Female: Welcome to this two-part podcast hosted by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, OELA. We're here with Maha Fukuda, an education program specialist from OELA. Joining Maha for this discussion on secondary English learners are Dr. Aida Walqui from WestEd, Dr. Ilana Umansky from the University of Oregon, and Dr. Karen Thompson from Oregon State University.

English learners at the secondary level who are approaching high school graduation face unique challenges. For example, secondary ELs must not only meet the standard graduation requirements determined by their local educational agency but have to also take and pass English language development classes. As students are returning for the new school year, it's important to identify and eliminate structural barriers and accessibility issues that may impact English learners. During the English Learners at Secondary Schools' "Trajectories, Transition Points, and Promising Practices" webinar that was hosted by OELA in 2021, the three panelists who are here with us today discussed what research has shown about the academic trajectories of ELs at the secondary level and explored structural barriers to EL education as well as policies and practices that may potentially reduce these barriers. The recording of this webinar can be found at the NCELA, at www.ncela.ed.gov.

In this podcast, Dr. Walqui, Dr. Umansky, and Dr. Thompson will answer some of the questions that were submitted during the webinar but due to time constraints could not be addressed at that time. Part one will address questions about supporting ELs in meeting graduation requirements, mitigating risks that may lead ELs to drop out of school, and providing English language development or ELD instruction. In the second part of this podcast, the panelists will address questions about the needs of students with limited or interrupted formal education, professional learning opportunities for educators of secondary ELs, and promising practices that may help educators meet the needs of ELs in secondary schools. Let's get the conversation started.

Maha: Our first question is for Dr. Umansky. During our webinar, you provided the audience with several warning signs that districts and schools need to be aware of and be prepared to intervene when they encountered them with regards to secondary English learners. Can you tell us a bit about those warning signs and perhaps some promising practices that schools and districts can implement to address these issues?

Dr. Umansky: Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to be back together with all of you today. In that webinar, I mentioned some warning signs. These included course failure, repeating courses, missing core content areas in student schedules, incomplete schedule, so missing periods, disproportionate placement in remedial classes or non-credit bearing classes, slow progress towards graduation, as well as chronic absenteeism and disengagement. And in the webinar, I mentioned that these were opportunities for intervention. So, I'll talk a little bit more about what I mean by that. The first important step is to identify that these patterns are occurring both at the individual level for individual secondary school-aged English learners, but also at a systematic level...but also at a systemic level within a school or district. So, it's really important that schools first understand that they can identify these patterns both for individual students and at a systemic level. And this is happening increasingly in different schools, districts, and even across whole states.

So, one way in which these patterns can be identified is through data systems. Reports can be generated that provide information for school and district administrators, such as how many credits has a student accumulated in a given year? Are they repeating a class? Is there a class that they failed? And perhaps most basically, is the student in English language arts this year? Is the student in math this year? Is the student in science and social studies this year? So, these reports can be generated and pretty easily then reviewed. Another alternative is through learning team meetings. And this is another thing that we're seeing being taken up more and more across schools and districts. And these learning team meetings might include a counselor, the EL lead in the school, an administrator, and potentially also the parent or the student themselves. So, in these meetings, these educators can review student transcripts and really try to identify any of these warning signs. Then the second step after identification would be responding. And again, here we can think about responding at the individual level, or responding at the system level.

So, let's say it's identified for a particular student that they're repeating algebra, that they're now taking algebra for the second year in a row, or for the third year in a row because they're struggling to pass that class. So, there are individual kind of responses, for instance, supporting that student to be placed in both algebra and a supplementary math class to support them in their math learning, or placing them in an algebra class where the teacher has professional development on working with English learner students. Also, these responses

can be system-wide. So, let's say a school identifies a pattern in which students are missing a core subject area like English language arts because it's being crowded out by multiple periods of ELD. So, then there can be a system-wide response where, for instance, the school decides, no, we're only gonna play students in one period of ELD per day so that we can make sure that students have full access to core content, or we're gonna work on integrating ELD into our ELA classes. So, just to summarize, these are warning signs that are opportunities for intervention. The first step, of course, is identifying them and then the second step is responding. Does anybody have anything they want to add, Karen or Aida?

Dr. Thompson: This is Karen, and I just was going to add that in Oregon, there was a recent ballot measure called Measure 98 that was passed that provides substantial funding to eligible high schools across the state to do some of what you're talking about, for example, develop stronger data systems that can help the school understand students' progress towards graduation. Although that measure wasn't specifically targeted at improving education outcomes and opportunities for students classified as English learners, it has the potential to realize that goal. So, while states and districts and schools all have varying resources around data, districts and schools that I've worked with have found it really promising and meaningful to invest substantial time and resources in data systems because they enable that pattern identification, and then both systemic and individual level responses.

Maha: Thank you. The next question is for Dr. Walqui. Dropout rates for secondary English learners is a big concern in the EL educational community. From a programming curriculum and instruction standpoint, what can schools and districts do to reduce dropout rates among secondary English learners?

Dr. Walqui: There are many things that schools and districts can do programmatically in terms of curriculum and instruction, beginning with the fact that they need to recognize that the world has changed immensely in the last half a century and immensely in the last year, and the nature of learning has also changed. And so, programmatically, I think that schools should provide the time and space for teachers to develop their expertise to serve all students with quality and equity. And when it comes to English learners to realize that at least five major changes have to guide their actions in instruction and in material selection. The first one is that it is not really about readiness. Are students ready to tackle a specific text or to discuss at a certain level specific ideas? We know

today very clearly through multiple studies that started in the 1930s with [inaudible 00:10:02] but that most recently have been picked up by many, including Barbara Rogoff, that it is processes of apprenticeship that trigger the conceptual, the analytic, and the linguistic development of students. So, students do not need to be ready. Students are made ready by their being offered quality, well-supported learning opportunities.

The second big shift is that English learners are not lacking in English and in general, they are not lacking. English learners come to school full of potential. They come to school ready to learn, like, they come to school with interest, they want to engage. And, unfortunately, oftentimes the kind of education they receive does not fulfill their expectations. And that is a good reason for why they drop out. A third idea is that it is not about teaching language to English learners. Guadalupe Valdes coined a wonderful new verb, curricularize. What she says is that oftentimes in American education, we carricularize the language English. In other words, we think that the syllabus, the curriculum, is English. And we need to teach English the forms of the language in linear ways in a lockstep fashion. Instead, we know very well that students learn and develop key ideas, they learn how to work through those ideas by analyzing them, summarizing them, comparing them, contrasting it. And in the process of doing all that, they develop language. So, it's not about teaching language. It's about developing conceptual, analytic, and linguistic practices.

And finally, I want to talk about the notion of simplification, which has to be put aside if we want quality for our students. Instead of simplifying, we need to amplify, enrich the possibilities for students to get complex messages. And in a process of apprenticeship, students initially only understand part of what is in a text, whether that text is oral, whether that text is pictorial or written. But as they keep being invited to engage with the text and support that to notice specific things, they appropriate those practices, and this is the process of simplification.

So, to me, what is essential is that teachers catch up to the times. How do we do that? I think schools and districts need to provide that time within the working day of teachers so that they tool themselves. When teachers studied in college or at the university, what they came out with was nearly the first step in their preparation. They need to put it against practice and they need to keep developing their understandings as knowledge evolves. And so, supporting them and helping them critique the materials they have, helping them adapt,

expand and amplify the materials with which they teach students, and making lessons an everyday practice in class enticing, where students are sitting at the edge of their seats talking about important things. That will definitely curb the dropout rates and the low performance and reclassification of our students.

Maha: Thank you, Dr. Walqui. You certainly gave our audience a lot of actionable steps to consider. We're going to go next to Dr. Thompson. Some people have expressed concern that the emphasis on graduation is making it more important for schools to just give out credit by any means necessary rather than to give English learners the content and language instruction they really need. What are your thoughts on this, and what can be done to mitigate this potential problem?

Dr. Thompson: Well, that's an important topic that I first wanna start by just pointing out that we see, looking at a recent factsheet that OELA released, we see that graduation rates for students classified as English learners remained disturbingly low. So, the median state-level 4-year graduation rate for students classified as English learners is about 60% and there's lots of variation by state. But if schools were just handing out credits, we would expect that graduation rate to be higher. Of course, it's very disturbing that that rate remains low and there actually has been, as the factsheet points out, considerable improvement in the English learner high school graduation rate in recent years. Here in Oregon, the graduation rate for students classified as English learners in high school has increased from just a little over 50% in 2014 to about 65% in 2020. So, we do see some improvement, but there still remains a long way to go.

While we don't see substantial evidence of schools just granting credit without evidence of learning, researchers have pointed out that there are some problematic aspects of current policies. For example, ESSA requires that schools' four-year high school graduation rates be a central feature of how they're evaluated for states' accountability systems. And Julie Sugarman at Migration Policy Institute has a really interesting and useful report looking at this practice and its implications for students classified as English learners at the high school level. And she points out, as others have pointed out as well, both from research and practice, that especially for newcomer students, particularly those who arrive in the U.S. in the late middle school or high school years with limited or interrupted formal education, they may simply need more than four years to engage in the learning that is necessary to demonstrate the skills and earn the credits required for graduation.

So, she urges that future reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act consider expanding, and requiring states to include not just four-year high school graduation rates, which of course are important, but also potentially five and six-year graduation rates. Michael Keefer and Carrie Parker have shown with New York City data that when you look at five and six-year graduation rates, there are substantial numbers of students classified as English learners who are graduating in five and six years and we don't want schools to not serve students and actually push them out into the community college or adult education system if they think they aren't going to be able to graduate in four years. So, we do want to make sure that schools are providing students with the meaningful learning opportunities that they need, as Aida was describing.

In order to make sure that those English learners have the rich content and language learning experiences they need, I think Aida did a beautiful job of describing what that can look like. And as she described, that requires, in many cases, substantial professional development for teachers, as Aida described, and also for administrators and counselors so that they know how to design the systems that Ilana was talking about before to alert...the system to warning signs that students aren't enrolled in the courses they need to graduate or that students are experiencing challenges there. And also how to integrate content and language so administrators know what to look for and what kinds of professional learning opportunities to set up for their teachers. And that teachers have opportunities to collaborate and work together to think about what integrating content and language really means.

Maha: Thank you, Dr. Thompson. I'm going to go back to Dr. Walqui for the next question. We just discussed factors that increase the likelihood of graduation for English learners. Now let's talk about the instructional side, English language development and ELD instruction. What do we know about optimal content and time for secondary English learners in these types of courses?

Dr. Walqui: Maha, we, unfortunately, do not know a lot, at least not in studies that have taken this in-depth and to scale. We have a lot of qualitative data about it. However, I would like to suggest that the best way to understand what happens to English learners instructionally is to shadow them, and then to interview them. And when you shadow a student, you realize how the classes that they are sitting in are, for the most part...I mean, you do encounter the

exceptions both at the classroom and sometimes at the school level. But for the most part, the classes are so boring. Kids in high school are still filling in the blanks with the correct form of the verb in sentences that do not even connect from one to two to three to four. And they themselves know this is menial expectations for them. When you talk to them, they say that teachers think we are not intelligent. Well, obviously, the question is no longer why do they drop out? The question almost becomes why don't more students drop out? And so, I strongly suggest that everybody be given a few hours, by the principal of a school, to walk with a student through four hours of instruction, and then talk to that student about it to realize what is happening.

I think that, in general, all teaching of language is teaching of content. Language is not only used for interaction, but it's always interaction about something, it's interaction about ideas. And definitely, the development of intelligence is intimately related to the development of language. So, language development needs to be always content-driven, even from the very first day that a newcomer goes to school. Now, from there on, does it need to be curriculum-driven? I would say that newcomers deserve one semester of super-intensive and high challenge, high levels of support thematic instruction, where they develop the basic ideas, basic analytic practices, and the language. And then after that semester, they should be in classes where teachers are teaching the specialty, the subject matter specialty.

In the end, Maha and all other colleagues, the census very clearly indicates that the country is growing in terms of its population that is not native speakers of English. And so, our schools are going to keep growing in terms of English learners, and the presence of diverse students is going to increase. It behooves us all to invest the best that we can into realizing the potential that those students bring, and they bring so many assets, they bring so many experiences to the task. If we only see students through the lenses of narrow curriculum and how they refuse to complete it at times, we are seeing a 1% of the reality. But if we see them outside of class, and if we see them in their communities, we realize how resourceful and very intelligent they are.

So, once again to clarify, I think that in the emerging levels of language development, students can be grouped together and then given an excellent accelerated deep and rigorous introductory curriculum, where the teacher speaks in amplified ways, but speaks at a normal pace, because that is what students are being apprenticed into. After that, each and every teacher needs to

know how to amplify and enrich instruction so that their English learners and all other students can thrive at the same time.

Maha: Thank you, Dr. Walqui for reminding us to position English learners as capable learners. Another question on English language development instruction is for Dr. Thompson. How can we integrate English language development into content-guided instruction where many teachers are not prepared to address the language demands of their content? How do we turn around this expectation?

Dr. Thompson: So, as a teacher educator, I think that this actually starts at the university in teacher licensure programs and then continues into in-service learning opportunities as well. So, we know there are thousands and thousands of teachers across the country who got their teaching license without coursework that had much of an emphasis on understanding multilingual students and their assets, who didn't have much attention to language in their content methods classes. And many states are moving to increase the requirements for pre-service teachers to have coursework that attends to those issues. And I think that's just one beginning step, but a useful step. And then, as Aida mentioned, ensuring that teachers have professional development and the chance to continue learning so that, as Aida said, every single teacher, all the math teachers, high school math teachers across the country have an understanding of what are the language practices in their math classes? And how can they support students classified as English learners and all their students in really engaging in those language practices in service of math content learning?

I also think that it's really important when we think about integrating ELD into content-area instruction that we think really carefully about what we mean by that. Andrea Honigsfeld and Maria Dove have written a variety of resources about co-teaching and collaboration and they define different sorts of models of what that can look like and also lay out different aspects of co-teaching and collaboration. Are two teachers in the same room at the same time both instructing students, is there co-planning but one teacher is really taking the lead during instruction, is there co-assessment? What does that look like?

Here, together with my colleague, Amanda Kibler, we've been convening a professional learning community of administrators from districts around the state who are all implementing integrated ELD at the secondary level. And we

see that what they mean by that and what it looks like in their schools and districts is different depending on their particular context, the population they're serving, the skill sets of the teachers they have, the way their schedules are configured. And so, I think it's really powerful to have conversations across schools and districts to share the plans and resources as folks are thinking about and working to implement integrated ELD.

Also, I have a doctoral student who recently finished her Ph.D., Mercy Ancucci [SP], who is a district administrator in Corvallis, Oregon and wrote her dissertation looking at other districts in implementation of integrated ELD, really focusing on the role of both administrator and teacher leadership, that it's great to have this vision of integrating ELD into continuous instruction, making content area instruction more meaningful for students who are still in the process of acquiring English, but it takes more than, sort of, hope. It takes on-the-ground leadership, not just from administrators, but also from teachers to make that happen. So, again, I think it's useful for districts to be in conversation with one another to learn from one another in order to make it meaningful because it's easy to say, oh, we're integrating ELD into content-area instruction, but really having content and language teachers work together to co-develop curriculum, to bring their expertise to bear, and to learn from each other. Having the time and space to do that is a big lift but is potentially a powerful option.

And as the National Research and Development Center on Improving Education for Secondary English Learners as part of our center, my colleague Amanda Kibler and Martha Cassio-Palacios at West Ed are leading a study looking at co-teaching and collaboration for ELD across the country trying to understand its prevalence across the country, what it looks like in different districts, doing case studies and interviews in districts. And so, we're eager to learn from that study and be able to share with the field as well. Ilana and Aida, anything you'd like to add?

Dr. Walqui: Yes, this is Aida. I would like to add a caveat to co-teaching, one that is seldom raised. If we pretend that the social studies teacher knows social studies but doesn't know language, and the language teacher comes in to provide language support, we have it wrong. Nobody uses the language of history better than a history teacher. Nobody knows better what sourcing is in history that every time that you express an idea, you need to say clearly from what perspective that idea comes from, where the data comes from. That is

another area sourcing, right? So having an ELD specialist, once again, curricularizes language, the ELD specialist comes and look at looks at the essay and says, "Oh look, this sentence is in the present perfect. So, let us practice the present perfect. In the present perfect, you have the verb have plus the main verb that goes in the participle." Well, that is all irrelevant.

What, in the history class, needs to happen is for a teacher to help students become aware of what the purpose of this document is, from what perspective is it written? What kinds of data sets does it bring? How many claims does it make? Let's look at the claims that are made. Let's see how the claims are framed. How are they expressed? So, the study of language is very different than what the curricularization of language pretends. So, I am very worried that that mixture does not necessarily get at what we want to do. And I am even further worried by the fact that we enable teachers, subject-matter teachers to say, "That is not my department. I don't do languages." As if they didn't speak historical English.

Maha: Thank you. Dr. Walqui, and Dr. Thompson, thank you for these important reminders on the goal-sharing and ownership of language development. I know I speak on behalf of our audience when I say we're very excited to see and learn more about the studies that are coming out from your center and the studies that Dr. Thompson just mentioned. With this, we conclude the first part of our podcast. Thank you, Dr. Walqui, Dr. Umansky, and Dr. Thompson for joining us today. We appreciate all the information that you shared with us. We also would like to thank our listeners for joining us for today's discussion.

Female: A big thank you to our three panelists for discussing the education of secondary English learners. The information, reflections, and experiences that you shared today will certainly help educators support this population of students. You have given us many useful ideas to think about as we continue to serve English learners across the country. Stay tuned for the second part of this podcast where our panelists will address questions about the needs of students with limited or interrupted formal education, professional learning opportunities for educators of secondary ELs, and promising practices that can help educators meet the needs of ELs in secondary schools. We also encourage you to visit the NCELA website at www.ncela.ed.gov and check out the many educator resources available there, including the English Learners and Secondary Schools' "Trajectories, Transition Points, and Promising Practices" webinar.