

AccELLerate!

The quarterly newsletter of the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition

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Professional Development for Teachers of English Language Learners

Welcome to the winter issue of *AccELLerate!*, focusing on professional development for teachers of English language learners. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as reauthorized in 2001, places special emphasis on ensuring that every child has access to highly qualified teachers. Yet, despite continued federal, state, and local efforts to support general classroom teachers, professional development (PD) programs face many challenges, such as time constraints and the difficulty of identifying appropriate instructional strategies. We hope that the collection of articles in this issue, many of which were written by the recipients of National Professional Development grants, may stimulate productive discussion among researchers, administrators, and teachers about PD strategies that help ELLs meet achievement goals by improving the knowledge, skills, and practices of pre-service and in-service teachers.

The introductory article by Judith Wilde provides an overview of what constitutes successful and productive professional development. Cynthia Ryan and Ana Garcia describe the National Professional Development Program (NPD) that supports professional development programs for educators of ELLs, and several grant recipients share preliminary results from these programs: Maria Coady, Ester de Jong, and Candace Harper examine the impact of a PD program on teacher preparedness for and efficacy in teaching ELLs; Susan Spezzini and Julia Austin, as well as Ye He and Kathryn Prat, investigate the emergence and effect of collaborative mentoring among teachers; Mary Truxaw and Megan Staples report on a math PD project; and Lauren Cervone shares the design and outcomes of a successful PD program focusing on mainstream teachers.

Because the range of topics discussed in these and other articles we have received demonstrates a great interest in professional development among educators of ELLs, the spring issue of *AccELLerate!* will continue the discussion of these topics.

Happy holidays and a Happy New Year!

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Guidelines for Professional Development: An Overview

Judith Wilde

Across the United States, many schools, districts, and whole states are dealing with a shortage of personnel certified to teach English language learners (ELLs). According to the 2007-08 *Consolidated State Reports* completed by 49 states and the District of Columbia, there currently are 255,049 certified or licensed teachers in Title III-funded programs, with an additional 67,140 teachers needed in five years.¹ In 1994, only 18 percent of elementary teachers and 13 percent of secondary teachers reported that they had received training to teach ELLs.² It does not appear that a great deal has changed since then. As noted in a recent U.S. General Accountability Office report, "While the majority of [teacher preparation] programs required at least one course entirely focused on students with disabilities, no more than 20 percent of programs required at least one course entirely on English language learners. Additionally, more than half of the programs required field experiences with students with disabilities, while less than a third did so for English language learners."³ Thus professional development activities are especially important for educational staff working with ELL students.

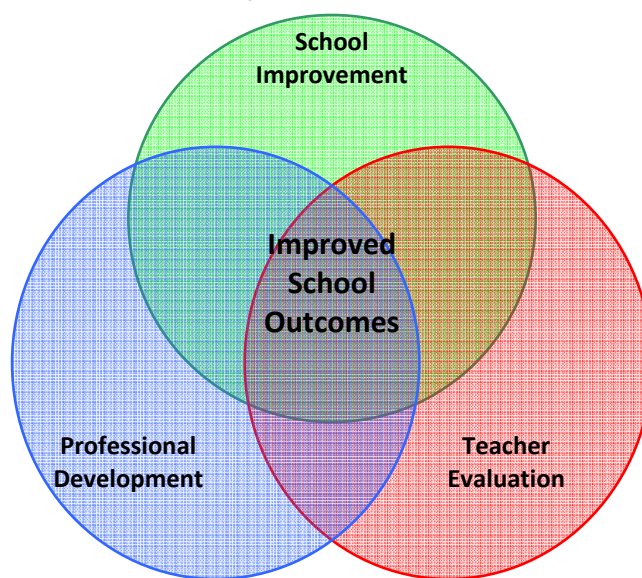
What is "professional development?" Most would agree that this refers to processes and prac-

tices that improve the job-related knowledge, skills, and attitudes of school employees. Ideally, these skills, knowledge, and attitudes should assure the intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development and well-being of each student within the school, regardless of their linguistic, cultural, economic, or national background. Various initiatives within the U.S. Department of Education have included student success as a focal point, including the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) and its reauthorizations. Ultimately these initiatives and professional development have the same goal: better educational programs and outcomes for all students in the school. A Venn diagram can demonstrate this ultimate goal (Figure 1): pro-

fessional development, school improvement, and teacher evaluation, together, lead to improved school development.

If you were to ask many in-service teachers "What does professional development mean to you?," they will answer "A few days each year." The professional development offered to teachers and other educational staff often fails to meet teachers' needs; is brief, infrequent, and mandated by the district or state office; focuses on topics selected by administrators; and allows little opportunity to practice, receive feedback, or to participate in follow-up activities. Effective professional development must be ongoing, interesting, and meet the needs of participating personnel.

Figure 1. Factors that improve student outcomes



I believe that five principles, if followed, can lead to successful and productive professional development. These principles are based on the tenets of adult learning and the fundamental belief that all teachers bring strengths to the profession and want their students to achieve and feel successful; teachers will attempt new ways of teaching when they are convinced that their students will benefit.

Principle 1: Build on a foundation of skills, knowledge, and expertise

Professional development must build upon the current foundation of basic skills, knowledge, and areas of expertise of the educational personnel involved. Professional development will link new knowledge and activities with what the practitioners already know and are able to do, and will extend their thinking.

Those attending any professional development activity will bring with them different experiences, knowledge, and skills. The individual(s) providing the activity must determine the current level of expertise, the needs of participants, and develop appropriate materials and activities. Professional development activities that do not target a specific audience must, at a minimum, offer basic knowledge to ensure that practitioners are operating from the same foundation.

Principle 2: Engage participants as learners

Professional development should include rich and varied opportuni-

ties that engage educational personnel as learners and offer the opportunity to apply new skills and knowledge.

Professional development is effective when the materials are presented in a hands-on manner using techniques that suit various learning styles. In addition, practitioners need time to try out new methods in a safe environment before either moving to another topic or attempting the method in the classroom.

Principle 3: Provide practice, feedback, and follow-up

Professional development should offer educational personnel opportunities for (1) practicing the new skills, strategies, and techniques; (2) providing feedback on performance; and (3) continuing follow-up activities.

A constructivist approach to staff development precludes the didactic presentation of decontextualized knowledge and skills. Principle 3 reinforces the precept that information about skills and knowledge must be presented to educational personnel in a manner that allows them to link new information to their current knowledge and skills, and allows them to construct their own meanings. Interactive, hands-on approaches to professional development make use of sound principles of adult learning. Modeling specific skills with practice sessions also will allow practitioners actively to make meaning out of the new information. Finally, a period of classroom application followed

by formal observation and feedback should be used to reinforce the development of new skills.

Principle 4: Measure changes in teacher knowledge and skills

Successful and effective professional development should be manifested by measurable increases in participant knowledge and skills.

The evaluation of a participant's knowledge and skills is essential to the effectiveness of the professional development program. In order to evaluate the participant, an appropriate amount and variety of information about what participants do and their effect on the learning community should be collected. Assuming that the participants are teachers, then a variety of evidence of the genuine teaching work and performance of the teacher should be collected.

Principle 5: Measure changes in student performance

Professional development should be linked to measurable outcomes in student performance, behavior, and/or achievement.

A direct link to student outcomes is necessary to determine what types of professional development activities are effective within specific contexts. The local level district involved in focused, long-term professional development activities must first identify what measurable student outcomes it wants to change. The problem for which professional development is sought may provide the type of

outcome to be assessed. For example, a school district recently wished to link professional development more closely to student outcomes. The outcomes this district identified as important to change were the number of ELL students (1) placed in pull-out English-as-a-second language (ESL) programs; (2) who received low grades in reading, math, and science; and (3) who dropped out of school. Principle 5 states that a link must be established as evidence that professional development contributed to significant improvement in the quality of educational programs or student achievement.

Summary

According to the 2007-08 *Consolidated State Performance Report*, the most commonly offered professional development content concerned educational strategies specific to ELL students, followed by a focus on the assessment of ELL students. School districts also offered professional development on understanding and implementing both English language proficiency (ELP) standards and content area standards, on the alignment of ELP standards and the curriculum, and on content area knowledge for teachers.⁴

The foundational premise underlying the delivery of professional development, based on these five principles, is that professional development is a cultural, not a delivery, concept.

Professional development

- must be ongoing, flexible, and supportive;

- should be developed with the educational personnel instead of for them; and
- must fit within the institutional context of the educational personnel.

Many professional development programs are not successful, or may be successful in one venue and not another. This will be important to remember when planning professional development programs. To develop a successful model, the needs of the learners (in this case, educational personnel, and most likely teachers) must be determined, and appropriate modalities for knowledge transfer must be utilized. The assessment system designed for the professional development program will be an elemental component of the entire program. In order to suggest an assessment system for the staff development program, we must define "appropriate assessment system," then develop ideas for the assessment of programs and participants, and finally aggregate the assessments for evaluation purposes. It is not enough to ask participants what they learned, there must be actual assessments, observations, or formal reflections on specific behaviors, skills, and/or attitudes. While we may consider professional development an easy training for adults that will obviously improve the education of students, it is anything but! Improvement of student outcomes is based not only on professional development activities for teachers, but also on a formal evaluation of teachers, and on other school improvement plans and activities.

Citations

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Consolidated State Performance Reports (CSPR), Part I, 2009. Based on analyses by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) on data reported through March 2009.

² National Education Goals Report as cited in Teachers of limited-English-proficient students in US schools, 1996.

³ U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2009, unnumbered front page.

⁴ U.S. Department of Education, CSPR, Part I, 2009. Based on analyses by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) on data reported through March 2009.

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Professional Development for Teachers of ELLs: Facts and Figures

To keep America competitive, and to make the American dream of equal educational opportunity a reality, we need to recruit, reward, train, learn from, and honor a new generation of talented teachers.¹

Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education

Facts and Figures

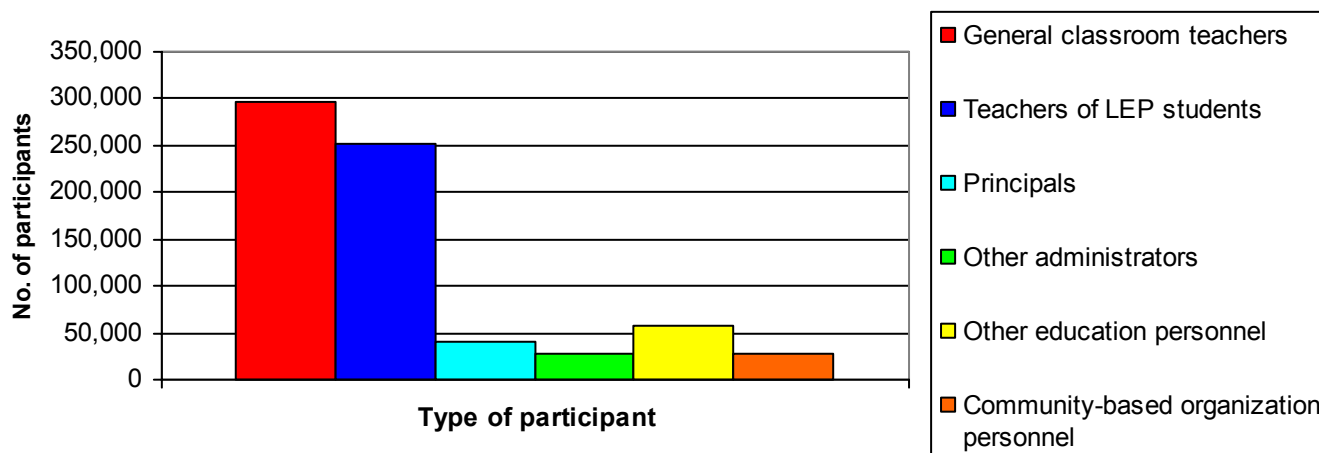
- There are currently about 255,000 teachers of ELLs in the United States.²
- States anticipate needing an additional 67,000 teachers of ELLs by 2013.²
- Most traditional teacher preparation programs require some training in working with English language learners for general classroom

teachers, but only 20% have a stand-alone course focused on ELLs.³

- Less than one-third of teacher preparation programs require field experiences with ELLs.³
- Over one-third of public schools had teaching vacancies in the field of ESL in 2004.⁴

The Council of Great City Schools Recommendation on Professional Development and ELLs: Ensure that all teachers of ELLs have access to high quality professional development that provides differentiated instructional strategies, promotes the effective use of student assessment data, and develops skills for supporting second-language acquisition across the curriculum (p.35).⁵

Numbers of participants in state-offered professional development activities, by type of participant: school years 2007-08



U.S. Department of Education Consolidated State Performance Reports, Part I, 2007-2008 (2009). Based on analyses completed by NCELA on data reported through March 2009. Individual state reports available from <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy07-08part1/index.html>.

Citations

¹Arne Duncan's remarks from a speech given at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, October 22, 2009: <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/2009/10/10222009.html>.

²U.S. Department of Education Consolidated State Performance Reports, Part I, 2007-2008 (2009). Individual state reports available from <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy07-08part1/index.html>.

³U. S. Government Accountability Office (2009). *Teacher Preparation: Multiple Federal Education Offices Support Teacher Preparation for Instructing Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners, but Systematic Departmentwide Coordination Could Enhance This Assistance*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved November 25, 2009 from <http://www.gao.gov>.

⁴National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (2009). *Teaching English Language Learners: A Complex System*. Washington, DC: Author.

⁵Horwitz, A. R., Uro, G., Price-Baugh, R., Simon, C., Uzzell, R., Lewis, S., Casserly, M. (2009). *Succeeding with English Language Learners: Lessons Learned from the Great City Schools*. Washington, DC: Council for Great City Schools.

The National Professional Development Program

Cynthia Ryan and Ana Garcia

The National Professional Development (NPD) Program is the only federal program that offers professional development exclusively to educational personnel who serve English language learners. Authorized under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, NPD is administered by the Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). The program provides five-year grants to institutions of higher education—including community colleges, tribal colleges, and public and private universities—that work in partnership with local school districts or state educational agencies to meet the need for teachers and other professionals well prepared to serve English language learners.

NPD is a competitive, discretionary grant. Applications are reviewed by teacher trainers and administrators experienced in professional development, and judged on

how they respond to published selection criteria related to program design, quality of key personnel, management plan, evaluation, and need for the program. Because of the high demand for program funds, not all high-scoring applications can be selected for funding. Generally, about one-third of submitted applications are funded in a given competition.

Reviewers' comments and OELA staff reviews indicate that some effective features of applications selected for funding include:

- prior and planned continuous collaboration with schools in assessing need, in developing and refining the program design, and in evaluating the program;
- follow-up of graduates to determine project effectiveness;
- use of participant and student achievement data to inform program design;

- incorporation of collaborative, inquiry-based professional development activities;
- extensive field experience and placement of participants in schools with high concentrations of ELL students;
- specialized support for paraprofessionals—such as mentoring, counseling, advisement, and release time—to ensure they progress through their studies;
- demonstrated commitment to the program through cost-sharing by the institution and the local school districts it serves; and
- clear and measurable objectives which specify expectations for participant learning, progress, and completion.

The great majority of NPD programs opt to use their funds to prepare new teachers or to improve the skills of practicing



Did you know ?

The mission of the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA) is to:

- provide national leadership to help ensure that English language learners and immigrant students attain English proficiency and achieve academically, and
- assist in building the nation's capacity in critical foreign languages.

OELA distributes and manages \$1 billion in federal grant funds to institutions of higher education, state education agencies, districts, schools, and community-based organizations. The goal of OELA and Title III is to ensure that all federal dollars are spent to *"close the achievement gap"* for limited English proficient and immigrant children (from *Welcome to OELA's home page*). For more information, go to:

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html>.

When an NPD Competition is announced, the information will be sent via the *NCELA* list or found on NCELA's website at: <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/grants/view/npdp/>.

teachers. With its 2007 NPD competition, OELA announced an invitational priority for preparing mainstream content teachers to improve instruction and assessment of the growing number of ELL students in mainstream classes. Most of the 139 funded applicants responded to this priority. Brief examples of seven of these projects follow.

Project *Attach* at the University of Illinois, is working with mainstream teacher teams in Chicago Public Schools to develop teachers' collaboration and teaching strategies. At the same university, Project *STELL*, responding to the shortage of secondary teachers prepared to serve ELL students, targets both pre-service and in-service secondary content teachers. Practicing secondary teachers will earn ESL or bilingual state certification. New teachers and their mentors will participate in professional learning communities.

To ensure that all secondary teachers have the knowledge and skills they need upon graduation from a teacher preparation program, Brown University's Project *BRITE* serves secondary-higher-education faculty, deans, and department chairs at Brown and other universities. Through supervised study of topics related to ELL pedagogy, participants will modify their course syllabi to address effective strategies and instructional standards.

Indiana University takes a multifaceted approach to addressing the

need for prepared teaching staff. In collaboration with six local school districts, the grant serves pre-service teachers, mainstream content teachers, ESL teachers, paraprofessionals, higher education faculty, and school psychologists through networking, collaboration, and peer coaching.

The University of Wisconsin's *LADDER* Project, located within the WIDA Consortium, works with teams of educators and administrators, helping them to base their student-related decisions on data, including decisions about improving teaching strategies. Teams work collaboratively to analyze their school or school district's data.

Leland Stanford Junior University, through its development of online instructional models, has replaced traditional face-to-face professional development with a "networked learning" approach, reaching a large number of teachers who would not otherwise have access to high-quality professional development. Under the NPD grant, the university extended its program to school leaders and counselors—two groups critical to supporting ELLs effectively. Modules include classroom videos of exemplary content teachers.

In addition to providing professional development for higher education faculty, content teachers, early childhood educators, administrators, and counselors, the University of Alabama at Birmingham assists bilingual profes-

sionals of ELL students to earn teacher certification. Using a grow-your-own approach to increase the supply of ELL teachers in Shelby County, the Shelby *STARS* project provides special support to paraprofessionals, including mentoring and pre-professional program advisement.

Although most NPD grants serve many types of educators, some focus on a specific type, such as early childhood educators, high school principals, or math teachers. San Diego State University, for example, provides specialized training for pre-service and currently practicing bilingual school psychologists in the San Diego County area. The grant supports induction and internship training, coursework leading to the California bilingual credential, annual institutes for school psychologists and project participants, and an intensive language-culture immersion experience in Mexico.

If Congressional appropriations for the program remain at level funding, OELA anticipates the next cycle of new NPD grants to compete in 2012. For more information about the program, visit:

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/funding.html>

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Editor's note:
Look for this sign to identify articles written by recipients of OELA's National Professional Development Program grants.



New Resources: Three New Publications from the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality

The National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, one of five content-specific comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education, has released three new documents regarding the preparation and licensure or certification of teachers of ELLs.

The policy-to-practice brief *Teaching English Language Learners: A Complex System* is an overview of issues relevant to policy-makers with little background in this issue. It covers topics such as the increasing numbers of ELLs, the achievement gap, types of program models, and teacher supply and demand.

The issue paper *Preparing Teachers of English Language Learners* reviews the literature pertaining to teacher preparation for mainstream teachers of ELLs and contains a rubric for evaluating coursework intended to prepare these teachers.

Finally, the publication *Certification and Licensure for Teachers of English Language Learners, by State*, examines eight components of the preparation and licensure of teachers of ELLs for each state, including whether the state offers ESL or bilingual education certification, the contents of the coursework required for that certification, and whether the state requires all teachers to complete coursework regarding ELLs.

All three documents are available from www.tqsource.org.



Quality Teacher Preparation for ELLs: Preliminary Findings from Florida

Maria R. Coady, Ester J. de Jong, and Candace Harper

Introduction

Florida is one of only four states that requires teacher preparation for English Language Learners (ELLs). A 1990 federal court order mandated that all Florida teachers be prepared to work effectively with ELLs, and all elementary teachers must earn an ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) endorsement through university coursework, in-service professional development, or a combination of the two. As a result, since 2001 most Florida Institutions of higher education have adopted an “infused” model of preparing teachers to work with ELLs. In that model, ESOL teacher competencies are concentrated in

two or three dedicated courses, and all remaining ESOL competencies are integrated with general education coursework and field experiences. Despite nearly a decade of preparing teachers through ESOL-infused programs, we know little about the impact of this model on teacher education or on ELL student achievement.

Project DELTA (Developing English Language through Teacher Achievement) seeks to provide such information by investigating the relationship between teacher preparation and the achievement of ELLs in inclusive elementary classrooms in Florida. The goal of Project DELTA, a five-year study

funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is to learn about the preparation and effectiveness of teacher graduates from the University of Florida’s Elementary Education program (called ProTeach) in teaching ELLs. We report here on findings from the Project DELTA survey, which was sent to graduates of the ProTeach program during years one and two of the study.

Project DELTA Survey

The survey was designed to explore teacher graduates’ perceptions of their efficacy and preparedness to work with ELLs. We operationalized the notion of *efficacy* as teachers’ self-reported

beliefs about their ability to work effectively with ELLs, and *preparedness* as teachers' self-reported beliefs about how well their ESOL-infused preservice program prepared them to meet the linguistic and cultural needs of ELLs in their classrooms. The study addressed the following research questions.

1. In what instructional areas related to ELLs do ProTeach graduates feel most and least prepared?
2. In what instructional areas related to ELLs do ProTeach graduates feel most and least effective?
3. What program experiences do ProTeach graduates consider to have been most effective in helping them work with ELLs?
4. Are there significant associations between teacher responses related to preparedness/efficacy and teacher background characteristics?

To answer questions one and two, we presented a series of 49 statements of teacher knowledge and skills related to effective instruction of ELLs with a Likert-type, four-point scale response. To answer question three, we asked teachers to indicate which of nine preservice clinical or field experiences in their teacher education program had been helpful in preparing them to work effectively with ELLs. To answer question four, we obtained data from a set of open-ended questions designed to elicit teacher background characteristics (e.g., number of years teaching, certification status, and teacher demographics).

The paper survey was mailed to 1,200 graduates, 70% of whom had Florida addresses. A total of 105 surveys were returned, with 85 of the surveys fully completed and viable for statistical analyses.ⁱ

Findings

Analysis of the teacher background characteristics elicited in the survey revealed that the teacher respondents had an average of 5.8 years of teaching experience. Of the 85 responding teachers, 72% indicated that they currently teach at least one ELL student (the mean number of ELL students per teacher was 4.9ⁱⁱ), 42% percent indicated that they speak a language other than English (primarily Spanish) at an intermediate level of proficiency or higher, and 32% indicated that they have lived outside the U.S.

In terms of teacher preparedness (question 1) and efficacy (question 2), survey data revealed that ProTeach graduates felt both most prepared and most effective in providing wait time for ELLs in class, organizing the classroom for ELLs' learning, and using graphic organizers to make language comprehensible for ELLs. Another area where most teachers felt effective is modeling the use of English. Teachers felt least prepared and least effective in working with ELLs in two main areas: using students' first language as a resource in teaching, and addressing the linguistic complexity of English in content area lessons. They also indicated that they felt less effective in locating bilingual materials for ELLs.

With respect to research question three, survey data indicate that teacher graduates valued the direct experiences with ELLs provided during the ProTeach program as being most helpful in preparing them to work with ELLs. The most highly rated field experiences in the program included direct instruction with and tutoring of ELLs, as well as observations of ELLs in ESOL classrooms. The least-valued field experience was Project Book Talk, a multicultural experience in which preservice teachers attended schools and day care centers and read with children from culturally diverse backgrounds who were not ELLs.

Finally, the survey revealed a strong association between teachers' sense of preparedness and their self-reported proficiency in a language other than English (LOTE). In other words, those teachers who spoke a second or third language at a level of intermediate or above (42% of the respondents) also indicated that they felt more prepared to work with ELLs than did those teachers who reported speaking only English.ⁱⁱⁱ

Conclusion

The findings from the survey indicate that teachers' sense of preparedness and efficacy were related. Many of the areas in which teachers felt most or least prepared also were the areas in which they felt most or least effective. With respect to teachers' sense of preparedness for teaching ELLs, survey findings also

indicate that teacher preparation, teacher background characteristics, and experiences matter in teachers' perceived ability to work effectively with ELLs. As some prior research has suggested, Project DELTA survey results indicate that language-related issues may be more challenging to address in teacher preparation programs than general curricular or instructional issues, and these issues may be less sensitive to the influence of teaching experience.¹ While the preparation of highly qualified teachers of ELLs is positively associated with student achievement, we must seriously consider the extent to which teacher education programs can prepare teacher candidates to meet all of the classroom demands of teaching ELLs.

While we continue to investigate and define what makes a quality teacher of ELLs,² we have much to learn about the specific characteristics, classroom practices, and experiences of teachers of ELLs and how those affect students in inclusive classroom settings. In particular, more detailed

knowledge of the use of students' first language in classrooms may be useful, as well as a clearer understanding of how teachers use knowledge of a language other than English in classroom settings. The tentative results of the Project DELTA survey make a beginning contribution to understanding the ways in which preservice teacher preparation programs can meet those needs and prepare teachers to work effectively in classrooms that reflect the changing, global, and diverse world in which our students live.

Notes

ⁱ We calculated descriptive statistics for questions 1-3 and calculated two measures of association, the Pearson product moment correlation and Kendall's τ (tau), for question 4.

ⁱⁱ This number may have been inflated by the large numbers of ELL students reported by the few teachers currently assigned to teach ESOL classes.

ⁱⁱⁱ Due to the small sample size, the data associating teachers who speak a language other than English with their sense of preparedness to teach ELLs are indicative of a trend, but will require further investigation in this and future studies.

Citations

¹ Buck et al., 2005; de Jong & Harper, 2007.

² Darling-Hammond, 2006.

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Upcoming Conferences



1. National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), Denver CO
February 03, 2010 - February 06, 2010
<http://www.nabe.org/conference2010.html>
2. 2010 National Reading Recovery & K-6 Classroom Literacy Conference, Columbus, OH
February 06, 2010 - February 09, 2010
<http://readingrecovery.org/conferences/national/index.asp>
3. American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) 2010 Annual Conference, Atlanta GA
March 06, 2010 - March 09, 2010
<http://www.aal.org/aaal2010/index.php>
4. The 44th Annual TESOL Convention and Exhibit, Boston MA
March 24, 2010 - March 27, 2010
http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/convention2010



Collaborative Mentoring Among K-12 Teachers: Professional Development on the Effective Instruction of ELLs

Susan Spezzini and Julia S. Austin

Professional development (PD) in the effective instruction of English language learners (ELLs) is critical for meeting the needs of the nation's expanding ELL population. Particularly important are local, ongoing PD efforts for *all* teachers.¹ To support such efforts, a partnership was established between the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and the Shelby County School System (SCSS).

As the only school district in Alabama's fastest growing county, the SCSS serves rural and suburban communities from low to high socioeconomic status. From 2001 to 2008, SCSS's student body grew 27% (20,805 to 26,431), and its ELL population grew 174% (573 to 1,570). Supporting the language acquisition and academic achievement of these ELLs was the main goal of Project EQUAL, a 5-year National Professional Development grant. To meet this goal, Project EQUAL enhanced SCSS's PD efforts by (1) training teacher mentors and (2) providing teacher licensure.

Project Implementation

Both the mentoring and licensure components of Project EQUAL began in Spring 2003. Following the project plan, SCSS selected 20 prospective teacher mentors, provided reference materials to schools, and hired mentoring experts as trainers. Prospective

mentors attended three day-long workshops, over two semesters, that focused on participating in structured experiences, becoming aware of needs, teaching with targeted strategies, monitoring activities, reflecting on outcomes, adapting strategies, and harnessing personal strengths.² Our anticipation was that the trained mentors would then guide and assist their untrained colleagues on effective ELL instruction.

In spring 2004, Year 1 evaluation data (participant and principal interviews) suggested that this teacher mentoring component was only minimally effective. Possible reasons were limited self-accountability, insufficient interaction with other mentors, and inadequate follow-up. While some mentoring had occurred, it resembled self-reported pre-training occurrences. Focused on transferring workshop content rather than on changing their own practice, mentors-in-training often did not have first-hand results to share and, hence, did not become teacher mentors. The traditional mentoring model was not effective, especially for experienced teachers.³

Unexpectedly, the licensure component did produce teacher mentors. The first cohort, 34 Teacher Fellows, took seven courses over 19 months. The fall and spring courses were delivered in profes-

sional learning communities and the summer courses in weeklong modules at UAB. Teacher Fellows read extensively, completed cyclical reflective activities, interacted online with the instructor and students at other sites, implemented action research based on school needs, heard world-class speakers, and held summer internships. In spring 2004, Year 1 evaluation data (course evaluations, focus groups, principal interviews) suggested that Teacher Fellows had changed their own practices, and, by sharing these changes and their ELLs' learning outcomes, had mentored colleagues. This collaborative mentoring entailed "a spontaneous, unstructured, peer-to-peer coaching relationship that emerges when optimal conditions are created."⁴

Based on Year 1 data, Project EQUAL's Advisory Council recommended adjustments to project implementation. Funding was redirected from the component with ineffective outcomes (mentor training) to the one with effective outcomes (licensure courses). Increased stipend funding allowed more teachers to take courses and, thus, fostered mentoring and on-site PD.

The evidence of teacher mentoring in the written coursework of the licensure sequence led us to investigate how K-12 teachers were becoming mentors.

Study

The study was guided by two research questions:

1. What changes occurred in sharing interactions between Teacher Fellows and untrained colleagues?, and
2. What conditions did licensure courses create that fostered collaborative mentoring?

To capture changes in sharing interactions and occurrences of collaborative mentoring, we designed a questionnaire, *Capacity Building for Providing Professional Development*⁵. In their fifth licensure course, 84 Teacher Fellows completed this questionnaire. In their seventh course, 78 wrote mentoring stories about having mentored a colleague. After all four cohorts completed the licensure program, six Teacher Fellows participated in telephone interviews (January 2009), and 51 responded to an electronic survey (July 2009).

Study Results

Questionnaires showed statistically significant increases in frequency and duration of sharing interactions after only four courses. Frequency (daily/weekly) increased from 12% to 83% and duration (15+ minutes) from 7% to 88%. Descriptors suggested changes in interactional quality. From confusing and nonproductive to enlightening and beneficial, interactions were mainly negative before program onset (41% non-existent, 38% negative, 13% neutral, 8% positive) and

positive after 1 year (1% negative, 10% neutral, 89% positive).

Mentoring stories chronicled where (hallway, classroom, lounge) and when (break, lunch, before/after school) the Teacher Fellows had mentored colleagues. Causal links were proximity (same hall or lunch) and convergence of responsibilities (same grades or students). Mentoring catalysts were commiserative comments (frustrated, overwhelmed) and common misconceptions (“ELLs are lazy”) or myths (“No Spanish—Just English”).

Interviews and electronic surveys provided post-program insights. Though initially challenged by new paradigms, Teacher Fellows became empowered through coursework. They assumed accountability for their own learning and group members’ learning. They embraced ESL best practices, assumed advocacy for ELLs, and mentored untrained colleagues.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Findings suggest that traditional mentor training is inadequate for transforming teachers, even caring and dedicated teachers, into teacher mentors. Yet, teacher-to-mentor transformations can occur under the conditions described below:

1. For at least one year, teachers take licensure courses delivered via professional learning communities, online interaction, and action research projects focused on school needs;

2. During these courses, teachers read extensively, hear world-class speakers, write short responses and cyclical reflections, and complete summer internships; and
3. Within coursework, teachers write about using innovative strategies, observing learner outcomes, and helping colleagues with their ELLs.

When such optimal conditions are created, K-12 teachers respond effectively to “mentorable moments” and become collaborative mentors. By listening empathetically to colleagues and sharing what works in their own classrooms, these trained teachers provide personalized PD that is “practitioner centered, experiential and research oriented, reflective, and empowering.”⁶

Citations

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³ Abate & Eddy, 2008; Spezzini et al., 2009.
⁴ Spezzini et al., 2009, p. 300.
⁵ Spezzini et al., 2009, p. 314.
⁶ Mullen, 2000, p. 4.

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Meeting the Professional Development Needs of Teachers of English Language Learners

Like other Midwestern states, Kansas is experiencing a rapid increase in culturally and linguistically diverse students. There is an increasing need for ESOL professional development activities to meet teachers where they are and equip them in ways that can be implemented realistically in their content area classes.

Partnership at state, university, and district levels is making it possible for teachers from across Kansas to receive ongoing training to teach ELLs in mainstream classrooms. The collaborative Kansas Migrant and English Language Learner Academy (KMEA) is responding to the need for every teacher of every subject at every level to receive training in ESOL methods for the content area classroom. Cohorts of teachers, based on the level they teach (elementary, middle school, high school), are formed during the summer. They attend an intensive two-day workshop where they receive practical training and actively participate in methods that are transferred readily to the classroom. They are able to dialogue with teachers from similar content areas, but also are engaged purposefully with those who teach different subjects in an effort to encourage various models of collaboration. Workshop modules give an introduction to the needs of migrant students and ELLs, lay a foundation for understanding linguistic and cultural differences, provide hands-on experience using methods and strategies proven to be effective with ELLs in the classroom, and finally, present an overview of state and classroom assessments as they concern ELLs. Each participant receives a manual, containing information, activities, and resources written by experts in ESOL education, that serves as a tool during the professional development, and becomes a resource afterwards. By the end of the workshop, the teachers have completed an individualized Action Plan with ideas they can implement immediately in their classroom.

Unlike many professional development formats, KMEA continues its involvement with teacher cohorts into the school year. To ensure that content delivered at the conference is reinforced, the KMEA participants have access to ongoing support with personalized answers to their questions and pertinent suggestions and resources through email dialogue with KMEA staff. In addition, online support is provided through a website that hosts conference materials. Teachers can review videos of the summer sessions and access materials to share with colleagues who did not attend the workshop. Six months after the initial workshop, the cohort reconvenes for a one-day follow-up event where they apply the methods learned over the summer. They share their experiences with teachers from other districts around the state who work in similar content areas.

The response from participants in the initial middle school cohort has been extremely positive. When asked on an anonymous evaluation if the participants thought the materials presented at the workshop would be useful, 94% agreed. When asked if they learned through collaborations with other participants, one respondent wrote, "It was good to hear other people's ideas; everyone has similar challenges as we try to meet the needs of ELLs."

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Collaboration in Professional Development for ELL Content Achievement

Ye He and Kathryn Prater

With the growing number of English Language Learners (ELLs) at K-12 public school settings, more and more professional development (PD) efforts at districts and schools are focusing on enhancing teachers' ability to work with ELLs. As noted by many researchers,¹ all teachers need to know about topics such as language acquisition and development, students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and specific teaching models and strategies that facilitate ELLs' growth in both language and content areas, in order to work with ELLs more effectively. More importantly, teachers need opportunities to apply this knowledge in their daily teaching practice and to work collaboratively to enhance ELLs' academic achievement.

As recipients of a National Professional Development grant, we have engaged in collaborative PD activities at our university and with local school districts over the last two years. In this article, we describe the collaboration between university faculty and one local school to design and deliver a one-year PD program targeting ELLs' science achievement. The impact of our PD efforts on both ELLs' achievement and school capacity building are reported.

Professional Development Program

Unlike traditional PD offered by faculty from the university, this year-long PD program was co-designed and co-delivered by university faculty and school personnel based on the school's specific needs. The majority of the students at the school were ELLs (63%), and one of the major concerns was the low "proficiency" rate on the science End-of-Grade (EOG) test: only 4% of all students reached "proficiency" level. To support teachers in both English language development and content instruction, the PD aimed to (1) discuss content-based instruction for ELLs; and (2) facilitate the development of science units for each grade level that incorporated strategies for English language development. Through the PD experience, we also hoped to strengthen the collaboration among teachers and build capacity in working with ELLs at the school.

All faculty and staff from the elementary school (N=46), including interns and student teachers from our teacher education program, participated in the PD. Among the 46 teachers, six were English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and 1 was a dual-language teacher. In terms of teaching experiences, 40% were novice teachers (0-3 years),

and 60% experienced teachers (4 years and above) with 35% having more than 10 years of teaching experience.

In spring 2008, university faculty, school administrators, and teachers held three meetings to discuss the content, design, and schedule of the PD sessions. We planned eight three-hour sessions to develop teacher knowledge related to specific needs of ELLs and provide a framework for planning science units at each grade level. Building upon teachers' prior PD on the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)² and their desire to plan the units together, we introduced the Backwards Design process as a model for planning. Backwards Design is "an approach to designing a curriculum or unit that begins with the end in mind and designs toward that end."³ Based on the Backwards Design process, we started the unit planning with the desired results and assessments specified, and then determined the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to demonstrate their understanding of the content taught. Teaching activities then were planned to facilitate students' mastery of the knowledge and skills.

In addition to the eight PD sessions, we also scheduled time for grade-level meetings to facilitate

the discussion of the unit planning. After completing the PD, each grade level submitted a science unit, and participants reflected on the process of working together as a group. The units were implemented in spring 2009.

Professional Development Impact

In order to measure the effectiveness of the PD, we collected session feedback from participants, participants' reflections, and students' science EOG scores.

The session feedback indicated that over 80% of the participants rated all PD sessions as "excellent" or "good," and agreed that the PD improved their knowledge of Backwards Design and strategies to work with students. Participant feedback indicated that they especially liked having "multiple instructors to provide instructions that allowed for multiple perspectives;" having "time to work with grade level;" and "to work with other teachers on our grade level to make an assessment and rubric for our science unit."

In their reflections, participants commented on the information presented and strategies they learned to implement in their classrooms. In addition, they specifically mentioned that they enjoyed sessions led by administrators from the school because "they know us and our school best." While teachers had the opportunity to work in groups during the session, several teachers commented that they would like to have more time to work in their grade-level groups. One participant commented: "I need to plan

all of my units in order to teach. We need more time to plan using *Understanding by Design* because it's long and needs to be organized very well. I think I need to continue working in order to use all the strategies."

Based on spring 2009 EOG test results, 67% of students at the school scored "proficient" in science (compared to 4% in spring 2008). While we do realize that the school may have implemented other initiatives or programs to enhance the science achievement test scores, we believe that the PD provided a focus for teacher planning at the school and contributed to the enhanced student achievement.

An unexpected outcome was noted as a result of the PD. During summer 2009, 25 teachers worked together to extend what they had done in the PD and designed 11 more science units to be shared and used in the 2009-10 academic year. Using the Backwards Design model, each unit included content and language objectives, formative assessments and rubrics, and relevant supplementary materials to facilitate instructional activities. The SIOP strategies also were integrated in the lesson planning.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Collaboration was key in the success of this year-long PD program. The collaboration between the university and school in PD design and delivery made it possible for us to deliver research-based information that teachers used immediately to impact student

achievement. Providing time and a structure for all teachers, including ESL and content-area teachers, to collaborate, plan, and teach science units enhanced instruction across the school. Collaborating with school personnel enabled us to provide effective PD that addressed specific local concerns related to English language learners.

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² Echevarria et al., 2008.
³ Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 338.

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Math ACCESS: Building Mathematical Proficiency in Linguistically Diverse Schools

Mary Truxaw and Megan Staples

Issues of teacher quality have been of great concern for many years. It has been established that teachers with good professional preparation can make a significant difference in students' learning, which is equally true for teachers of English language learners (ELLs).¹ While many experts agree that teaching a second language through content instruction is appropriate, it requires specialized knowledge and skills to organize their instruction in a way that meets the needs of both English learners and English speakers at the same time. This is a big job, and there is a dearth of professionals with such skills.²

Therefore, providing professional development (PD) for teachers of English learners to help them understand the challenges that ELLs face and to develop pedagogical strategies to address these challenges is of great importance. This article reports on a profes-

sional development (PD) project that worked with teachers to develop professional communities of practice and helped them not only build knowledge but also develop *ways of knowing*³ that "make use of knowledge in new, innovative, and more productive ways."⁴ The project was supported by the *Teacher Quality Partnership Grant* program from the Connecticut State Department of Higher Education. We partnered with four schools in an urban district in which 45% of the students speak a language other than English at home, 94% of students qualify for free/reduced lunch, and 96% of the students are categorized as minority students (CT School Profiles).

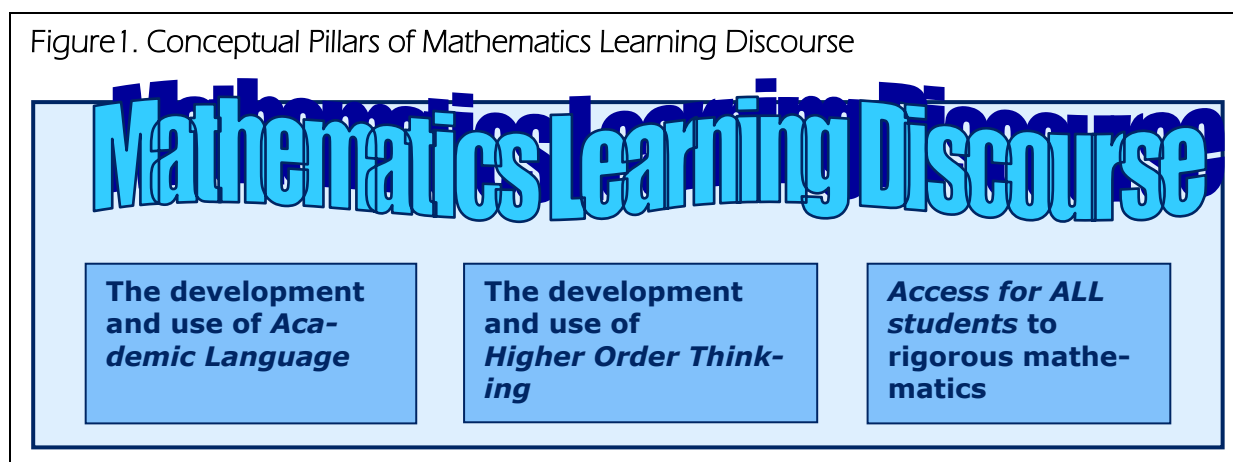
Math ACCESS Conceptual Model
As part of the Math ACCESS Project, teachers worked to organize in their classrooms what we termed a *mathematics learning discourse*.⁵ Such a classroom has

the following qualities, or conceptual pillars, that support student learning (Figure 1):

- promoting the development and use of *Academic Language*, including the mathematics register, by all children, including ELLs;⁶
- pressing for Higher Order Thinking, including justification and sense making that support all students, including ELLs, in learning mathematics;⁷ and
- affording *Access for All Students* on some level to cognitively demanding tasks and rigorous mathematical activities.⁸

Math ACCESS Teaching Practices
Twenty-four grades 4 through 10 teachers participated in 45 hours of PD. Nineteen of these teachers participated in follow-up collaborative work that comprised a modified form of lesson study where teachers, organized in

Figure 1. Conceptual Pillars of Mathematics Learning Discourse



grade-band teams, collaborated to develop, implement, and debrief higher order thinking (HOT) lessons that fostered increased awareness of academic language, enhanced higher order skills and engaged all students in cognitively demanding activities.

HOT lessons, archived through the University of Connecticut's *Center for Research in Mathematics Education*

(<http://www.crme.uconn.edu/lessons/>), use various language-developing strategies to support students' performance.

- *Language objectives*, recommended by SIOP experts,⁹ besides vocabulary, include language functions, skills, and structures and focus on everyday language necessary to explain contexts of problems as well as mathematical language necessary to express and justify mathematical ideas. For example, the language objective "Students will be able to express the likelihood of various events using everyday language" focuses on *language functions*; "Students will be able to restate the problem in their own words" focuses on *language skills*; and "Students will be able to use complete sentences with time sequence words to explain their answers" focuses on *language structures*.

- *Sentence frames* are used to scaffold verbal and written responses. For example, in a lesson using pattern blocks to represent fractions, the sentence frame, "I think ____ (shape) is ____ (fraction) of the whole because

____," supports students' ability to explain and justify their responses while requiring that they work through and make sense of the mathematics.

- The use of *time/sequence words* (e.g., first, then, next, finally) in written explanations helps students organize their ideas and promote attention to narrative structure.

- *Student explanations* in whole class and small group discussions support the development of language, higher order thinking, justification, and mathematical understanding. Teachers ask "HOT questions" (e.g., "Why?" "How do – and – compare?" "Do you agree/disagree ... and why?") and use "checkpoints" at which students explain their work.

The teachers reported perceptions that these and other language-related practices not only increased students' awareness of the mathematics register/academic language, but also enhanced mathematical performance and higher order thinking.

Project Outcomes

To gauge student performance in grades 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 in three public schools, we administered a single-item pre-post assessment. The item was an open-ended released item from a state test that was different for each grade level and scored on a scale of 0 – 3, with *mastery* level being designated by a score of 2 or 3. The post-test showed that mastery increased (from 0-26% to 24-51%)

and scores of "0" decreased across all ACCESS classes. This suggested that instructional practices that focus on academic language development, enhancement of higher order thinking, and all students' access to rigorous activities lead to educational achievements.

These increases in student scores correlate with changes we documented by pre-post assessments of teachers' content knowledge, abilities to analyze prompts for the language demands, confidence in teaching for the development of academic language, and confidence in teaching in a manner that supports student participation in justification and higher order thinking. For example, 96% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that their content knowledge in academic language increased as a result of this professional development experience, and 100% agreed that their overall ability to teach students in a way that develops their academic language improved. There was also a statistically significant increase in total mean scores from pre- to post-self-assessment (using a 7-point Likert scale from 1=not at all knowledgeable to 7=expert knowledge) demonstrating a positive impact of the PD on the teachers' instructional practice with respect to language issues.

Conclusions

The positive outcomes of the Math ACCESS Project show that PD that provides teachers with tangible strategies for better meeting the educational needs of their students enhances teachers'

knowledge and ways of knowing, increases their sense of competence, and fosters learning, particularly for linguistically diverse students.

Citations

- ¹ For example, Hayes et al, 2002.
² Gándara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006.
³ Kazemi & Hubbard, 2008.
⁴ Cook & Brown, 1999, p. 398.
⁵ Staples & Truxaw, 2009.
⁶ Cummins, 2000; Janzen, 2008; Moschkovich, 2002; Pimm, 1987; Schleppegrell, 2007.
⁷ Boaler & Staples, 2008; Brenner, 1998; Stein et al., 1995; Wood et al., 2006.
⁸ Cohen & Lotan, 1997; Stein et al., 1996.
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Upcoming PD Opportunities

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) has provided ELL education services for states, school districts, and schools for 50 years. In response to growing requests from K-8 educators for professional development in teaching reading to ELLs, CAL is offering three-day Institutes in Washington DC in 2010:

Training of Trainers Institutes are designed for trainers to provide PD for educators who teach reading in classes with ELLs.

January 26 – 28, 2010

May 24 – 26, 2010

Direct Strategies Institutes are designed to help teachers provide effective reading strategies for ELLs in their classroom.

June 22 – 24, 2010

July 20 – 22, 2010

To learn more, visit www.cal.org/services.



ELD AIMS High

The English Language Development = Achievement In Mathematics (ELD=AIM) project was formed by 35 K-12 teachers from Haverhill School District in Massachusetts in partnership with EQUALS¹ to improve teacher professional development by integrating standards-based mathematics content with English-language-development, standards-based pedagogy. The ultimate aim of the project was to increase English learners' mathematics achievement.

The 14-day PD program addressed the following five strands:

1. Understanding the underpinnings of second language acquisition;
2. Increasing teachers' mathematics content and pedagogical content knowledge;
3. Raising teachers' awareness of the interplay among language, culture, and mathematics;
4. Assessing English learners' mathematics misconceptions;
5. Examining and addressing teachers' biases towards and beliefs about English learners.

The collaborative model established for the ELD=AIM project had three equally important components: mathematics content; ELD instructional strategies; and local applications. Each component had a lead contributor, while the EQUALS staff supplied the framework and materials for all the presentations. A key element to the collaborative approach was that the entire team was present for all the PD program sessions, including follow-up sessions. This allowed the presentations to be integrated and interconnected as the team made linkages to previous activities and comments in the institute.

The PD program was observed by the outside evaluators to determine whether it was aligned with sound pedagogical practices. The sessions were assessed using a modified version of the Horizon Research Professional Development Observation Protocol. This 46-item instrument examines PD across multiple categories including Design, Implementation, Mathematics Content, Materials, and Culture. On the 5-point rubric, the ELD=AIM training team consistently earned a score of 4.8 or higher. The quality of the training also was assessed informally through the comment cards completed by the participants at the end of each day of training. The participants continually had positive comments about the content of the presentations and the pedagogical strategies modeled.

Mathematics pre- and post-tests were developed and administered at the beginning of the summer institute, end of the summer institute, and end of the full year's training. The participants made statistically significant gains between the pre-test and post-test and also between the pre-test and the end-of-program mathematics test. The participants also were asked to give written explanations to six questions related to ELL issues at the beginning and at the end of the institute. Significant gains on the evaluation rubrics were measured between the two tests.

Changes in instructional practices were assessed by videotaping typical mathematics lessons in the spring prior to the institute and again in the spring of the training year. Classroom visits were also made by the external evaluators. On both measures, increases in the ELL friendly strategies were noted.

After two years of implementation, and after conducting research and an evaluation of the professional development and participants' implementation, results validate the program and demonstrate positive outcomes in relation to the project goal. These results also support the need for long-term PD designed with participant input, that includes time and opportunity for practice and feedback, and assessment of progress. In short, this project aimed high and reached high, demonstrating good PD.

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¹ The EQUALS Project is an international program created by the Lawrence Hall of Science at UC Berkeley that promotes access and equity in mathematics education.



Excellence for Connecticut's English Language Learners: A National Professional Development Grant Project

Laureen Cervone

Excellence for Connecticut's English Language Learners is a departure from programs that work with a limited number of teachers and result in ESL-endorsement or certification. The project, currently in its third year, is funded under OELA's National Professional Development program, and represents a collaborative effort between the UCLA School Management Program and the Connecticut public school districts of Montville, New London, Norwich, and Stratford.

A persistent achievement gap between ELLs and other students has been documented widely—there are few who would disagree that students learning English in our schools are not achieving at the levels we would hope to see. We do not know if low ELL test scores are due to poor English abilities or a poor grasp of academic content, or the relative contribution of each. But we do know that thoughtfully applying instructional strategies in the mainstream classroom can help ELLs make sense of academic content knowledge, particularly when it is delivered in English.

Late in 2006, administrators from four Connecticut public school districts approached UCLA's School Management Program (SMP) to explore ways they might be more effective with a rapidly

growing and diverse ELL population. This conversation was spurred, in part, by the realization that *all* district classroom teachers would work with students with limited English proficiency in the coming years. The outgrowth of this collaboration was a five-year professional development plan for mainstream classroom teachers across all levels and subjects.

ELL students in these districts spend the majority of their school day in the mainstream classroom. This is sometimes by design and intended to complement high-quality ESL services offered on a pullout basis. At other times this is by default, acknowledging the very real shortage of personnel qualified to offer intensive ESL instruction in these school districts.

Our project planning began with a survey of teachers and administrators across the four districts, designed to identify gaps and weaknesses in services, infrastructure, and opportunity. The survey was administered early in 2007. Based on nearly 500 responses, 86% percent of all respondents indicated they were interested in participating in workshops and collaborative, on-site work groups to help them increase their skill in working with ELL students.

Of the 356 classroom teachers working with ELL students in a

mainstream classroom who responded:

- 72% did NOT feel adequately prepared to work with ELLs;
- 64% had not received any special training (only 1% reported receiving more than 22 hours of training); and
- 81% felt a strong need to increase their knowledge and skill to work with ELL students.

The 100 administrators and instructional support personnel responding also indicated an urgent need for training and support:

- 73% do NOT feel prepared for their responsibility to support teachers of ELLs;
- 82% have received fewer than five hours of professional development designed to build their capacity to support teachers of ELLs; and
- 85% felt a strong need to increase their knowledge and skills in this area.

Our formal survey and informal conversations clearly established a need and a desire for professional development across the districts. We knew a few hours or days of workshop events was not enough to meet the need and promote change. An intensive and ongoing system of support that would allow teachers to develop the level of expertise needed to work with their new

students was essential. All this information helped us design a well-crafted program of professional development for mainstream classroom teachers, based on three interwoven strands.

The first strand is the design and delivery of a PD focused on building knowledge of effective classroom instructional strategies for ELLs. Classroom teachers receive comprehensive training in techniques to *scaffold* the delivery of academic content for ELLs. Scaffolding helps ELLs move toward new skills, concepts, or levels of understanding by providing temporary assistance for learners in a way that allows them to eventually complete a similar task independently. Scaffolding makes it possible for students to understand and work with age appropriate content *while* they are developing language fluency and literacy in English.

The second strand is the establishment and facilitation of school site collaborative learning communities (CLCs) focused on building the skills of participating teachers. Classroom teachers who have completed the training (as a team) work together at their school site over the course of one year, focusing on implementation and building their own skills. Teachers choose one or two strategies to implement in their classroom, guided by the current needs of their school and students. Teachers complete reflective journals capturing the details of how and when the strategy was implemented, as well as the outcomes

(supported by student work). All these materials serve as jumping-off discussion points for CLC meetings, where instructional choices and outcomes are shared in a manner that elicits useful feedback designed to improve future instruction.

The third process strand is the design and delivery of workshops for administrators focused on coaching classroom teachers towards improving instructional practices with ELLs. Administrators receive the comprehensive training needed to develop their capacity to support classroom teachers of ELLs, including the ability to recognize and evaluate quality instruction in the classroom.

Almost all participants have rated the training and school CLC meetings as highly practical and worthwhile. Classroom implementation of strategies addressed during professional development continues to improve. While it was very helpful (and necessary) to have formal training in the use of the strategies, the real learning occurred during the school year as teachers tried things out in classrooms, compared notes, and tweaked the processes.

We have measured success by the increasing number of teachers who volunteer for participation—70 teachers the first year, 85 the second, and 109 the third, and by the numerous examples of individual student growth and achievement that have been documented. As we embark on our third year, district administrators

are crediting this work with improvements in state academic scores among the ELL population. In the words of Mohegan Elementary School principal Lori Caron, “All our schools made [Title I] AYP for the first time in many years. Our ELL students at Mohegan *actually helped to bring the scores UP!*” One project school in Stratford (Whitney) has moved out of [Title I] “identified” status. Students in Norwich have demonstrated impressive progress on the statewide assessment (CMT), with more than half of the ELLs achieving proficiency in *both* reading and math at EXCELL sites. Overall, an impressive 64% of ELL students impacted by Project EXCELL have demonstrated more than the expected one year’s growth on statewide tests in reading, writing, and mathematics.

But our best measure of success is seen in the ‘stickiness’ of the work. Participants plan to continue meeting and working together, sharing knowledge with colleagues after the grant year is complete. All recognize the need for long-term collaboration for long-term success.

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Sixteen Fundamentals for Every Successful Teacher of ELLs

The lack of ESOL preparation for teachers in many teacher education programs has led in-service teachers to implement intuitive, well-meaning strategies for ELLs that do not necessarily work. As former teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and now professional educators preparing pre-service and in-service mainstream teachers, we understand the critical need for ESOL and mainstream teachers to know how to work successfully with ELLs. We have identified 16 fundamentals that teachers of ELLs need to understand in order to teach ELLs. We have grouped these sixteen fundamentals into the categories of language, culture, policy, and teaching. Each fundamental is briefly explained below, followed by links to websites that provide more specific information.

Editor's note: NCELA does not endorse the accuracy, completeness, or reliability of the materials recommended below. Links were correct at the time of publication.

Language

1. *First and second language acquisition*

Teachers understand the similarities and differences between first and second language acquisition.

For more see <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/vivian.c/SLA/L1%20and%20L2.htm>.

2. *Language acquisition stages*

Teachers understand the natural progression of language acquisition stages.

For more see http://www.everythingsl.net/in-services/language_stages.php.

3. *BICS and CALP*

Teachers understand and apply the theories of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) development for social language applications, and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) development for academic language applications.

For more see http://www.everythingsl.net/in-services/bics_calp.php.

4. *Applied linguistics applications*

Teachers use the knowledge of applied linguistics.

For more see <http://talktime.wordpress.com/2009/08/07/teaching-pronunciation-to-adult-english-language-learners/>.

Culture

5. *Cultural adaptation and culture shock*

Teachers understand and address cross-cultural issues.

For more see <http://www.asu.edu/clas/shesc/projects/bajaethnography/shock.htm>.

6. *Learning styles and culture*

Teachers frequently use culturally specific learning styles.

For more see <http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators/content/cooperative>.

7. *ELL parental involvement*

Teachers understand cultural communication patterns and cultural differences when communicating with parents.

For more see <http://www.palmbeach.k12.fl.us/MULTICULTURAL/MulticulturalNew/ProceduresManual/19%20PARENT%20INVOL.pdf>.

8. *Inclusion of ELLs in classroom and school cultures*

Teachers realize that ELLs feel alienated, especially when they are isolated from peers of their linguistic and cultural background.

For more see <http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators/reachingout/welcoming>.

Policy

9. *Laws and policies governing the education of ELLs*

Teachers are aware of the obligation to provide instructional accommodations to ELLs and assess their yearly progress in language and content areas.

For more see <http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/fags/view/6>.

10. *ELLs' juxtaposition to Special Education*

Teachers do not view ELLs as "disabled" (needing Special Education accommodations) as this can hold back their language and academic progress.

For more see <http://www.geneseeisd.org/edlearn/docs/ESL/ELLs%20-%20Special%20Education.pdf>.

11. *Consequences of language discrimination on ELL learning and retention*

Teachers are aware of how discrimination based on language can negatively affect the social and academic achievement of ELLs.

For more see <http://faculty.weber.edu/rwong/edu3200/articles/ELLClassMgt.pdf>.

12. *Attitudes towards English language learners*

Teachers view working with ELLs as a rewarding and unique opportunity to learn about another language and culture. They do not view ELLs as "problems" to be avoided or fixed.

For more see http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/pds/intern-resources/ESL_handbook.pdf.

Teaching

13. *Make input more comprehensible*

Effective teachers use visuals such as photos, pictures, illustrations, graphs, charts, graphic organizers, and even gestures to augment comprehension.

For more see <http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/sum.htm>

14. *Include both content and language objectives when planning lessons*

Mainstream and sheltered content instruction teachers include both language objectives and content objectives in lesson planning for ELLs.

For more see <http://www.newhorizons.org/spneeds/ell/wallace.htm>.

15. *Appropriate language translation services*

Teachers are aware of free online translation services and pre-translated letters and forms available to them through TransAct Library (online language translation of school forms). It should be noted that online translation services translate text literally and may not transfer meaning accurately and, therefore, need to be reviewed by a native speaker before dissemination!

For more see http://babelfish.yahoo.com/translate_txt and <http://www.transact.com/>.

16. *The use of ELLs' cultural knowledge in scaffolding new content*

Teachers realize that ELLs' participation in class is not dependent only on language proficiency but also on the inclusion of the ELLs' culture and background knowledge through scaffolding.

For more see <http://www.pgcps.org/~rosa/esoln/scaffoldingfeb09.pdf>.

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askNCELA's Inbox

in which we highlight the answers to commonly asked questions that appear in our e-mail inbox.

Q: What materials are available for teacher professional development on NCELA's website?

A: NCELA's 2008 report, *Educating English Language Learners: Building Teacher Capacity*, provides strategies for professional development practices for mainstream teachers of ELLs. The full report can be accessed at <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/rcd/BE024215/EducatingELLsBuildingTeacherCa.pdf>.

You can also see excerpts targeted at teachers of:

- English language arts (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/uploads/3/ELAforELLs.pdf>),
- mathematics (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/uploads/3/mathforELLs.pdf>),
- social studies (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/uploads/3/socstudiesforELLs.pdf>),
- science (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/uploads/3/scienceforELLs.pdf>).

More resources can be found at <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/development/>.

askNCELA@gwu.edu is NCELA's e-mail helpline. We are happy to answer questions and to provide technical assistance information upon request.



NCELA has been growing!

Over the last few months, there have been several changes at NCELA. These include additional staff and consultants. Our newest addition is Mari Rasmussen, who has joined us as assistant director for state outreach. Mari has been involved with the education of ELLs and multicultural students throughout her career. She began as an ESL instructor here and abroad, but her primary experience has been as Director of the State Bilingual and Language Acquisition Program of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. In this position she provided technical assistance to local education agencies, interpreting federal and state legislation, developing policy, analyzing data, and researching issues related to ELLs and multicultural students. She is knowledgeable in educational theory, including second language acquisition, instruction, and assessment, along with legislation. Give Mari a call, or send her an e-mail to welcome her to our staff!

Other staff who have joined us over the summer include Kathia Flemens and Natalia Romanova. Kathia has just finished a degree in Global Leadership. While a graduate student, she worked with the "Soaring High in English Language & Literacy" (SHELL) project. In addition, she has served as a curriculum developer and has taught ESL, French, and special education. She is knowledgeable about current educational language-learning theories and practices. Kathia is leading our efforts in developing webinars.

Natalia is originally from Russia, where she taught English as a foreign language, served as an English/Russian translator, and directed an English program at a high school. She has expertise in second language acquisition research, assessment, and instruction as well as professional development and curriculum design and materials development. Natalia serves as the editor of *AccELLerate!* When she sends requests for articles, please respond!

Judith Wilde