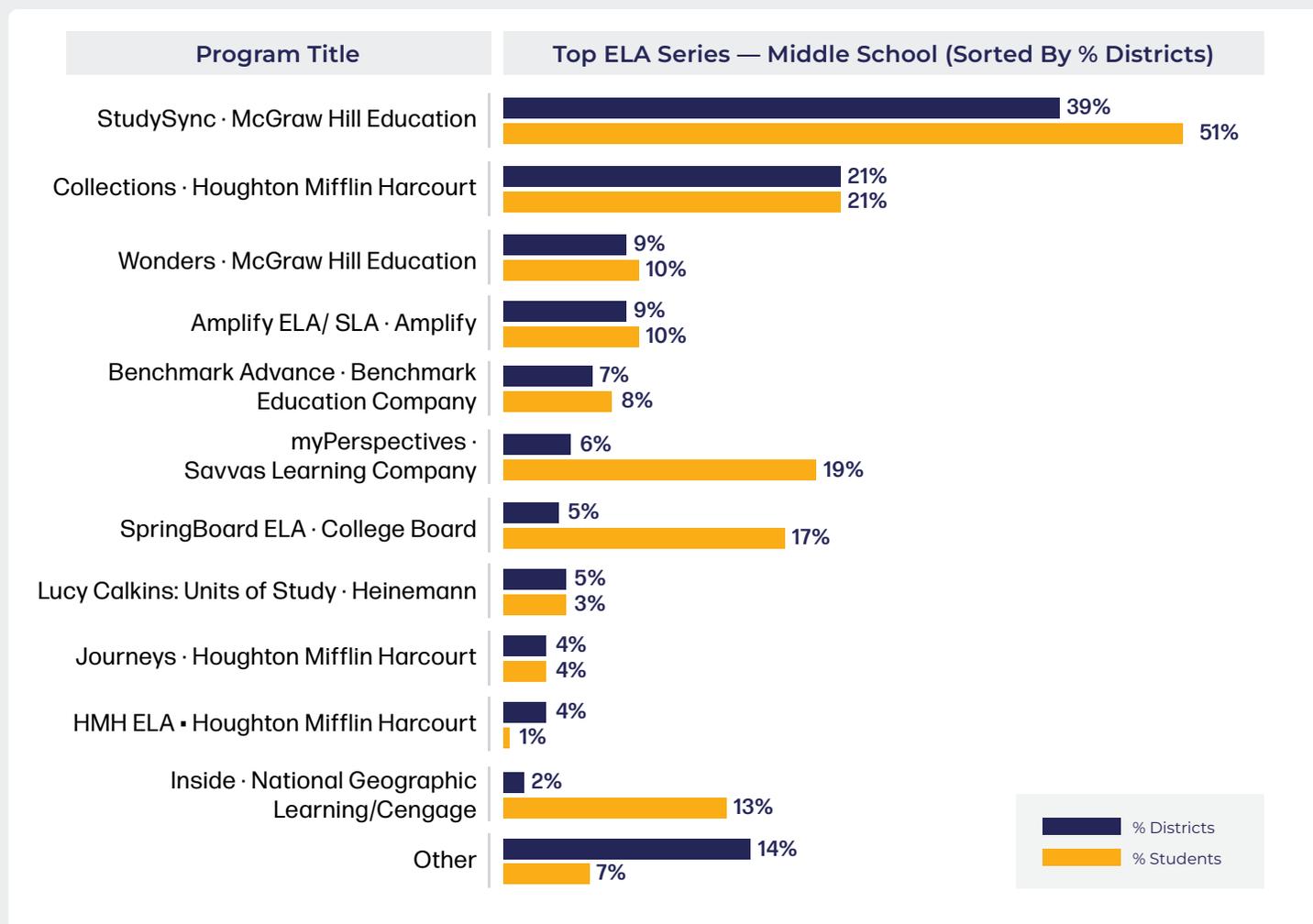
This pattern may reflect California's long adoption cycle—both recent cycles exceeded 11 years, compared to six or seven years in most states—which may have incentivized districts to move away from aging curricula before formal state guidance is issued. Additionally, California's size and influence create strong market incentives for publishers and technical assistance providers to prioritize large districts, making it easier for them to adopt high-quality materials on their own timelines.

**After state adoption lists are released, it is typical for districts to take between one and three years to conduct their own adoption process. Thus, the selection of the years 2017 and 2018 in this analysis reflects districts that likely had already completed adoptions related to the 2014 math and 2015 ELA lists.*

While the middle school market is comparably concentrated in terms of how districts have selected materials, a by-student lens shows that there is a heavier concentration than in elementary. StudySync from McGraw Hill, the series with the largest market share by both districts and series, reaches 51% of all California middle schoolers. Wonders, despite being developed for K–6 and therefore only used in middle school at the sixth grade level, shows up as a commonly-selected series in middle school—reflecting just how frequently the curriculum is selected.

Savvas Learning Company's myPerspectives also sees a sizable jump when analyzing by student access, and notably, it is the only series on the middle school list with its first edition released post-2015 adoption. This mirrors the trend seen at the elementary level, where large districts (fewer districts, more students) have moved to newer materials despite the majority of districts remaining with materials selected around the previous adoption.

Most-Selected ELA Series, Grades 6–8



Represents 490 districts in California included in the CEMD sample.

Note: Sorted by district percentages; percentages add to over 100 due to districts selecting multiple materials.

Note: We hypothesize that districts that have indicated they use “HMH ELA” or “MGH ELA” have selected Journeys and Wonders, respectively; however, we cannot confirm this hypothesis and have kept the district self-reported data as-is.

Source – CEMD School Year 2024–25 Data Collection



Moving Toward State Adoption

Many of the highly selected curriculum series were first introduced either in or before 2015, and many of these curricula were included on the California 2015 adoption list. At the elementary level, four of the 10 most prevalent series (as defined either by-student or by-district) were on the state adopted list, and an additional one that was not adopted by the state in 2015 (Amplify CKLA). This number climbs to seven of 10 at the middle school level (along with another, Springboard ELA, that was not adopted). The series not included on California’s list are a mixture of materials aligned to old methods (Lucy Calkins: Units of Study), materials not adopted by the state, and newer materials that were not published at the time of the 2015 adoption (Wit & Wisdom, EL Education, etc.). These series are seen more frequently at the elementary level.

Under the [legislative mandate](#), all instructional materials adopted (by both the state and by districts) must align with the California ELA/ELD Framework, and “align to evidence-based means of teaching foundational reading skills”. Therefore, additions to the 2015 list during the follow-up adoption are required to align to both the California Framework as well as science of reading methodology. These additions may include products developed after the 2015 adoption, as well as revised submissions of materials that were not adopted at that time and are up for reconsideration.

A Focus on Multilingual Learners (MLLs)

California’s ELA story cannot be told without multilingual learners, and the inclusion of ELD standards into the combined ELA/ELD Framework released in 2014 reflects an intentional focus on these students. This focus is also reflected in the instructional materials adopted by the state, and subsequently, districts.

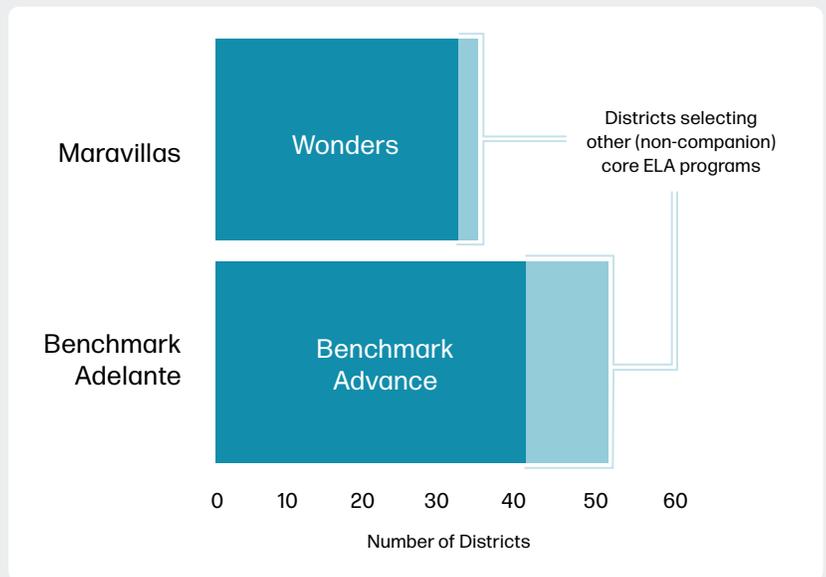
The 2015 instructional materials adoption list, and the subsequent 2026 follow-up list, houses three families of core ELA products: basic ELA, basic ELA/ELD, and basic biliteracy. Basic ELA and basic ELA/ELD differ in the latter’s inclusion of integrated, designated ELD instruction within the curriculum. Basic biliteracy programs are intended for use in Spanish language immersion programs. California adopted two basic biliteracy programs in 2015, Maravillas (the Spanish-language companion to Wonders) and Benchmark Adelante (the companion to Benchmark Advance), which are both K-6 products. Their presence in elementary schools can still be seen today, with 8% of districts in CEMD’s database selecting Benchmark Adelante, and 6% selecting Maravillas. Analysis of the selection of these Spanish Language Arts (SLA) materials shows compelling trends:

Districts that adopt both ELA and SLA materials are typically adopting the companion programs. Of the 34 districts that selected Maravillas, 32 of those districts also selected Wonders. Similarly, of the 53 districts that selected Benchmark Adelante, 42 of those districts also selected Benchmark Advance.

The districts selecting both an ELA and an SLA product have larger populations of multilingual learners. The median percentage of total enrollment that MLLs make up in districts selecting both Benchmark Advance and Benchmark Adelante

FIGURE 3

Districts Selecting Companion ELA/SLA Materials



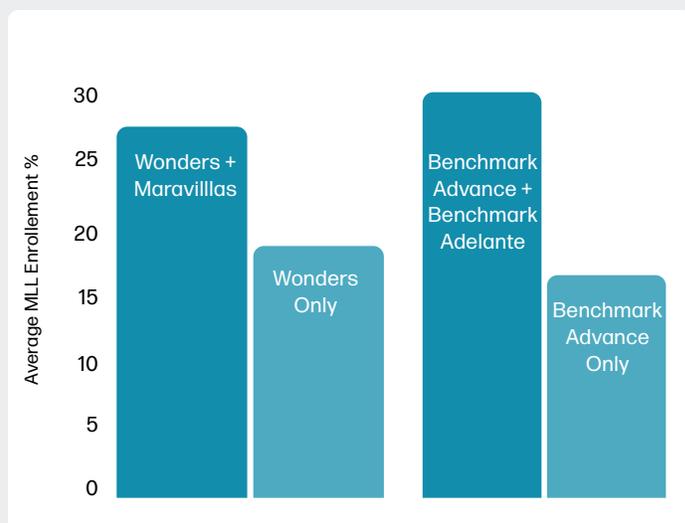
Represents 87 districts in California included in the CEMD sample.
Source – CEMD School Year 2024–25 Data Collection



is 28%, while the median drops to 17% in all districts selecting Benchmark Advance. Similarly, the MLL enrollment percentage in districts with both Wonders and Maravillas is 27%, while the median for all districts selecting Wonders is only 18%.

These figures support what district leaders have repeatedly reported to be true—they [want high-quality SLA materials](#), and their availability will likely impact broader adoption decisions.

MLL Enrollment by ELA or ELA + SLA Selection



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Opportunities for Leaders

The 2026 follow-up adoption is a key opportunity for districts to reassess how literacy instruction is supported within and across classrooms. Because instructional materials shape daily teaching practice, adoption decisions often influence professional learning, instructional coherence, and long-term student outcomes.

As districts prepare for the follow-up adoption, leaders may benefit from considering several strategic questions:

- What instructional vision for literacy does our district want to advance, and how well do our current materials and practice support this vision?
- How can we prepare our adoption committee in advance so members have a shared understanding of the ELA/ELD Framework, structured literacy research, and the criteria that should guide evaluation of materials?
- In what ways might adopting new instructional materials require shifts in instructional practice, professional learning, or system supports within our district?
- What partnerships or external resources—such as county offices of education—could strengthen both our adoption process and eventual implementation?
- How does this upcoming ELA adoption intersect with other major instructional initiatives, such as recent math adoption work, and how can district leadership ensure each receives sufficient time, attention, and resources?



Takeaways

For more than a decade, California has been building toward stronger, research-aligned literacy instruction. With AB 1454 and the 2026 ELA follow-up adoption, that vision continues to solidify.

This moment matters for students:

- Structured literacy is becoming the standard. Clear expectations for instructional materials increase the likelihood that students receive explicit, evidence-based reading instruction from the start.
- With over 440 districts still holding onto materials from 2018 or earlier, the adoption of new instructional materials means the potential for positive shifts for millions of students.
- Multilingual learners remain central to the story. Continued demand for aligned SLA materials and integrated ELA/ELD materials reflects the needs of districts serving large multilingual populations—and the importance of getting literacy right in more than one language.

The 2026 follow-up adoption represents an opportunity to strengthen student reading outcomes in a big way. As California is one of the nation's largest instructional materials markets, the decisions made here have the potential to influence districts' approach to literacy—well beyond the state's borders.

Data Methodology

CEMD is a central hub for the collection, distribution, and making sense of data and information about K-12 curriculum and instruction. During the 2024-25 school year, CEMD researched the math, ELA, science, and social studies core curricular materials—as well as math and ELA supplemental and assessment materials—selected across grades K-12 in more than 3,000 districts nationwide, representing 61% of all students in the country.

Analyses in this report focused on the reported selections of K-5 and 6-8 ELA and SLA instructional materials by California districts in 2024-25. For more information on data methodology, visit cemd.org/frequently-asked-questions/.

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