

*A Resource Guide for  
Low Incidence ELL Districts*

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT &  
EDUCATOR SUPPORTS**

*Connecticut Administrators of Programs for English Language Learners*

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This resource guide was developed by members of Connecticut Administrators of Programs for English Language Learners (CAPELL) with support from the New England Comprehensive Center (NECC). It was developed to address the needs of districts that are just beginning to see the emergence of an English Language Learner (ELL) population in their district or who have very low numbers of ELLs.

The guide is an introduction that highlights key research- or evidence-based practices and is not meant to provide detailed explanations. It provides beginning answers to frequently asked questions, many of which were derived from a survey of CAPELL members from low incidence ELL districts. For more detailed information, the guide includes the references on which most of the answers are based. Other suggestions come from promising practices cited by CAPELL members.

*This is Document 2 in the series A Resource Guide for Low Incidence ELL Districts.*

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Document 3: Family, School, and Community Involvement

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## INITIATING AND PROMOTING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### ***Q 1: How can low incidence districts effectively use resources to provide appropriate professional development focusing on the needs of English Language Learners?***

As districts begin to address the emergence of an English Language Learner population, they will need to consider how to allocate and use limited resources to provide appropriate professional development such as assigning various *personnel* who will take responsibility for leading the planning and delivery; freeing up *time* during the school day or outside the school day for participating in professional development; and providing *funding* for costs such as presenters, materials, technology, or location, as needed.

The following ideas were suggested by CAPELL members:

- Contact the CT State Department of Education for technical assistance.
- Identify key stakeholders in the district who belong in the dialogue to move the work forward.
- Determine who will be the person(s) in charge of overseeing the professional development initiatives at the district level.
- Initiate a meeting of appropriate parties from the state and district and including key stakeholders from the community to form a planning group.
- Collaborate with other programs affecting ELLs, such as Title I, in using funds from both programs for substitutes who can then free up teachers of ELLs to work together during school time. During such times, teachers can work together to discuss student work, design modifications for lessons, as well as generate and share ideas, strategies, and resources they have found effective in working with ELLs.
- Network with other district level administrators to see how others have leveraged resources to provide professional development opportunities in their districts and/or schools.
- Partner with another low incidence district to pool resources.
- Explore available resources such as funding sources, professional development agencies, federally-funded in-service teacher training programs, professional networks of educators working with ELLs, or high incidence districts who may have the capacity to provide services or are willing to collaborate.

An excellent resource to help your district develop initial professional development trainings is the publication from the Center on Instruction: *Language Development for English Language Learners Professional Development Module (K-12)*. This professional development module, intended for state and district leaders, provides background information on language development, language assessment, and K-12 vocabulary and academic language instruction. It is designed to be used as a four-hour train-the-trainer session but materials in the Facilitator's Guide also can be used as a study group tool with other ELL professionals or as a self-study guide. It comes as a Facilitator's Guide and PowerPoint presentation.

#### *References:*

1. Rivera, et al. 2009.

## ***Q 2: How can districts find time to provide district-wide professional development?***

Maximize opportunities by coordinating with already-scheduled district professional development days and other district-wide meetings. The following suggestions were provided by CAPELL members:

- Offer to host a segment of the agenda at a regularly scheduled professional development event. For example:
  - Organize a panel that includes a district administrator, an ESL teacher, a general education/content area teacher, and a special education teacher speaking about their respective roles, challenges, and successes in collaborating on the education of ELLs. By providing this array of perspectives, participants will be exposed to a comprehensive and integrated picture of the educational needs of ELLs.
  - Highlight frequently asked questions and answers to dispel the myths that many educators unfamiliar with the ELL population still have.
- Plan a focused presentation for a break-out session at a district conference, followed by table discussions facilitated by ELL teachers.
- Arrange for a forum at a regularly scheduled meeting of district administrators to familiarize them with the federal and state mandates involving the education of ELLs as a start to ongoing training. Invite CT State Department of Education staff responsible for ESL and Bilingual Education to present or help identify a presenter.

## ***Q 3: How can schools find the time and resources to provide school-based professional development?***

In addition to using some of the same strategies mentioned in Q2, other ideas suggested by CAPELL members are the following:

- Use common planning times to bring together general education and special education teachers, as well as specialists who work with ELLs in their classrooms to share challenges and learn strategies that are working.
- Plan a break-out session at faculty meetings focusing on such topics as the profile of ELL students at the school, data on ELL performance, and evidence-based instructional practices.
- Use part of an early release day to align work among teachers who share the same ELL students.
- Partner with another low incidence school either within your district or in another district.
- Invite certified ESL teachers as well as general education teachers with experience working with ELLs from a high incidence district to offer workshops, demonstrate effective practices, and facilitate discussions.
- Ensure that teachers, ESL as well as general education teachers, who participate in out-of-school trainings on effective strategies for ELLs, commit to sharing what they have learned. This approach helps build capacity within the school and saves on the expense of repeat trainings with external presenters.

#### ***Q 4: How can districts and schools decide whether to send staff for training and which staff members need training?***

Although the responsibility for the education of ELLs belongs to *every* educator, it is unlikely that there will be sufficient resources to involve all staff in training that is offered outside the school or district.

- Prioritize the selection of your audience by urgency, beginning with ESL teachers and general education teachers requesting assistance with their current students.
- Consider the match between the professional development that is being offered and the needs of your student population as well as the needs of the prospective participants.

#### ***References:***

1. Hamayan & Freeman, 2005, pp. 108-109.

## **ENGAGING DISTRICT/SCHOOL PERSONNEL**

#### ***Q5: How can we get the need for in-service training recognized and target audiences engaged?***

A challenge often faced by low incidence ELL districts is generating and maintaining support for professional development for administrators and teachers on the educational needs of ELLs. Below are suggestions from the literature and from CAPELL members on ways to engage different audiences.

- Survey your target audiences to determine what their respective priority needs are and use these responses to make the case for the need.
  - Use the information from the survey (needs assessment) to identify the topics that are uppermost in people's minds.
- Begin by offering sessions that focus on immediate needs that will also have the most impact on improving the education of ELLs (e.g., increasing general education/content area teachers' understanding of second language development and making the connection to "best practices" and "proven strategies" in the classroom).
- Make sure that professional development on the education of ELLs is connected to the goals and current professional development initiatives of the district/school. For example, if the professional development focus is formative assessment include information or a focused session on formative assessment strategies for ELL students.
- Convene a professional development team that includes the district ELL coordinator or ESL teacher, general education/content area teachers, special education teachers, specialists such as guidance personnel, and a representative of the CT State Department of Education, if possible, to discuss and clarify mutual expectations in using the CT ELL Framework and the TESOL standards.
- Build support for ongoing professional development by demonstrating that the professional development helps improve student learning. Disseminate results to teachers, administrators, parents, students, volunteers, and community stakeholders to gain their support.

- Call on existing expertise from trusted resources, such as administrators and ESL teachers from other districts similar to your own, or staff developers from your RESC or from higher education. Engage experienced teachers (perhaps from high incidence districts) to present or facilitate a session or to field questions.
- Invite experienced teachers to demonstrate the strategies they use in their classrooms or organize observational visits to classrooms taught by experienced teachers.
- Find ways to integrate classroom planning and teaching with professional development; get staff working in teams, creating a natural “lab” for teachers to learn from each other and support each other toward excellence.

**References:**

1. Hamayan & Freeman, 2006, pp.164-165.
2. Estrada & Hamilton, pp.180-182, “How can administrators sustain and extend teachers’ professional development regarding English language learners?” In Hamayan & Freeman, 2006.
3. Hassell, 1999.

***Q 6: How does one open the minds of students and staff who misunderstand ELLs?***

Develop cultural competency through training and activities with staff and students to open doors to new understandings and appreciation of the diverse backgrounds of the school community. Explore multiple perspectives to enhance understanding, appreciate struggles and successes, and find helpful new resources. Exposing staff to different perspectives can be an eye-opener for everyone and especially for those whose life experiences may have been limited primarily to a single language and culture.

- Invite a presenter or facilitator to provide a series of sessions on strategies that foster cultural responsiveness in the classroom. Focus on strategies that incorporate knowledge and information from the heritage of the various students and teachers at the school into the curriculum to increase understanding across cultures, validate the resources that different cultures bring, and affirm the value of students’ backgrounds.
- Help your staff set up regular study groups to learn more about the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of your students and staff.
- Facilitate student “speak outs” (i.e., opportunities at which students can speak about their experiences) to discuss common topics from various cultural perspectives as a tool for understanding.

**Resources;**

1. Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005.
2. National Association for Multicultural Education

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTENT

### ***Q 7: What do general education/content area teachers who work with ELLs need to know?***

General education/content area teachers who work with ELLs need exposure and increasing skill development in the following areas:

- Understanding the process of second language development (in particular, the development of English-as-a-second-language) and its implications for effective instructional practice.
- Teaching students at different levels of English language proficiency by differentiating instruction.
- Exploring cultural understandings needed to match the needs of diverse learners.
- Using proven or promising instructional practices and appropriate assessment strategies for ELLs such as the use of sheltered instructional methodologies when teaching content.
- Learning how to elicit students' prior knowledge and build on it.
- Engaging in inquiry on who the students are and the implications of their unique experiences for placement into programs and for classroom instruction.

#### ***References:***

1. Coady, Hamann, et al., 2003.
2. Francis, Rivera, et al., 2006 a.
3. Francis, Rivera, et al., 2006 b

### ***Q 8: What are some key strategies for content area instruction that should be the focus of professional development for content area teachers?***

Recommended strategies for content area teachers working with ELLs are the following:

- Create classroom opportunities for explicit and intensive development of sophisticated vocabulary and academic language.
- Focus on oral language development as well as social language communication skills.
- Use sheltered instruction strategies and techniques to make content more comprehensible to ELL students and promote academic English language development. One such program is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), a research based model that can be used effectively in a general education classroom with all students.
- Provide numerous opportunities that expose students to a variety of print materials and other resources.
- Teach strategies on how to analyze challenging text.
- Provide guided opportunities to engage in structured academic talk as well as in writing for academic purposes.
- Provide opportunities for independent reading with structure and purpose.

#### ***References:***

1. Torgesen, et al. (2007)



***Q 9: What strategies can we use to encourage teachers to use the Connecticut State Department of Education ELL Framework in alignment with TESOL standards in designing curriculum?***

Knowing the reality of the students – their educational history and cultural context – can help teachers discover the need to be attentive not only to the content of their instruction and to the CT ELL Framework and TESOL standards but also to how the curriculum needs to be modified to incorporate the learning demands of their ELL students.

- Review the CT ELL Framework and do a crosswalk with the TESOL standards to understand how the two complement and support each other and how the curriculum may need to be modified to include opportunities to meet these standards.
- Use student-focused scenarios to understand how the specifics of their educational histories and levels of language proficiency in both their home language and English impact the kinds of modifications that are needed; use these scenarios to practice developing modifications that will make the curriculum more accessible.

References:

1. CT ELL Framework
2. TESOL PreK-12 ESL Standards

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- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) *ESL Standards for PreK-12 Students*  
Available online at: [http://www.tesol.org/s\\_tesol/seccss.asp?cid=113&did=1583](http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?cid=113&did=1583)
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## RESOURCES

### **Doing What Works, Teaching Literacy in English to K-5 English Learners**

[http://dww.ed.gov/topic/?T\\_ID=13](http://dww.ed.gov/topic/?T_ID=13)

Doing What Works (DWW) is a website sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The goal of DWW is to create an online library of resources that may help teachers, schools, districts, states and technical assistance providers implement research-based instructional practice. The “Teaching Literacy in English to K-5 English Learners” provides multimedia presentations on the following recommended strategies: screen and monitor progress, provide reading interventions, teach vocabulary, develop academic English, and schedule peer learning.

### **Center on Instruction, English Language Learning Strand**

[http://www.centeroninstruction.org/resources.cfm?category=ell&subcategory=&grade\\_start=&grade\\_end](http://www.centeroninstruction.org/resources.cfm?category=ell&subcategory=&grade_start=&grade_end)

The Center on Instruction provides materials and resources to improve instruction and intervention for **English Language Learners**, including exemplary delivery models and professional development for teachers in content and language areas.

### **National Association for Multicultural Education: Advocates for Educational Equity and Social Justice**

<http://nameorg.org/>

The National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) is a volunteer organization that brings together individuals and groups with an interest in multicultural education from all levels of education, different academic disciplines and from diverse educational institutions and occupations. NAME hosts national and international conferences, provides leadership in national and state dialogues on equity, diversity and multicultural education and develops publications.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Academic language (Academic talk):** Language used in the learning of academic subject matter in a formal schooling context; aspects of language strongly associated with literacy and academic achievement, including specific academic terms or technical language, and speech registers related to each field of study. ([http://www.tesol.org/s\\_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=95&DID=1565](http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=95&DID=1565))

**CAPELL: Mission Statement:** The Connecticut Administrators of Programs for English Language Learners (CAPELL) is committed to enhancing the educational experiences of English Language Learners (ELLs) by promoting cross-cultural awareness, sensitivity, parity, inclusion, and the improvement of instruction and curricula. It advocates equal educational opportunities for English Language Learners (ELLs). (<http://www.capellct.org/>)

**Connecticut ELL Framework:** The Framework for English Language Learners (ELL) is inherently different from other content areas, in that grade-level performance is based upon degree of English language proficiency. Students enter programs at every grade level and there is no necessary connection between their grade level and their English proficiency. Furthermore, an individual student's proficiency level may vary among the four skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It should be understood, therefore, that although the structure of this document is based upon that of other curriculum frameworks with grade-level divisions, performance standards from lower grades will need to be addressed for ELL students in upper grades. In other words, the document is structured so that, vertically, you can clearly see the progression from a beginning, intermediate and advanced level. The progression horizontally includes indicators that may appear to be repeated from one grade level to the next. This emphasizes that ELL students must master these indicators, regardless of the grade at which they begin their education as an ELL, so that they can move from beginning to advanced levels of proficiency. (<http://www.capellct.org/>)

**Cultural responsiveness:** Use of the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students. (<http://www.intime.uni.edu/multiculture/curriculum/culture/teaching.htm>)

**English Language Learners (ELL):** National-origin-minority students who are limited-English proficient (US Department of Education). Students whose first language is not English and who are in the process of learning English. (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/>) The term English language learner (ELL) has generally replaced the term Limited English Proficient (LEP) used by the federal government to identify those students who have insufficient English to succeed in English-only classrooms.

**English as a Second Language (ESL); English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL):** An educational approach in which English language learners are instructed in the use of the English language. Their instruction is based on a special curriculum that typically involves little or no use of the native language, focuses on language (as opposed to content) and is usually taught during specific school periods. For the rest of the school day, students may be placed in mainstream classrooms, an immersion program, or a bilingual education program. Every bilingual education program has an ESL component. (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/>)

**Home language:** The language student speaks at home, with family. (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/>)

**Language proficiency:** Refers to the ability to communicate or understand thoughts or ideas effectively through a language's grammatical system and vocabulary, using its sounds or written symbols. Language proficiency is composed of oral (listening and speaking) and written (reading and writing) components as well as academic and non-academic language. (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/>)

**Sheltered Instruction:** An instructional approach used to make academic instruction in English understandable to English language learners to help them acquire proficiency in English while at the same time learning in the content areas. Sheltered English instruction differs from ESL in that English is not taught as a language with a focus on learning the language. Rather, content knowledge and skills are the goals. In the sheltered classroom, teachers use simplified language, physical activities, visual aids, and the environment to teach vocabulary for concept development in mathematics, science, social studies and other subjects. (<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/>)

**The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP):** A research-based and validated instructional model developed by researchers Jana Echevarria, Mary Ellen Vogt, and Deborah Short. It provides a framework for planning and delivering instruction in content areas such as science, history, and mathematics to limited-English proficient students. The goal of *SIOP* is to help teachers integrate academic language development into their lessons, allowing students to learn and practice English as it is used in the context of school, including the vocabulary used in textbooks and lectures in each academic discipline. Using this planning framework, teachers modify the way they teach so that the language they use to explain concepts and information is comprehensible to these students. The *SIOP* planning and observation framework covers eight areas of instruction: preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice and application, lesson delivery, review and assessment. In most cases, teachers receive professional development on the *SIOP Model* before using it to modify their lessons. ([http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/english\\_lang/siop/index.asp](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/english_lang/siop/index.asp))

**TESOL Standards:** *PreK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards*, published in 2006, that provide a starting point for developing effective and equitable education for ESOL students. These standards were developed to complement the discipline-specific standards created by other professional associations and groups. The TESOL standards stand apart because they acknowledge the central role of language in the achievement of content and highlight the learning styles and particular instructional and assessment needs of learners who are still developing proficiency in English. ([http://www.tesol.org/s\\_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=95&DID=1565](http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/seccss.asp?CID=95&DID=1565))