

Connecticut Administrators of Programs for English Language Learners (CAPELL)

Low Incidence Work Group

*With Assistance from the New England
Comprehensive Center*

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Strategies and Resources for ELL Low Incidence Districts: A practitioner's guide

Audience: Administrators of districts with emerging or low incidence ELL populations.



Purposes of Guide:

- To provide beginning answers to frequently asked questions;
- To provide references and links to resources that elaborate on the ideas and practices presented in this document; and
- To serve as a repository for promising practices within CT districts.



Assumptions Underlying this Guide:

Assumption #1:

ELL low incidence districts do not have a large enough population of ELLs who speak the same language that they would be eligible to create a transitional or dual language bilingual program.



Assumption #2:

This guide is simply an introduction that highlights key evidence-based practices and is not meant to provide detailed explanations. For more information, we are including the references which the reader can then pursue on their own.



Assumption #3:

This is a “living document” that will continue to be updated, especially with CT examples of promising practices.



General guiding principles for the development and implementation of educationally sound programs that result in the positive achievement of ELLs:

- There is clear articulation of the linguistic and academic goals for English language learners;
- Programs are research- and evidence-based, while taking into consideration local resources and constraints;



- There is careful planning based on an assessment of the ELL student population's strengths and needs that results in program coherence; and
- There is school-wide support, affirmation, and incorporation of the ELL student population's linguistic and cultural heritages irrespective of the linguistic model/approach used.



Three Topics:

- Instructional Issues
- Professional Development and Staffing
- Family and Community Engagement



Topic 1: Instructional Issues

Examining six categories:

1. Getting Started

2. Enrollment and Identification

3. Placement/Services

4. Research and Evidenced-based
Instructional Practices

5. Assessment

6. Exit Criteria



Examples of Instructional Q & A:

*How can we find instructional materials for skills and content learning?
(Category 4)*

- Use your colleagues for resources and recommendations
- Check your school library for ELL resources about how language is acquired and what are recommended instructional and assessment strategies.



- Check the Internet. The Internet provides many multilingual resources some at no cost while others may require a reasonable membership fee; other sites feature materials that can be purchased but allow you to review them; identify ones that provide quality materials and share with teachers, parents, and students.

Resource:

De Jong, p.90; Nguyen, p.92; Hilliard & Hamayan, 94 in Hamayan and Freeman



How do we create conditions that foster effective teaching and rapid learning for adolescent new comers? (Category 4)

- Group students heterogeneously. **Effective programs recognize that students often learn language among their peers with different levels of oral language proficiency; these programs provide structured opportunities for newcomers to work collaboratively with more advanced ELLs and native speakers.**



- Provide extended instructional time. A strong research base supports the notion that, provided instruction is deemed effective, greater time on task is essential to the success of students performing below grade level, ELL's in particular.
- Coordinate efforts around newcomer programs, programs for advanced ELLs and mainstream classes.
- Target resources to those areas most likely to have an impact on student achievement.



Resource:

Francis, et al., 2006, book 2 of 3, (p. 26-30)

Topic 2: PD & Staffing

Examining three categories:

1. Federal and State directives on professional development for the educators of ELLs
2. District considerations for programming and implementation of effective professional development practices?
3. Best practices for implementation of effective professional practices on the school level?



Examples of Prof Dev Q&A

*How can we effectively allocate resources for appropriate professional development?
(Category 2)*

- It is possible that Title III funds could be used to cover substitutes in order to make it more palatable for principals to send their teachers to the PD.



Examples of Prof Dev Q&A

What do content area teachers need to know? (Category 3)

Answer source: "Practical Guidelines for the Education of ELLs: Research-Based Recommendations for Instruction and Academic Interventions" by David Francis, Mabel Rivera, Nonie Lesaux, Michael Kieffer, and Hector Rivera, 2006.



Here are the six major conclusions:

1. ELLs need early, explicit, and intensive instruction in phonological awareness and phonics in order to build decoding skills.
2. K-12 classrooms must increase opportunities for ELLs to develop sophisticated vocabulary knowledge.
3. K-12 classrooms must equip ELLs with strategies and knowledge to comprehend and analyze challenging narrative and expository texts.



4. There must be a focus on vocabulary and exposure to print.
5. ELLs students need significant opportunities to engage in structured, academic talk.
6. Independent reading is only beneficial when it is structured and purposeful, and there is a good reader-text match.



Topic 3: Family and Community Engagement

Examining six categories:

1. Parenting: Establishing home environments to support children as students
2. Communicating: Designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications
3. Volunteering: Recruiting and organizing parent help and support



4. Learning at Home: Strategies to provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home
5. Decision Making: Strategies to include parents in school decisions
6. Collaborating with the Community: Strategies for identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development



Examples of Family & Community Q&A

How can schools design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and the children's progress? (Category 2)



Strategy 1: Broaden opportunities for parent interaction

- *As quoted from a REL-NEI Issues and Answers report from June 2008, “it is necessary to broaden opportunities for interacting with parents. The principal of a school in rural Virginia greatly increased the participation of Hispanic parents through a series of parent meetings, conducted in Spanish, on the importance of parents’ involvement in their children’s education.”*



Strategy 2: Form relationships with community organizations

- One way of communicating with parents who have a limited command of the English language is by establishing working relationships with community organizations that provide services to specific ethnic or language groups that the parents are a part of and distributing materials through these agencies and/or having school meetings in the offices of these organizations.



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