Local Education Agency Planning for Effective Language Instruction for English Supporting English Learners: An Approaches, Models, and Practices Primer

Introduction

In order to access funding available through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Local Education Agencies (LEAs) are required within their LEA plan to 1) describe the effective programs and activities--including language instruction educational programs--proposed to be developed, implemented, and administered under the subgrant that will help English Learners increase their English language proficiency and meet the challenging state academic standards; 2) describe how the LEA will ensure that elementary and secondary schools receiving funds under this subpart assist English Learners in achieving English proficiency based on the state's English language proficiency assessment, consistent with the state's long-term goals and meeting the challenging state academic standards; and 3) describe how the LEA will promote parent, family, and community engagement in the education of English Learners.

Effective programs and activities vary, and LEAs have significant latitude in determining how to effectively support English Learners. In developing plans, LEAs are advised to review their current plans and evaluate student- and program-level data and current English language support. When evaluating their research-based programs and activities, LEAs will find that there is an abundance of outlets accessible via print and the internet. In sifting through these sources, LEAs should be aware of the differences between an approach, a model, and programming. An effective system for supporting English Learners is comprised of an approach or approaches, usually implemented through a model or a number of models, depending on the school's situation (e.g., a low-incidence EL population, a multilingual setting, a high number of speakers of a single language or newcomers) and language programming: how language, literacy, and content are provided to the student.

This document briefly summarizes approaches, program models, and emerging themes for effectively serving English Learners. Contained within are also links to a few foundational studies and sites for further investigation. In exploring options for supporting English Learners, LEAs should be cognizant that although ESSA offers an opportunity for LEAs to present their Language Instruction Education Program (LIEP)--its combined approaches, models, and services to support English learners--the obligation to both identify and to provide a language education program to English Learners is an obligation beyond ESSA.

Bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) Approaches

An **approach**[1] is a broad, conceptual framework. Two approaches, "English as a Second language (ESL)" and "bilingual," vary primarily in terms of their use (or non-use) of a student's native language (L1) during instruction that targets development of English as a Second language (L2). Various models are subsumed under each approach.

English As a Second Language Approach

As its name implies, the ESL approach focuses on instruction in English as the primary means to help ELs acquire the language and ultimately meet high academic standards. Students learn and are taught in English exclusively or primarily—certain instructional materials or instructional techniques may make use of basic L1

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[1] Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs): A Review of the Foundational Literature. US Department of Education. May 2012. https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/title-iii/language-instruction-ed-programs-report.pdf.

vocabulary, but only as a means to support the students' use of English. Models that follow the ESL approach may include both language instruction, wherein English language is the instructional content itself, or content-based instruction, in which academic content is the object of instruction, but it is delivered in such a way as to support ELs' acquisition of English as well.

Bilingual Approach

The bilingual approach to educating ELs is built on the increasing body of research indicating that first language (L1) skills contribute positively to students' acquisition of a second language (L2), and that L1 instruction appears to promote gains in English achievement (Thomas and Collier 2002; August and Shanahan 2008; Genesee et al. 2006; Goldenberg 2008; Ramirez, Yuen, and Ramey 1991).The bilingual approach is based on a commitment to the understanding that instruction in students' L1 will help them meet the goals of attaining English proficiency and meeting high academic achievement standards. Beyond this common trait, bilingual models vary in their details and orientation—some see L1 development as an important goal in itself, while others see it as a scaffold or stepping-stone to English fluency.

ESL, Bilingual and Combined ESL/Bilingual Models

A **model** is a specific set of instructional services or a fully developed curriculum designed to help ELs acquire English proficiency and meet high academic standards. It comprises a set of characteristics, principles, and practices that have been developed based on theory and research, and serves as a rough blueprint that classrooms, schools, and districts may follow as an implementation guide.

An example of a model that embeds a bilingual approach is Dual language Immersion (also known as. Two-way Bilingual or Two-way Immersion) (DLI), where the purpose is to develop strong skills and proficiency in English and students' first language (referred to as the partner language). About half of program participants are native speakers of English and half are English Learners from the same language group. Instruction takes place in both languages. For example, in a "90/10" model, instruction begins 90% in non-English and10% in English, and gradually transitions to 50/50; in a "50/50" model, instruction begins 50% in non-English and 50% in English for all students from the start. These models are available pre-K through high school, and nclude language and content classes in English and the partner language for both core and noncore classes. The audience is a sizable group of ELLs who speak the same language and are in the same grade.

An example of a model that embeds an English as Second Language (ESL) approach is Sheltered Instruction, also known as Structured English Immersion (SEI), Pull-out English as a Second Language (ESL), or English Language. Student acquire English through the content. The class is comprised of students who are English Learners from the same or diverse language backgrounds.

For a complete crosswalk of the DPI LIEP program model descriptions, see https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/english-learners/Language%20Instruction%20Education%20Program%20state%20of%20WI%20crosswalk.docx.pdf.

General Emergent Themes[2]

The following themes about language instruction educational program (LIEP) design, implementation, and evaluation emerged from the literature from a U.S. Department of Education 2012 report, *Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs): A Review of the Foundational Literature.*

1. High Standards and Challenging Content Are Good for ELs

Based on research, various authors (Henze and Lucas 1993; Collier and Thomas 1997; Minaya-Rowe 2004; August and Pease-Alvarez 1996; Ray 2009) found that English learners (ELs) benefit from being held to high expectations and challenging content and achievement standards. Callahan (2005), for example, found that the classes into which an EL is placed are a greater predictor of the child's ultimate academic outcomes than linguistic proficiency, which suggests that reducing the rigor or substance of content instruction does not help, and may ultimately hurt, ELs' academic achievement. While it is important that ELs receive instruction that is tailored to their language-based needs, this finding suggests that it is equally important that ELs not be held to lower academic standards as they build their linguistic proficiency. This finding also suggests in combination with theme 7 ("ELs need instruction that is specifically cognizant of their needs as second-language learners") that teachers who provide ELs with content instruction should be equally prepared to deliver challenging content instruction and to address ELs' linguistic needs as they do so.

2. Having a LIEP Is Important

One descriptive study and three research reviews found that providing any kind of special program or instruction for ELs is better for these students than not providing any special services (Goldenberg 2008; Saunders and Goldenberg 2010; Thomas and Collier 2002; Lindholm-Leary and Borsato 2006). Simply placing ELs in the general program and treating them like English speakers is not likely to help these students overcome the barriers they face.

3. No One Approach or Model Is Appropriate for All ELs

Reviewers found examples in the literature of high-quality programs (usually defined by students' performance on academic content assessments) based on all the reviewed models, at all grade levels and all over the United States (Williams, Hakuta, and Haertel 2007; Parrish et al. 2006; Boyson and Short 2003; Spaulding, Carolino, and Amen 2004; Howard and Christian 2002; August and Pease-Alvarez 1996; Genesee 1999). Factors such as state law, population characteristics and availability of funding or resources may be the more immediate factors that drive a school district's choice of program, and it may be the case that certain models are more or less practical for different EL subgroups based on factors such as age, formal education background or native language (L1) literacy.

4. Instructional Practices Are Important Variables in LIEP Design and Implementation

Increasingly, researchers and experts have been finding that the quality and consistency of instructional practices used within a LIEP may be more important than the model itself. Echevarria and Short (2010) have found that teachers who follow their Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model, a particular version of sheltered instruction (SI) with structured protocols for lesson planning and delivery, produce better lessons (according to validated rubrics) and potentially better outcomes (according thus far to quasi-experimental

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[2] Ibid US Department of Education page 107-111.

research; experimental research is under way at the time of publication) than teachers who implement SI in an ad hoc or less structured way. Irby et al. (2010) found via a large-scale quasi-experimental study that students who participated in enhanced transitional bilingual education (TBE) or sheltered English immersion (SEI) programs (so-called due to the use of specific professional development [PD], class structure and instructional practices) performed better on reading measures than students who participated in typical programs following either model. And Slavin et al. (2011) found via large-scale experimental research that students enrolled in programs using the same instructional practices and reading curriculum in English (through an SEI program) or Spanish (through a TBE program) reached comparable levels of performance on English reading measures, which suggests that the instructional practices mattered more than the model. From an implementation standpoint, these findings suggest that, while the choice of model is important, practitioners may be better served by focusing their energies on identifying and implementing effective instructional practices within that model, as these may play a more important role in a LIEP's quality than the model itself.

5. Literacy and Oral Language Development in English Are Critical Instructional Components for Any LIEP

Native language literacy and English oral language were emphasized repeatedly as important in the literature reviewed, and these elements transcended any particular approach or model. Two large-scale research syntheses (August and Shanahan 2008; Genesee et al. 2006) found that oral language proficiency in L2 appears to facilitate literacy in L2, and multiple research studies argued or studied the effects of instruction designed to develop proficiency in these areas (Dalton 1998; Echevarria, Vogt, and Short 2004; August and Pease-Alvarez 1996; Garcia 1991; Gersten et al. 2007; Knight and Wiseman 2006; Rubinstein-Avila 2003; Saunders et al. 1999; Saunders and Goldenberg 2010; Young 1996). Experts recommended, based on extensive research reviews, that incorporating oral language practice and development into the structure of any LIEP seems likely to help ELs develop second-language (L2) literacy (Saunders and O'Brien 2006; Saunders and Goldenberg 2010); oral language was also found to play a potentially important role in the development of academic language specifically (Anstrom et al. 2010) (see theme 11).

6. Academic Language Seems To Be Important in EL Instruction

Many experts have argued or found evidence for a conceptually distinct linguistic register that is specific to the school setting (Cummins 1979a; Cummins 1980; Belcher 2006; Scarcella 2003a; Bailey 2007). This register, most commonly referred to as academic language, academic English or academic English language, is distinct enough from social language that ELs may need special instruction to ensure that they acquire it. Preliminary descriptive research suggests that, like their non-EL counterparts, English learners must be proficient in this kind of language in order to meet grade-level standards in content areas and on assessments (Bailey, Butler, and Sato 2007; Bailey et al. 2007; Stevens, Butler, and Castellon Wellington 2000; Butler and Castellon-Wellington 2000).

7. ELs Need Instruction That Is Specifically Cognizant of Their Needs as Second Language Learners

 In addition to using high-quality general instructional practices, teachers may serve ELs better if they understand and adopt instructional practices that are more cognizant of these students' specific needs (Goldenberg 2008). Preliminary research on such practices suggests benefits for ELs, as well as increased confidence and competency for teachers (Aguirre-Munoz et al. 2001; Echevarria, Powers, and Short 2006; Linan-Thompson et al. 2003; Vaughn et al. 2006; Young 1996). While some studies have found that general instructional practices show promise for improving outcomes for all students, ELs and nonELs alike (D'Angiulli, Siegel, and Maggi 2004; Lee et al. 2008; Williams, Hakuta, and Haertel 2007), these practices, while promising, do not pledge to close the extant

gaps between ELs and their English-speaking peers. At least one study also found that the effects of such "high-quality practices" may be smaller for ELs than for non-ELs (O'Day 2009).

8. Teachers Need To Be Prepared to Teach ELs

Multiple authors found or argued that EL-specific practices and preparation may be more promising for improving ELs' achievement than general best practices for all students (Short and Echevarria 1999; Graves, Gersten, and Haager 2004; Garcia 1991; Ray 2009). In today's academic world, any teacher in any state at any grade level in any subject may have one or more ELs in his or her classroom. Therefore, all teachers should be prepared with a basic understanding of who ELs are, how second-language acquisition (SLA) may work and what practices will help these students to succeed academically. This knowledge may make a nontrivial difference in these students' chances at success. Multiple experts argued that this preparation should begin in preservice training and carry through teachers' careers as an ongoing professional development process (Zetlin, MacLeod, and Michener 1998; Gonzalez and Darling-Hammond 1997; Minaya-Rowe 2004).

9. Newcomer Models Are a Programmatic Option

That School Districts May Use to Meet the Needs of Newly Identified ELs at the Secondary Level ELs who are recent immigrants and who enter the American school system at the secondary level with limited literacy in their native language and with interrupted formal education face unique challenges, based on the fact that the language demands of secondary classrooms are likely to be significantly greater than those for lower grade levels (Anstrom et al. 2010). When executed as actual programs, newcomer models are designed to help orient and prepare newcomer ELs by providing targeted or intensive instruction to build foundational skills before ELs are ready to enter into a district's or school's regular LIEP. As of a 2003 study by Boyson and Short, the most common configuration for a newcomer program was for it to last one school year and operate at students' home school as a full-day program. There are, however, many variations on this model, as well as variations in how newcomer students are defined and identified. It should be noted that implementation of this model typically does not include instructional goals that meet the legislative definition of a LIEP. Nonetheless, the model is often part of a crucial pathway for entering recently immigrated students into a district's or school's regular LIEP. As such, this model has been included in this study to ensure a holistic depiction of how districts serve ELs.

10. ELs' Scores on Academic Content Assessments Should Be Interpreted With Great Care

The reviewed literature suggests that ELs' scores on academic content assessments may not always be representative of these students' actual content skills and knowledge. Research on accommodations for ELs suggests that, at best, many commonly used accommodations may be minimally effective for ELs. At worst, research suggests that these accommodations are inappropriate for ELs and may even hinder their performance (Rivera and Stansfield 2001; Rivera and Collum 2004; Willner, Rivera, and Acosta 2008; Willner, Rivera, and Acosta 2009). While English language proficiency assessments (ELPAs) are improving in terms of their ability to measure the academic language used in content classrooms, early studies found that these assessments did not always measure the kind of language necessary to fully engage with content assessments or provide adequate responses (Abedi 2004; Abedi 2001; Butler and Castellon-Wellington 2000; Stevens, Butler, and Castellon-Wellington 2000). In states where this is true, this could mean that former ELs may continue to face barriers to showing their knowledge on academic content assessments in English. Based on these uncertainties, practitioners and policy makers should interpret ELs' content assessment scores with care, particularly when making placement or redesignation decisions (Ragan and Lesaux 2006; Linquanti 2001; Stevens, Butler, and Castellon-Wellington 2000). Practitioners should also ensure that the cut scores on their ELPAs are set

appropriately, such that students who earn a proficient score truly have the necessary language skills to participate in and engage with academic content assessments in English.

11. Current Assessments May Not Be Sufficient Measures of the Linguistic Proficiency Necessary to Support Success in Mainstream Content Classrooms

Although efforts are currently under way to develop a new generation of ELPAs that focus more closely on academic language skills, research suggests that at least some ELPAs in current use do not use or measure language that is sufficiently complex to be representative of grade-level demands (Butler and Castellon-Wellington 2000; Stevens, Butler, and Castellon-Wellington 2000; Bailey, Butler, and Sato 2007; Abedi 2001). Although a 2006 survey found that eight of the 10 states that enroll more than 80 percent of the nation's ELs17 12. Culture and Community Matter use additional measures to determine whether ELs who score proficient on the ELPA will also exit the limited-English-proficient (LEP) subgroup and stop receiving services (Ragan and Lesaux 2006), it is important that ELPAs measure the kinds of language skills that students will need to succeed unsupported in classes where instruction is delivered in English. This concern is greater in states that use ELPA performance as the sole criterion for exit from the LEP subgroup under Title I. Such students may languish in mainstream classes without the language support they still need, and may never reach grade-level standards due to continuing language struggles that are no longer being addressed (Linquanti 2001; Bailey, Butler, Stevens et al. 2007; Bailey and Butler 2007; Gandara and Merino 1993; Parrish et al. 2006). Although empirical research has not proven a relationship between culture and student outcomes (August and Shanahan 2006), literature reviewed about programs from across the country have found repeatedly that they share the common characteristic of a strong and intentional community of respect and acceptance, both within and beyond the school (Berman et al. 2000; Lucas 1993; Necochea and Cline 2000; Ochoa and Cadiero-Kaplan 2004; Williams, Hakuta, and Haertel 2007). Descriptive studies suggest that cultural atmosphere can make a difference in student outcomes (Collier and Thomas 1997). As such, it appears that a school's attitude about ELs, their languages and their cultures are important considerations in program design, implementation and evaluation. School districts that view other languages and cultures as valuable assets, rather than as problematic obstacles, create positive environments in which ELs may thrive and achieve. In particular, parent involvement was frequently named as an important feature of program design, particularly for ELs who are recent immigrants (Genesee 1999; Boyson and Short 2003; August and Pease-Alvarez 1996).

Resources

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