

VOL. 10, NO. 1

r&d alert®

timely knowledge for education and human development

ISSUE FOCUS

English Learners

a publication of

WestEd 



EL Expertise: Not just for specialists anymore

03

Wanted: EL assistance for preschool teachers > 06

Academic Language: Opening the gate for English learners > 10

Where to Draw the Line: Setting ambitious, reasonable targets for EL accountability > 14

18 Improving Instruction for English Learners to Close the Achievement Gap

What's New & Useful: WestEd products & services > 22

r&d alert

R&D Alert covers issues affecting schools, communities, and human development professionals throughout the United States. Current and previous issues are available at WestEd.org/R&DAlert. Your letters are welcomed. Please send comments to Noel White at nwhite@WestEd.org or by regular mail to: Noel White, WestEd, 730 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107-1242.

Chief Executive Officer
Glen Harvey

Copy Editor
Tracy Landauer

Chief Policy & Communications Officer
Max McConkey

Proofreaders
Tania Bell
Rosemary De La Torre

R&D Alert Editor
Noel White

Graphic Designer
Christian Holden

Contributors
Holly Holland
Priscilla Pardini
Susan Pittman
Noel White

Photographs
Christian Holden



WestEd, a nonprofit research, development, and service agency, works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. While WestEd serves the states of Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah as one of the nation's Regional Educational Laboratories, our agency's work extends throughout the United States and abroad. It has 16 offices nationwide, from Washington and Boston to Arizona, Southern California, and its headquarters in San Francisco. For more information about WestEd, visit our website: WestEd.org; call 415.565.3000 or, toll-free, (877) 4-WestEd; or write: WestEd / 730 Harrison Street / San Francisco, CA 94107-1242.

EL Expertise

Not just for specialists anymore

Pop quiz: What is the country of origin for a majority of the more than five million students in U.S. schools who are designated “Limited English Proficient”? 

» With a majority of English learners (EL students) born in the U.S. and the proportion of EL students within the overall student population growing dramatically, providing the best possible education for English learners has become a home-grown issue of increasing urgency.

Aída Walqui, Director of WestEd’s Teacher Professional Development Program, makes the point more starkly: “Unless we start looking at how to educate English learners as a systemic issue — something relevant to all teachers, not just EL specialists — we will become an illiterate nation soon.”

A “new model” for educating EL students

Walqui advocates not only for a more systemic approach to educating English learners than schools traditionally have pursued, but also for a more ambitious approach.

In the traditional model, Walqui notes, regular subject matter teachers generally simplify instruction and reduce expectations

for English learners. EL specialists bear most or all of the responsibility for improving these students’ language skills, while the subject matter teachers generally have little or no expertise specific to working with EL students. If the teachers do receive professional development focused on EL instruction, it is generally no more than a few days of workshops with no follow-up.

By contrast, Walqui and colleagues are advancing a new model in which all educators develop expertise in English learner instruction. Professional development guides teachers toward providing “high challenge, high support” lessons, which give English learners intellectually challenging experiences and provide the supports needed for them to develop English language skills and academic content knowledge simultaneously.

To put this model into action, Walqui and colleagues developed the Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) initiative. QTEL provides systemwide professional development and coaching to help teachers in every discipline offer high-caliber instruction for

Answer:
The United States.

Source: Batalova, J., Fix, M., and Murray, J. (2007). *Measures of Change: The Demography and Literacy of Adolescent English Learners*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.





At the system level

Reconceptualizing professional development. QTEL embodies the notion that professional development must focus on both pedagogy and subject matter simultaneously, and that doing so effectively requires a significant investment of time. The QTEL program includes apprenticeships that help educators build their theoretical knowledge and practical skills for supporting English learners. Experienced educators who have strengthened their own skills and understanding of how to work effectively with English learners provide models for other teachers and guide them through opportunities to apply newly learned information and practices. In this manner, professional development is very different from short-term workshops and better enables educators to gradually appropriate new information and abilities.

Sustained focus. QTEL's developers have found that the competing expectations and requirements of pursuing multiple reform initiatives can create a significant impediment to the success of professional development. In Austin, QTEL has begun with only two high schools (with plans

Unless we start looking at how to educate English learners as just EL specialists — we will become an illiterate

*continued from
previous page*

secondary students who are learning English as a second language.

Over several years, QTEL has had success in sites ranging from La Paz Middle School (in an agricultural community in California) to the New York City Department of Education (the nation's largest school district) and has partnered with universities, both nationally and internationally. Building on these experiences, QTEL in 2007 began a multi-year engagement in Austin, Texas, where the QTEL approaches described in this article are being applied at the school system and classroom levels.

to expand later) and is the only outside support provider currently in these schools. All teachers learn the same theory, says Walqui, and teachers within each discipline learn the same practices, so there's much more coherence and more buy-in.

"We didn't want that Christmas tree approach of just putting an ornament here, putting another there, adding another initiative," explains Edmund Oropez, who was Principal at Austin's Lanier High School when QTEL started there. "We are multiple ships, but all sailing in the same direction. And the beauty of QTEL is it helps us do that through cutting across curriculum, uniting our staff with one single purpose: improving instruction in the classroom."

Nested levels of professional development and capacity building. To build systemic support for English learners requires multilevel professional development. QTEL in

Austin consists of three years of continuous professional development for all educators in a school. In this “nested model,” different types of participants have different levels of engagement, varying from 8 to 20 days per year of professional development. Some of the QTEL professional development takes place with teachers in discipline-specific groups (e.g., all mathematics teachers together), and some with all disciplines mixed together.

Administrative leaders attend professional development prior to their teachers and then alongside them. Teacher leaders in each discipline engage in additional professional development to become expert QTEL teachers who, by the second year of QTEL, open their classrooms to their peers to model instructional practices. These leaders participate in six days of professional development per year with other teachers, but they also engage in further reading and discussions, plus they receive extensive coaching, are videotaped, and participate in guided lesson-planning sessions.

QTEL also helps develop the expertise of local professional developers to coach teachers in their subject matters, usher new colleagues into the schools’ ways of doing things, and

to appropriate and reinvent the schools’ professional development model to sustain high-quality instructional practices beyond QTEL’s direct involvement. QTEL takes these local professional development experts through a supported apprenticeship process, including benchmarks that signal different levels of expertise.

At the classroom level

Opportunities for students to “own the language” as teachers let go of some control. Through the support of scaffolding and opportunities to practice using academic English, says Walqui, students “apprentice to the language” and eventually come to “own the language.” She notes that one of the best ways for English learners and other students to have these opportunities is to work together in small groups, solve problems together, struggle, and make mistakes as they



a systemic issue — something relevant to all teachers, not nation soon.



Wanted

EL assistance for preschool teachers

>> In recent years, policymakers and professional developers have stepped up efforts to help K–12 schools meet the challenge of educating an increasing number of children whose primary language is not English. But far less attention has been given to this issue at the preschool level. A professional development program developed by WestEd — English Learners, Language, and Literacy in the Early Years (ELLLEY) — is helping fill this void.



“The movement to provide this kind of professional development for preschool educators is definitely in its infancy,” says Rebeca Valdivia, who with Ann-Marie Wiese co-directs the project through WestEd’s Center for Child and Family Studies. “But it’s destined to grow, given the huge need.”

A recent report found a “substantial percentage” of Hispanic children may be entering kindergarten without the foundation in either English or Spanish language skills they need to make a good start in school.* The finding is significant because nearly 20 percent of all U.S. children eight years old or younger are Hispanic, a figure projected to reach 25 percent by 2030.

ELLLEY, one of only a few programs of its kind nationwide, promotes preschool English language instruction that “uses children’s first-language skills as a foundation for speaking, listening, and reading in their second language,” says Wiese. Research in second-language acquisition supports such an approach, noting that learning vocabulary and concepts in one’s first language provides a bridge to learning equivalent vocabulary and concepts in a second language.

Other research findings reflected in ELLLEY’s design include: giving students opportunities to use oral language for varied purposes; forging connections between material that is already familiar to students

* National Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics. (March, 2007). Para Nuestros Niños: Expanding and Improving Early Education for Hispanics. Tempe, AZ: Author.



and new material they need to learn; and providing students with visual cues, such as drawings or other graphic material designed to clarify vocabulary and concepts in the second language.

ELLLEY is based on a resource guide and training session on second-language acquisition that Valdivia and Wiese developed for the California Department of Education in 2003. The training session introduced approximately 1,000 California preschool teachers, administrators, specialists, and consultants to the resource guide's concepts. Positive feedback led to ELLLEY, a series of full-day, interactive seminars and on-site technical assistance in the form of one-on-one coaching.

Valdivia and Wiese, both senior research associates at WestEd, say one reason there are so few professional development programs for preschool teachers of English learners is that many preschool administrators assume that having one or more teachers on staff who speak the first language of their young students is adequate for addressing the children's language needs. "Having these teachers on staff is a great resource, but unless all teachers are consciously aware of which language they are supporting, to what degree, and through which strategies, that is not enough," says Valdivia.

Using students' first language in the classroom is a good way to show respect for their home culture, says Valdivia. "Research tells us that those home languages are critical to second-language development." She adds, "A classroom where the children speak 15 different languages requires a thoughtful and creative approach to providing support for the first language of every child."



**continued from
previous page**

One ELLLEY seminar helps teachers find ways to build on home languages. For example, teachers learn that before reading a book aloud to students in English, it's helpful to introduce key vocabulary words in both English and the students' native language. Classroom lending libraries that give families access to the same book in both English and the home language also help nurture connections between home and school, Wiese says.

Other ELLLEY seminars address ways to promote oral language development, such as using language structures in the form of highly predictable, patterned sentences to facilitate students' use of English. For example, teachers might turn an everyday activity such as "show and tell" into a language lesson by teaching the phrases "This is my..." or "I like it because..." in order to help get the students speaking.

Teachers also learn how to use graphic organizers and sequencing charts to scaffold — or support — instruction. Teachers might, for example, display paper

cutouts of objects mentioned in a story they are reading aloud. Placing the cutouts on a chart in the order they are mentioned in the story can graphically demonstrate the concept of sequencing. Or the teachers can ask students to point out physical attributes of a character from the story while the teacher labels a drawing of the character in both English and the students' first language.

ELLLEY seminars caution teachers against dominating classroom conversations and encourage them to use transition time between activities throughout the day to reinforce language acquisition skills. "We try to show teachers how to make the most of daily activities that can become so routine they don't need to plan them," says Valdivia.

Although experienced teachers do such things intuitively, their equally committed but less-experienced peers have not had the opportunity to think about language in deep enough ways to understand the importance of using such strategies in their day-to-day teaching, says Valdivia. "We have found that newer teachers can make great strides. They are hungry for information that will take their practice to the next level."

**Research tells us that
[students'] home languages are
critical to second-language
development.**



Many of the preschool teachers and assistant teachers participating in ELLLEY professional development have never had formal instruction in language development, let alone in second-language development. But because many are second-language learners themselves, “that provides a natural hook,” says Wiese.

Familiarity with research on second-language development, Wiese says, helps teachers recognize good practice and understand the rationale behind it. That, in turn, “raises the teachers’ level of professionalism and their perception of themselves as more capable.”

At ELLLEY seminars, participants analyze video segments showcasing best-practice strategies, such as having young children plant a garden while talking about the process, participating in read-alouds of books related to gardening, and learning songs and finger plays about gardening. During on-site training sessions, which are scheduled between the seminars, Valdivia, Wiese, and other seasoned practitioners observe the preschool teachers at work and then meet with them — often during

children’s naptime — to discuss their observations and develop action plans targeting professional growth.

Wiese says ELLLEY is about showing teachers how to get young children on the path to beginning English proficiency by “honoring learners for who they are and for the linguistic and cultural resources they bring to the educational experience.”



For more information about the English Learners, Language, and Literacy in the Early Years (ELLLEY) project, contact Rebeca Valdivia at 858.530.1176 or rvaldiv@WestEd.org; or Ann-Marie Wiese at 415.289.2343 or awiese@WestEd.org; or visit WestEd.org/ellley.

Acade

» Every day in schools across America a **growing number** of non-native speakers of English search for an **essential tool** they need to continue their education. The missing resource is **academic language** — the vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension skills that will enable them to read, write, and **construct meaning** from subject-specific texts.

mic

L • A • N • G • U • A • G • E

opening the gate for English learners

“Academic language is a gatekeeper,” says Pamela Spycher, Director of English Learners and the Language Arts (ELLA), a K–8 professional development project created by the Comprehensive School Assistance Program at WestEd. “If we don’t give English learners that language of power, we’re doing them a huge disservice.”

Making curriculum accessible to English learners

To help students, ELLA provides a series of targeted workshops for faculty and administrators and ongoing coaching in classrooms to improve teachers’ skills.

For teachers, particularly those who specialize in subjects other than English, the challenge is to deepen their understanding of how language works so they can convey that knowledge to students. In addition to helping students think as scientists, mathematicians, or historians, teachers must provide explicit instruction in reading and writing as applied specifically to each content area.

For example, the features of narrative text differ significantly from those of expository text, and this difference can trip up students as they try to decipher the

meaning of passages in assignments and tests. Academic writing also follows stricter structures and tones than more informal writing. Asked to read and summarize a current events article, a nonnative speaker might use informal language that conveys feelings and opinions instead of a neutral, academic voice that will garner a better evaluation in high school, college, and the workplace.

Using graphic organizers can be an effective strategy for modeling and explaining these distinctions. Graphic organizers help teachers and students analyze the language features in sentences or the meaning of verbs in different contexts. By focusing on such functional linguistics, teachers can show “how language does what it does and then let students use it right away so they can make good choices about language and use it to their advantage,” says Spycher, who has conducted extensive research on how nonnative speakers build English fluency.

“You don’t have to be a linguist to do this. I think every teacher can be very knowledgeable and expert about the way academic language works. But it requires time for conversations about language; that’s a lot of what we do.”

In a traditional classroom setup, a teacher might pose a question and a few students will raise their hands to respond, while most remain passive and disengaged. The majority of students get limited practice talking about



**continued from
previous page**

curricular content. By contrast, classrooms implementing ELLA's strategies buzz with conversation. Teachers ask questions, then give students time to discuss their ideas with partners and report back to the whole class.

By scaffolding support for nonnative speakers — such as providing sentence frames for students to use in filling in new vocabulary terms — teachers encourage reflection and deeper comprehension. These methods also extend the learning of other students.

The ELLA project recommends that teachers routinely provide academic vocabulary instruction. Instead of the common method of asking students to memorize and look up the definitions of new terms, for example, teachers provide kid-friendly explanations, time to practice usage, and examples of how the words work within the context of the curriculum. Or they link the terms to something in the students' prior experience.

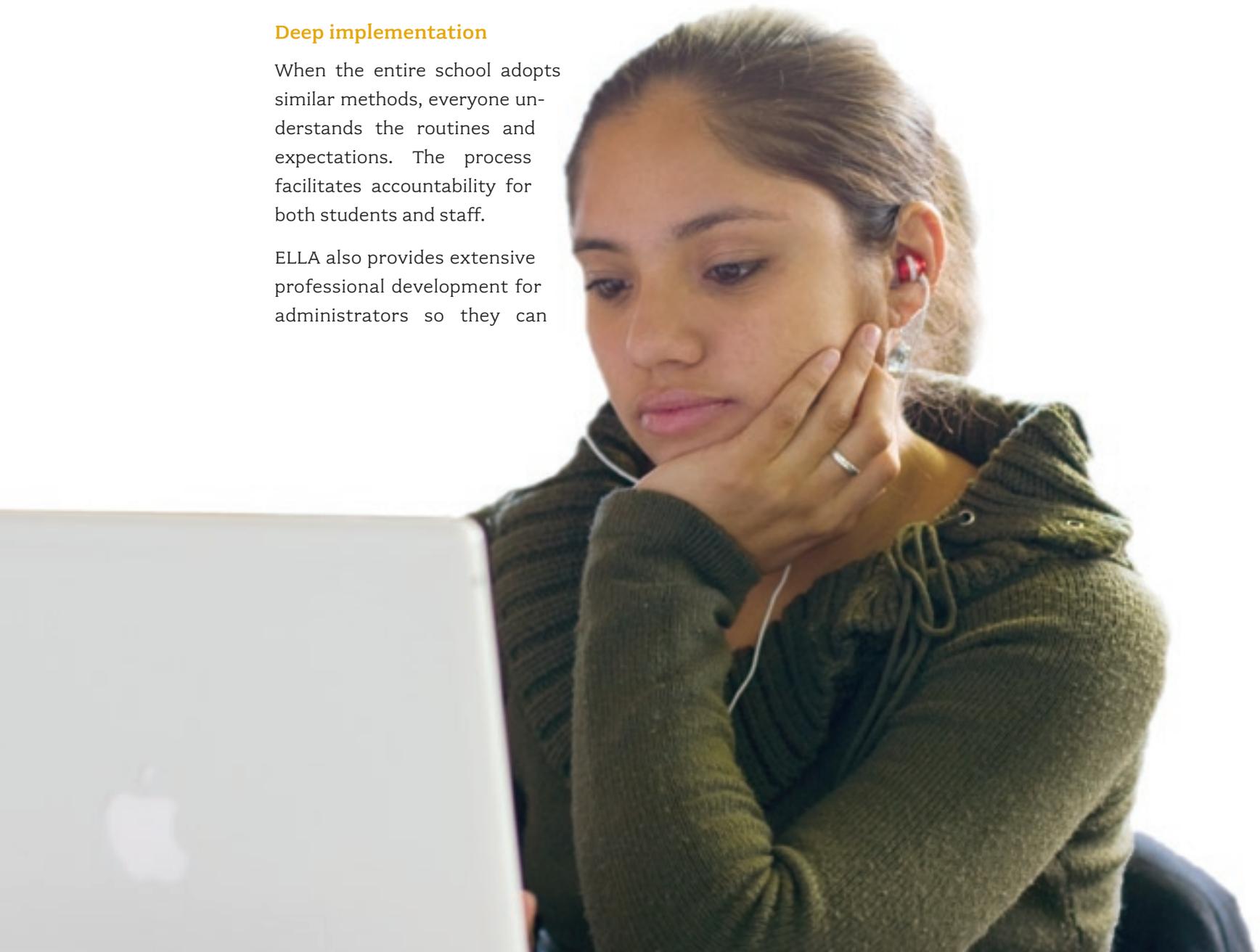
Deep implementation

When the entire school adopts similar methods, everyone understands the routines and expectations. The process facilitates accountability for both students and staff.

ELLA also provides extensive professional development for administrators so they can

learn what to look for in classrooms and how to extend additional support to teachers. In one affiliated school district, teachers and administrators jointly developed an "Action Walk Protocol," a checklist that principals and instructional coaches use when observing in classrooms to note examples of effective strategies. The resulting data have given leaders a quick and accurate summary of how well the community was addressing improvement goals.

"Our teachers are much more cognizant of the nature of language acquisition and have many more tools in their kit to address the needs of their students," says Tony Roehrick, Superintendent of the Bellevue Union School District in California, where



“Our teachers are much **more cognizant** of the nature of **language acquisition** and have many more tools in their kit to address the needs of their students.”

about 75 percent of the students are nonnative speakers. “The model of deep implementation has an effect on all levels of the organization. I know our principals have a good understanding of ELLA, what the instructional strategies look like, and the purpose behind each of the strategies. They are capable of serving as a facilitator/coach with new and experienced teachers.”

Lessons learned

ELLA staff have been working with schools in Arizona, California, and Nevada since 2002. Spycher says feedback from schools has been extremely favorable, and she plans to conduct more formal evaluations of the project in coming months. However, the project’s experiences already have revealed three important considerations for policymakers who are trying to address the needs of English learners:

- * If governments expect schools to meet rigorous accountability standards, they must provide resources to ensure schools can address every student’s needs. “We’re increasing our expectations for all students,

which is a good thing, but that means we have to provide support so everyone can meet the expectations,” Spycher says.

- * Everyone in the school community must know and consistently use effective strategies for English learners. “Having our mentors, coaches, and facilitators involved and actively supporting other teachers was key,” Roehrick says.
- * Teachers must develop a strong repertoire of techniques for serving English learners because one approach will not work for everyone. “There is no one foolproof method,” Spycher acknowledges. “English learners are not a monolithic group. They are individuals, and each one has different learning needs.”



For more information about the English Learners and the Language Arts project, contact Pamela Spycher at 916.492.4026 or pspycher@WestEd.org; or visit WestEd.org/ella.



Where to Draw the

SETTING AMBITIOUS, REASONABLE TARGETS FOR EL Accountability

» In the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, lawmakers set an unequivocal objective for all students to reach academic proficiency in tested subjects by 2014. But a provision of the law dealing with the language progress and proficiency of English learners was not so explicit.

Without firm guidance, several states set unrealistically high goals for nonnative speakers, while others set their sights much lower. Only a few based their decisions on data that tracked the progress of actual students. Those trailblazers have been helping other states revisit and reset targets that reflect challenging but reasonable expectations of how quickly students learn English, as the U.S. Department of Education strives to bring greater uniformity to English learner accountability across states.

“You have kids coming in at all different levels, and you have to move them all forward,” says Robert Linquanti, Director of the English Learner Evaluation and Accountability Support (ELEAS) project at WestEd. But at the same time, states need to have accountability systems based on “defensible decisions of how kids should be expected to progress and what the finish line should be.” Linquanti has consulted since 2003 with several states, consortia, and the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) to advise on research, methods, and policy guidance governing English learner accountability.

The issue came into national focus this past spring when the federal government issued draft interpretations of NCLB’s

Title III, which specifies policy for English learners served under NCLB in K–12 schools across the country. The interpretations attempt to bring greater standardization to how states determine and report students’ language progress and proficiency — including their ability to read, write, speak, and comprehend English — as well as their proficiency on tests of academic content. Officials said the changes are also intended to ensure that states don’t exclude some English learners from accountability measures.

According to Linquanti, researchers are finding that children’s progress toward English fluency depends on a variety of factors, such as their initial English proficiency when they start school in the United States, as well as their current English proficiency, time in program, and age or grade level.

Gains do not always follow a straightline trajectory. Students at lower levels of proficiency and lower grade levels tend to move faster than those at higher proficiencies and grade levels who are trying to master more complex academic language and content. This “lower is faster, higher is slower” pattern, explains Linquanti, runs counter to

Line

*continued from
previous page*

traditional accountability requirements that insist every student demonstrate equal progress each year and reach language proficiency at a fixed point in time.

“In our view, setting annual measurable achievement objectives without understanding how second-language learning occurs is fraught with problems,” H. Gary Cook and colleagues at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research wrote in a 2008 report for the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium. Since 2003, the nonprofit organization of 18 member states has worked to promote standards and assessments for English learners that meet and exceed the goals of NCLB.

WIDA has guided its states in developing annual measurable achievement objectives (AMAOs) based largely on approaches pioneered by WestEd’s ELEAS project. WestEd has helped several states use language assessment and academic achievement data to examine progress patterns and to define a “finish line” level of proficiency for students to reach. Those patterns and

definitions, in turn, are used to better inform decisions about how to set increasingly challenging targets for school districts to meet over time.

In California, for example, a team examined matched test scores over two years to determine how much progress students were making at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of proficiency. They grouped the results and ranked each school district’s success in moving English learners ahead. With this analysis, the team was able to provide policymakers with options for annual growth targets that are challenging but still possible for districts to meet. ELEAS has used these same language progress patterns along with academic achievement levels to help policymakers explore various “finish lines” for defining English proficiency — and expected time frames to get there.

“One of the guiding questions should be: Can you reflect reality and reasonably push the envelope on what’s expected over time?” says Linquanti, who helped California develop its accountability system for English learners. “As



“**One of the guiding questions should be: Can you reflect reality and reasonably push the envelope on what’s expected over time?**”

I work with other states, I advise them to create a system that makes sense to educators because it won't perform its function if folks don't understand how it works or if it isn't credible."

A key lesson Linqanti has taken from the experience of helping shape state accountability systems for English language acquisition is that policies should be grounded in the best available empirical research and data analysis, such as the processes California and the WIDA consortium pursued. Having longitudinal data to model and compare to existing research gives policymakers options to consider and helps them project the likely outcome of their choices.

Many states have not had consistent data from a standards-based test to work with, Linqanti notes. In the absence of such empirical evidence to support recommendations for English learners, "a lot of states pulled targets and progress and proficiency definitions out of their hats," which created some of the disjointed systems that the federal government's recent interpretations of Title III seek to address.

Jan Mayer, a former California Department of Education manager who brought in ELEAS, believes the best chance of success comes from teamwork and sharing information, not a one-size-fits-all mandate: "States must carefully analyze data to set targets, obtain feedback from various stakeholders during the developmental process, provide professional development to ensure that the field understands the system, allow districts the opportunity to review their data (and make corrections, if necessary) prior to public reporting, and provide reports on a pre-established timeline in a reader-friendly format."

Linqanti adds, "If a state's English learner accountability system isn't set up to be reasonable or promote educator insight and behavior change, its utility and impact are limited." State accountability systems should also promote both internal and external communication about student performance, he says. Educators need data to help them know which English learners require better support, and policymakers — and the public — need assurances that districts are on the right track.

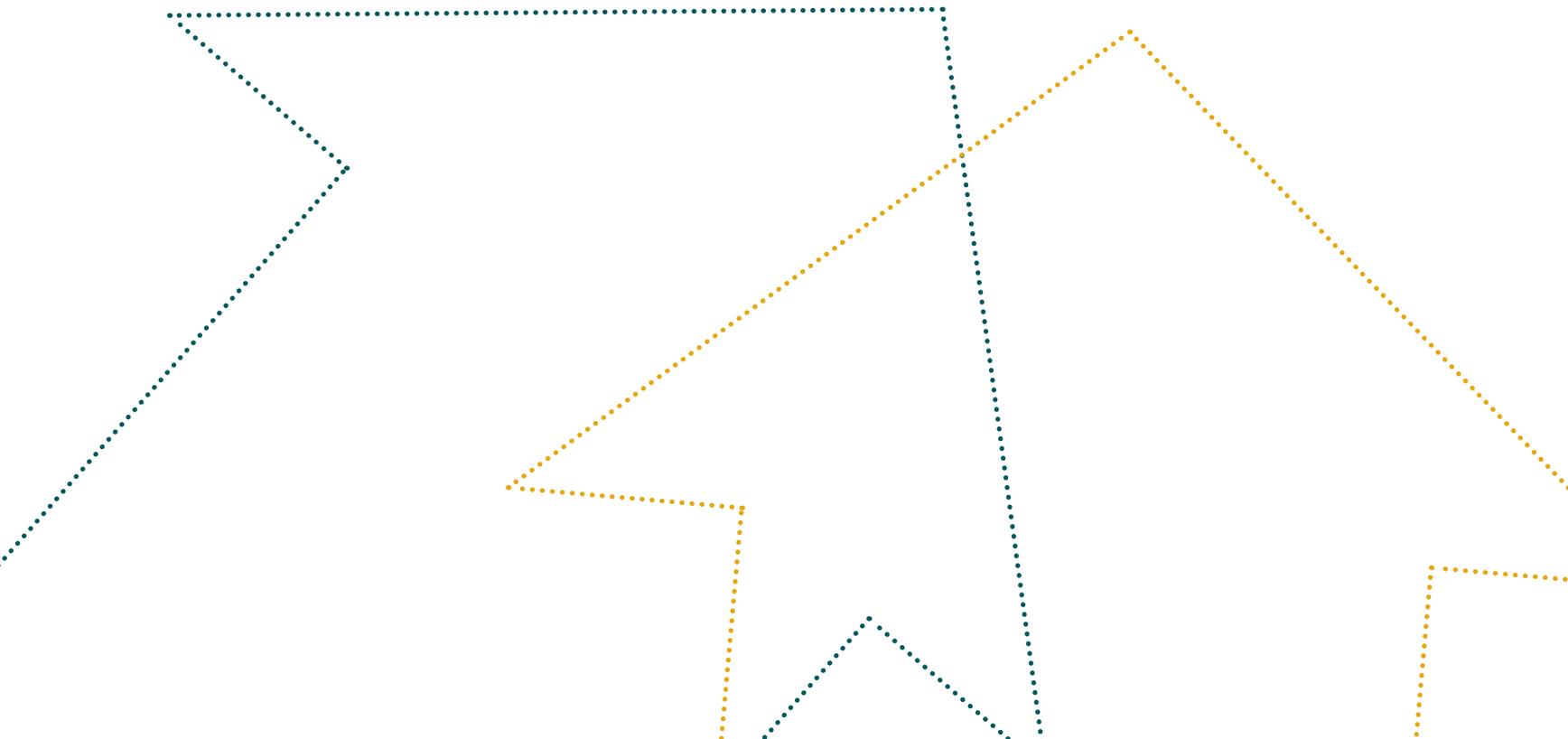


For more information about the English Learner Evaluation and Accountability Support project at WestEd, contact Robert Linqanti at 510.302.4235 or rlinqua@WestEd.org; or visit WestEd.org/eleas.



Improving
Instruction for
English Learners

TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP





>> A high school English teacher facing a classroom with many students whose first language is not English may hesitate to launch into Shakespeare. After all, iambic pentameter and arcane vocabulary are challenging for native English speakers. How could students learning English as a second language possibly “get it”?

But avoiding high-level academic content, say WestEd researchers, underestimates the abilities of most English learners and can impede the progress of an entire district.

Ruth McKenna, Director of Field Services for WestEd, has observed how raising the test scores of English learners is often among the key challenges districts encounter when pursuing school improvement. To help schools get an accurate picture of their students’ performance, McKenna spearheaded the creation of WestEd’s Local Accountability Professional Development Series (LAPDS) in 2003. The comprehensive program first guides districts in designing customized assessment tools to track student learning, then shows educators how to use those data to sharpen their instructional strategies and better meet state and federal benchmarks.

Once schools began examining student data, McKenna says, one finding became apparent in many of the sites working with LAPDS: “The performance of English learners seemed to be stuck at the basic level.” It was as if mainstream classroom teachers were hesitant to give those students more rigorous work, she says. But merely asking teachers to raise expectations was not the answer. Improving how they taught English learners required a more strategic approach.

Students in transition

The LAPDS model promotes increased collaboration among professionals, providing ongoing opportunities for classroom teachers and English learner specialists to share their expertise.

**continued from
previous page**

In many districts, English learners spend time in pullout instruction with specialists in English as a Second Language (ESL), then come into the general education classroom with a wide range of language abilities. Some may speak and comprehend English but have difficulty when asked to generalize concepts or compose a simple paragraph. A classroom teacher’s first task is to learn more about each student’s abilities.

Often “the receiving teacher’s expectation is that students who have spent significant time in ESL instruction are ready to be just like monolingual students in the class,” notes Marla Perez-Selles, Senior Research and Program Associate at WestEd and former principal of a bilingual school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The English learners “just jump in,” she says, “but often they can’t swim perfectly. They need additional support.”

Teachers might head down the wrong path when their English learners are unable to complete a task, such as writing an essay. In response, teachers may decide to lower the standards, says Perez-Selles. And because research indicates that it takes five to seven years for a student to acquire high levels of proficiency in a second language, “a

turn, drives the instructional techniques, Perez-Selles says.

When teachers are more aware of their students’ strengths and limitations, they can enhance lessons with the appropriate scaffolds, or temporary instructional supports, that teachers withdraw as students show more independent skills. These “scaffolds” might include sentence stems, paragraph templates, or word banks with important vocabulary or phrases. According to Perez-Selles, “The number, nature, and sequence of scaffolds should be informed by the learners’ language level and the goals of the lesson.”

Some textbooks include supplementary materials for English learners, but those materials may work for only some of these students. Teachers with LAPDS professional development learn to evaluate such materials and develop their own scaffolds, as needed for their specific English learners.

“Most teachers know what scaffolding is,” says Perez-Selles, “but

When teachers are more aware of their students’ **strengths and limitations**, they can enhance lessons with the appropriate scaffolds, or **temporary instructional supports**, that teachers withdraw as students show more independent skills.

teacher may underestimate the abilities of English learners who have only been here a few years and elect to simplify rather than augment and enrich tasks assigned to them.”

Building skills with scaffolds

To get a sharper image of students’ actual abilities and needs, LAPDS helps educators “look at the data first and figure out from the data where the learners are,” which, in

we're trying to help them think deliberately in ways that really target the English learner in a very close and very informed manner.”

Another kind of scaffolding can happen within an assessment itself, notes WestEd lead trainer Bob Rosenfeld. For example, math word problems can be carefully crafted to include definitions of key terms or background knowledge, making sure that students are being assessed for mastery of mathematical reasoning and/or calculation skills, rather than mastery of English or the cultural context.

Lesson planning

Quality instruction for all learners begins with clear goals and objectives, so that's where LAPDS professional development sessions begin. Drawing from the work of Jon Saphier,* LAPDS staff lead teachers through a set of different kinds of “teacher thinking,” including:

- ✱ **Coverage Thinking** — putting information “out there” with minimal checking for understanding;
- ✱ **Activity Thinking** — focusing on student tasks;
- ✱ **Involvement Thinking** — focusing on how to get students participating in small group or whole class activities;
- ✱ **Mastery Objectives Thinking** — making a strategic instructional plan based on clearly defined goals about what students should know and be able to do by the end of a lesson.

In a balanced curriculum, experts say, the first three types of thinking are in service to the fourth — Mastery Objectives. Therefore, LAPDS staff spend the bulk of their time helping teachers design lessons that meet this standard.

One hallmark of Mastery Objectives Thinking is having clear criteria for success. Teachers often communicate these criteria with a rubric or a “model” for all students to see. Rosenfeld recalls visiting an elementary school after teachers had asked for an extended workshop on modeling. In a second-grade classroom, he met an English learner who was very articulate about a piece of descriptive writing she was working on, so he asked, “When you are done, how will you know if you did it well enough?” The girl replied, “Oh, that's easy,” and she took him over to the bulletin board and pointed to examples of paragraphs the teacher was expecting. “See,” she showed him, “this



is what it's supposed to look like — and I have three descriptive words already.”

Perez-Selles says, “English learners benefit from having a clear example of what success looks like.” But, she adds, depending on their level of language proficiency, providing an example may not be enough to help them achieve mastery. English learners may also need clear and specific scaffolds on how to get there — how to achieve the steps that native English speakers may already have mastered.

Success across the district

Improved teacher clarity and carefully designed scaffolds give students who are English learners a better chance of mastering material in every classroom. But all students, especially those learning English as a second language, benefit from instruction guided by clear goals and objectives and appropriate scaffolding.

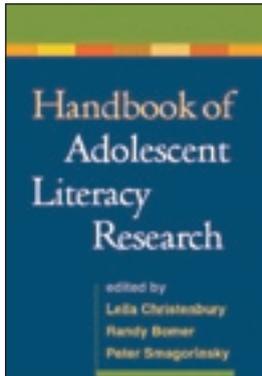
“The most important thing I see right now is that school improvement really is about lesson planning,” McKenna concludes. “The instruction students receive in classrooms today is not as rich as it could be, but in order for that to change, teachers have to deliberately plan more complex lessons — particularly for English learners — and that takes time. And it takes professional development.”



For more information, contact Joe Sassone at 520.247.7111 or jsasson@WestEd.org, Marla Perez-Selles at 781.481.1126 or mperezs@WestEd.org, Ruth McKenna at 360.472.1876 or rmckenn@WestEd.org, or Bob Rosenfeld at 415.717.5450 or rrosenf@WestEd.org; or visit WestEd.org/lapds.

* Saphier, J., Haley-Speca, M. A., and Gower, R. (2008). *The Skillful Teacher: Building Your Teaching Skills*. Acton, MA: Research for Better Teaching, Inc.

What's New & Useful



Handbook of Adolescent Literacy Research

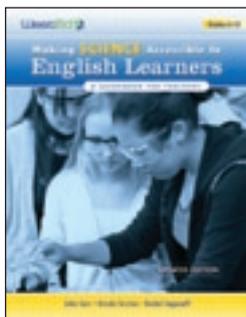
The first comprehensive research handbook of its kind, this volume showcases innovative approaches to understanding adolescent literacy learning in a variety of settings. Distinguished contributors, including WestEd's Ruth Schoenbach and Cynthia Greenleaf, examine how well adolescents are served by current instructional practices and highlight ways to translate research findings more effectively into sound teaching and policymaking.

Editors: Leila Christenbury, Randy Bomer, & Peter Smagorinsky

Publisher: Guilford Publications, 2008

Pages: 452 / Price: \$65

Product #: RE-08-0201 / ISBN: 978-1-59385-829-2



Making Science Accessible to English Learners: A Guidebook for Teachers, Updated Edition

This updated edition of the best-selling guidebook helps middle and high school science teachers reach English learners in their classrooms. The guide offers practical guidance, powerful and concrete strategies, and sample lesson scenarios that teachers can implement immediately in any science class. The volume is designed for teachers who have had limited preparation for teaching science in classrooms where some students are also English learners.

Authors: John Carr, Ursula Sexton, & Rachel Lagunoff

Publisher: WestEd, 2007

Pages: 132 / Price: \$24.95

Product #: CC-07-0101 / ISBN: 978-0-914409-40-3

Discussion Builders Posters Set: K-1, 2-3, and 4-8

By talking to learn, students also learn how to think. The sentence stems on these colorful posters provide students with a scaffold for voicing their ideas and questions, valuing others' contributions, and incorporating increasingly sophisticated thinking strategies. Accompanying quick-guides for teachers explain how to get students talking — and thinking — more conceptually in any subject. Powerful for English language learners and students of all achievement levels.



Authors: Carne Barnett-Clarke & Alma Ramirez

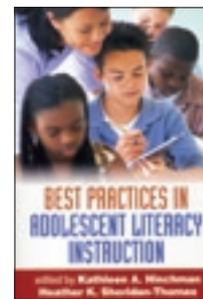
Publisher: WestEd, 2005

Price: \$38
(or \$14.95 per poster if purchased individually)

Product #: MATH-05-0401

Best Practices in Adolescent Literacy Instruction

From day-to-day learning activities to schoolwide goals, this engaging book reviews key topics in literacy instruction, grades 5-12, and provides research-based recommendations for practice. Leading scholars, including WestEd's Cynthia Greenleaf and Cindy Litman, present culturally responsive strategies for motivating adolescents, including English learners and struggling readers. Vivid case studies, thoughtful discussion questions and activities, and detailed ideas for program and lesson planning make this an indispensable classroom resource and professional development tool.



Editors: Kathleen A. Hinchman & Heather K. Sheridan-Thomas

Publisher: Guilford Press, 2008

Pages: 360 / Price: \$33

Product #: RE-08-0101 / ISBN: 978-1-59385-692-2

Product Order Form

HOW TO ORDER: Mail this form and prepayment by check or international money order to: WestEd Publications Center, 730 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107-1242. You may also fax this product order form, with a purchase order, to 415.512.2024, attention Publications Center.

For more information, contact the Publications Center toll-free at (888) 293-7833, or customerservice@WestEd.org. Hours: weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. PST.

WestEd Services Help English Learners Succeed, preK–12

Need help boosting the academic achievement of English learners? Check out our evidence-based services targeting preschoolers to adolescents.

- English Learners, Language, and Literacy in the Early Years (ELLLEY) seminars weave together research and strategies for reaching preschool English learners.
 >> more information online: WestEd.org/ellley
- English Learners and the Language Arts (ELLA) institutes increase the rigor of instruction for K–8 English learners.
 >> more information online: WestEd.org/ella
- Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) institutes help with educating adolescent English learners.
 >> more information online: WestEd.org/qtel

Doing What Works website >> <http://dww.ed.gov>

Launched in 2007 by the U.S. Department of Education, the Doing What Works site provides research-based information and real-life examples to help educators make good decisions and implement practices effectively. Focusing on priority topics, including literacy instruction for English learners, the site offers “practices in action” — examples of schools from across the country implementing research-based activities in a variety of settings. It provides educators with tools and multimedia presentations of these practices and describes key actions to implement them.



Name	
Position	
Institution	
Address	
City	
State	Zip
Email	
Phone	

Product Number	Title	Quantity	Price	Total

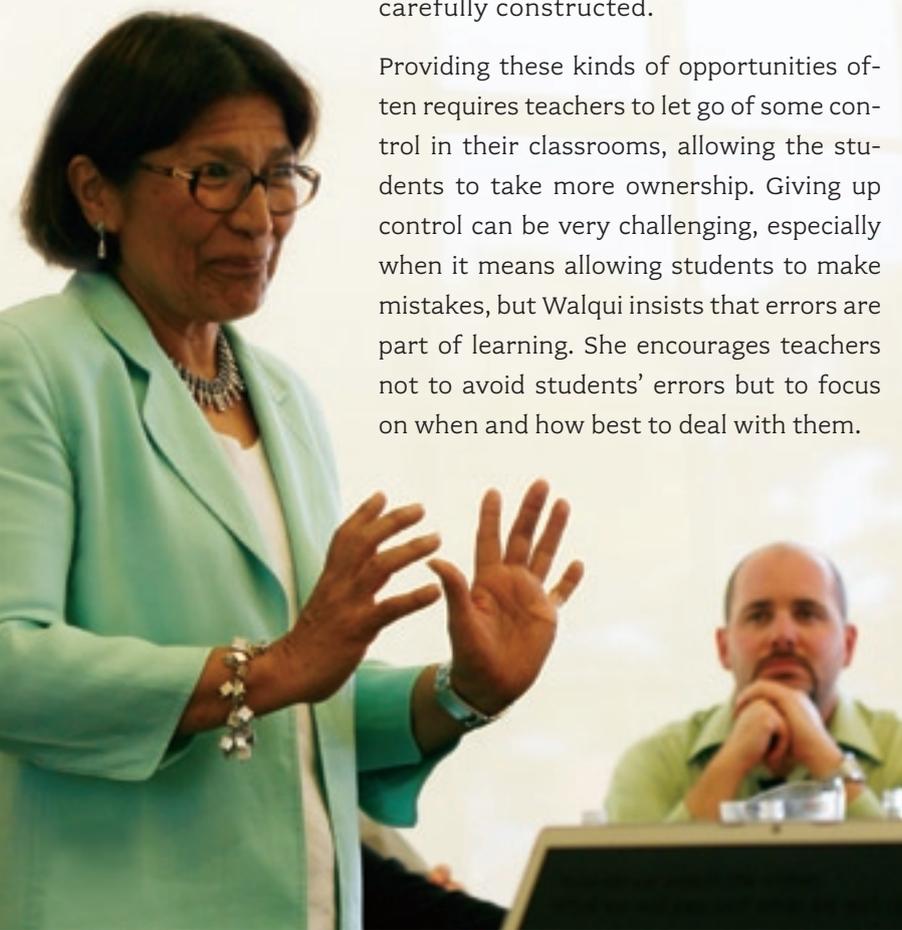
Prices subject to change without notice. Availability limited to stock on hand.
 Priority Code: RD101

Subtotal \$ _____
 Local Tax \$ _____
 (required for CA, AZ, MA, DC)
 Shipping/Handling \$ _____
 (10% of subtotal; \$6.50 minimum)
 Total Enclosed \$ _____

For faster service,
 visit our website:
WestEd.org/products



of nine webinars to present the latest English learners.



continued from page 5

participate in activities teachers have carefully constructed.

Providing these kinds of opportunities often requires teachers to let go of some control in their classrooms, allowing the students to take more ownership. Giving up control can be very challenging, especially when it means allowing students to make mistakes, but Walqui insists that errors are part of learning. She encourages teachers not to avoid students' errors but to focus on when and how best to deal with them.

Multiple types of scaffolding. At the core of QTEL professional development is a focus on classroom instruction. QTEL helps educators understand and know how to provide the kind of “quality interactions” in the classroom that are essential to learning. In particular, QTEL helps teachers learn and implement multiple kinds of scaffolding to make content more accessible for students who are still acquiring English.

The idea behind scaffolding is to foster student autonomy, says Walqui — whatever English learners can do with support from others today, they will be able to do alone tomorrow. And as our schools serve more EL students, knowing how to help them develop into independent, high-achieving learners will become an important goal for all educators.



For more information, contact Aída Walqui at 415.615.3262 or awalqui@WestEd.org; or visit WestEd.org/qtel.



730 Harrison Street | San Francisco, California 94107-1242

Address service requested

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
P A I D
Brisbane, CA
94005
Permit No. 83