English Learners Program Design

English learners require instructional approaches that change as students develop greater proficiency and become independent learners. To properly implement selected practices, teachers, coaches and site administrators should be provided with adequate professional development, establish inter-rater reliability and a developed rubric for each practice.

The factor that most impacts student achievement is teacher preparation and effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2000.) However, school leaders have come to terms with the fact that more and more professional development does not necessarily translate into teacher effectiveness. There are other factors at play. As various education researchers indicate, English learners (EL) require instructional approaches that change as the students develop greater English proficiency and become more independent learners.

Thus, effective instruction for English learners starts with an effective program design. The program, in this context, encompasses the pedagogy, instructional practices, and expected outcomes for ELs during the entire school day. That is to say that the design incorporates a coherent and consistent pedagogical approach to core content instruction, English language development, and intervention services. Since EL's are not a monolithic group and have a variety of linguistic and academic needs, one-size-fits-all programs are not effective. EL's must first be grouped by linguistic and academic proficiency in order to receive and participate in effective instruction (Snow, & Katz, 2010). Each program

design, then, addresses a separate set of developmentally-appropriate linguistic and academic needs (Dolson & Burnham-Massey, 2011).

For example, ELs in Kindergarten should be placed in a program that includes the following:

- Designated English language development (ELD) instruction (30 to 45 minutes daily) (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010)

- English language arts (ELA) scaffolded through integrated ELD (California English Language Arts / English Language Development Framework, 2010)

- Social science aligned to ELA instruction with integrated ELD (Snow, & Katz, 2010; Echevarria & Short, 2010)

- Math and science through problem-based, collaborative learning (Walqui, 2000; Echevarria & Short, 2010)

- The same scaffolding techniques and language routines used throughout the core

> Since EL's are not a monolithic group and have a variety of linguistic and academic needs, one-size-fits-all programs are not effective. EL's must first be grouped by linguistic and academic proficiency in order to receive and participate in effective instruction.
>
> Snow, M.A., and Katz, A., 2010

Secondary EL Educational Programs in CA

Period	Sheltered 4 years or less	SDAIE** 5+ years	Mainstream
1	ELD	ELA SDAIE	ELA
2	ELD	Elective	Elective
3	Math SEI*	Math SDAIE	Math
4	Science SEI	Science SDAIE	Science
5	Social Science SEI	Social Science SDAIE	Social Science
6	PE	PE	PE
ELD level	1-2	3	4-5

* SEI: Structured English Immersion
**SDAIE: Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English

An EL in upper elementary grades with intermediate English proficiency should be placed in a qualitatively different program. Language scaffolding should be less frequent and allow for greater independence but should still address the missing ELD standards (language skills) that ELs have not yet mastered. There should be frequent use of structured student interactions with a focus on targeted academic language (frames, functional academic terms, content specific jargon, etc).

An EL at the secondary level should be placed in a set of courses with a coherent instructional approach that is specifically designed to address the linguistic needs of the student throughout all core content areas. However, all students should be expected to perform at grade level. This requires a significant amount of scaffolding content for linguistic access (Echevarria & Short, 2010).

In an ideal classroom,

- The teacher would differentiate for academic and linguistic needs.

- All students would regularly participate in structured interactions.

- Learning would be student-centered, engaging, challenging, and meaningful.

— (Walqui, A., 2000)

In such a classroom, ELs at intermediate English proficiency would thrive by being placed in heterogeneous classes with native English speakers and fluent former ELs in order to develop greater proficiency and automaticity in using rigorous, grade-level academic language (Dolson & Burnham-Massey, 2011.) However, most ELs are not placed in ideal classrooms; instruction is not appropriately scaffolded or differentiated. Thus, it is often necessary to place ELs homogeneously in order to ensure that their needs will be met. This placement must be based on multiple objective criteria in order to ensure accurate targeting of linguistic and instructional needs. Based upon the program's pedagogical needs, teachers need

to receive appropriate professional development, support, and instructional coaching in the use of effective strategies.

English language development (ELD, ESL, ENL, etc.)

Assessments

ELs must acquire English as quickly and effectively as possible. Title III accountability requires that states annually assess English proficiency gains. Because scores are usually received postmortem, schools must implement on-going ELD assessments to monitor growth and adjust instruction and interventions as needed.

These assessments must provide quantifiable information on proficiency gains in each of the four domains of language. Core content teachers should be aware of the level of proficiency of each of their ELs in each domain. It is only thus that core content instruction can be accurately targeted to address the linguistic needs of ELs.

ELD assessment scores should be correlated to the annual state assessment in order to establish and meet interim ELD growth targets that ensure the school and school district will meet accountability targets. At the secondary level, these scores should be analyzed for placement patterns, establish rigorous placement criteria, and enable program evaluation.

Instruction

Newcomer ELs must receive a separate period of ELD-only instruction which focuses on the language skills that native English speakers already posses and which are not explicitly taught in mainstream ELA instruction. Because this period of instruction must provide for ELs opportunities for safe and frequent language interactions, CA does not normally allow non-EL students to participate in ELD instruction. Thus, these other students are placed in other classrooms for enrichment, instructional centers, or with aides to work on non-core activities.

Standards

ELD standards should be based on a developmental approach to English acquisition. In other words, students grow through clearly defined levels of proficiency in each domain of language (Snow & Katz, 2010; Dutro & Kinsella, 2010.) Skills are clearly articulated and provide classroom teachers with an understanding of the nuances of language skills students posses and those they still need to develop. These standards should be based entirely around language and not activities within a core content classroom.

Core content teachers should be able to use information regarding an EL's level of proficiency in each domain and reference the ELD standards to ascertain which linguistics skills need to be explicitly taught and scaffolded. At the same time, teachers should follow the same process to identify those linguistic skills that students have mastered and should be used as leverage to provide access to new

information. Both of these approaches should be interwoven within a variety of instructional and learning activities according to the linguistic demands of the lesson (e.g. reading complex text, critical questioning, summary writing, presentation, etc.)

Structured English Immersion (SEI)

For well-educated newcomer and long-term ELs, the instructional program should present the core content as closely as possible to the grade-level performance expected for native English speakers using the same textbooks and summative assessments (Dolson & Burnham-Massey, 2011.) Effective instruction then meets the students where they are linguistically—providing scaffolding and language frames as needed to allow students to access and comprehend concepts and information as well as to participate meaningfully in learning activities. See Attachment A for an example of an appropriate pedagogical approach.

Formative assessments should be based on rubrics which are aligned to the ELD standards. That is to say, they should allow for different levels of response aligned to the linguistic ability of each student (Snow & Katz, 2010; Dutro & Kinsella, 2010.) Results of summative assessments should be considered in light of this same linguistic lens. However, academic gains of ELs should be frequently monitored in comparison to native English speakers to ensure that academic gaps are fully addressed within a reasonable period of time according to the program design and other factors (level of English proficiency at U.S. school entry, time in U.S. schools, level of primary language literacy, etc.) (Dolson & Burnham-Massey, 2011).

Mainstream instruction

The linguistic patterns of long-term English learners, struggling students, African-American students, and many

low-income students are very similar. Namely, their discourse pattern calcifies around social language (Montaño-Harmon, 1993.) To avoid and/or remedy this, a school should adopt a school-wide approach to implement effective instructional practices in all classrooms. These practices can be culled from existing research on effective instruction (Marzano[1], Fisher[2], Walqui[3], Dagget[4], etc.).

In particular, selected practices should focus on academic language development, frequent student interactions, checks for comprehension, and engaging, real-world issues and problem-solving.

To systematize the use of these practices, a common instruction protocol (see Attachment B) should be developed that allows an observer to note degree of implementation of the practice and provide timely feedback to the teacher (Fink & Markholt, 2011.) Conducted in an online format, such observations can be archived in a database for analysis: frequency of use of strategies, subject area observed, EL program type, period, etc. This information can provide insight into existing practices and identify areas of need, allowing administrators and other school leaders to provide professional development and support with precision.

A common instruction protocol can be used by:

- Classroom teachers to plan instruction and/or conduct peer observations as part of lesson study

- Instructional coaches

- Resource teachers

- Site administrators, etc.

To properly implement the selected practices, teachers, coaches, and site administrators should be provided with adequate professional development, establish inter rater reliability, and develop a rubric for each practice.

Conclusion: Effective EL Instruction

A defined, research-based program of instruction for English learners includes a related pedagogical approach for core content instruction. It is important to articulate this program and its pedagogy through a collaborative process that involves ELD and core content teachers, school administrators, and other site leaders. Clearly, the program's pedagogy must be consistently implemented across ELD and the core (Genesee & Riches, 2006) and needs to include a variety of instructional strategies designed for English learners across the curriculum as well as explicitly teach linguistic skills as a means of providing access and participation in the core academic standards (Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006).

Implications of the Common Core Standards

The demands of the Common Core Standards (CCS) necessitate changes in instructional practice—moving away from teacher-centered instruction towards student-centered learning. Of course, for teachers there are added pressures beyond implementing CCS to appropriately and effectively serve English learners. Fortunately, a variety of research studies shed light on instructional practices and strategies that address the CCS, linguistic, and academic needs of ELs (Heritage et al, 2015.) However, the complexity of this work renders it necessary for teachers to receive quality professional development as well as on-going instructional coaching and support in the implementation of English learner pedagogy and use of instructional strategies (Echevarria & Short, 2010; Heritage et al, 2015).

End Notes

1. http://ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/video/WhatWorksinSchools.pdf

2 http://www.ascd.org/Publications/Books/Overview/Checking-for-Understanding-Formative-Assessment-Techniques-for-Your-Classroom-2nd-Edition.aspx

3 http://www.languagemagazine.com/LangPages/AidaWalqui_LM_Feb10.pdf

4 http://www.leadered.com/pdf/rigor_relevance_framework_2014.pdf

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Attachment A: How to Integrate ELD into Core Content Instruction (SEI)

Focus Area(s)	Reflective Guiding Questions
Objective: Core Content	1. Identify the core content objective for the lesson.
Lesson Delivery / Learning Activity	2. Determine how the lesson will be taught. ☐ *What and how will materials be used?* ☐ *Does text and/or vocabulary need to be frontloaded?* ☐ *What oral language skills will be necessary/used/developed?* ☐ *What groupings (for language/ability level/literacy) will be appropriate?*
Students' ELD Proficiency	3. Identify each student's current ELD proficiency in each language domain. ☐ *Use current on-going ELD assessment data— e.g. from the adopted ELD curriculum-embedded assessments standardized interim benchmarks* ☐ *Such data should be accessed on a regular basis by all core content teachers*
ELD Domain(s) & Standard(s)	4. Identify the most appropriate ELD standard for each domain *(collaborative, interpretive, productive)* for each student's level of English proficiency. ☐ *Relate the language objectives/needs of the core content lesson to the skills already developed by students.* ☐ *Identify the language skills that need to be scaffolded in order to ensure access along each step of the lesson.*
Scaffolding Core Content *Text Re-Presentation Modeling Contextualization Metacognitive Development Schema Building Bridging*	5. Identify the most appropriate scaffold given the core content objective and language needs of each step of the lesson. ☐ *Is there a need to cover substantial/complex text?* ☐ *Does the lesson/activity involve a series of steps?* ☐ *Is the concept new/unfamiliar/abstract?* ☐ *Will reflection be helpful?* ☐ *Is the concept related to known concepts/ideas/processes?* ☐ *Is the concept related to a previously covered objective or can it be related to past experiences?*
Strategies to Maximize Language Learning/Production	6. Select one or more strategies for each applicable scaffold identified above that will maximize the language learning/production.
Sequencing the Learning	7. Determine the most appropriate sequence to deliver each of the activities in the lesson.
Check for Understanding and Assessment of Learning	8. Create multiple Alternative Assessment Measures for proficiency (mastery) in targeted areas: Core Content, Academic Literacy in English/Primary languages.

Attachment B: Effective Instruction Observation Protocol

Department: _____

Your School District

Observer: _____
Type of Class: _____

Teacher: _____   Course: _____   Period: ____   Date: ____   Time: ____

Focus	Guiding Questions/Notes/Data	Observed?	
Structured Student Interactions	1. Discourse is structured to include: ☐ student-to-student ☐ student-to-group ☐ student-to-teacher 2. Discourse is regular, frequent, and focused with accountable discussion from all students 3. Discourse addresses an identified language objective and communicative mode	☐ Yes ☐ Yes	☐ No ☐ No
Academic Language Development	1. Focused on both content vocabulary (bricks) and functional language (mortar)	☐ Yes	☐ No
	2. Text selection is based on the rigorous, cognitive demands of the content and the linguistic demands of the learning task	☐ Yes	☐ No
	3. Explicit teaching of the language function being used so that students can identify language patterns.	☐ Yes	☐ No
	4. Established instructional routines for frequent, academic writing practice to improve written expression for various purposes (summarizing, generalizations, etc.)	☐ Yes	☐ No
Checking for Understanding	1. Understanding **of all individuals** is checked frequently during the course of direct, explicit instruction *How:*	☐ Yes	☐ No
	2. Understanding **of all individuals** is checked frequently during the course of classroom guided or independent practice *How:*	☐ Yes	☐ No
	3. Evidence suggests *checking for understanding* is **informing instruction and reteaching**	☐ Yes	☐ No
21st Century Skills	1. The level of rigor / relevance is in quadrant: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D		
	2. Student work requires use of prior knowledge, is creative, and requires students to reflect and revise.	☐ Yes	☐ No
	3. Students routinely have opportunities to extend and refine knowledge, solve problems, and create unique solutions.	☐ Yes	☐ No
	4. Student work reflects real-world unpredictable applications of knowledge that have unknown factors, and unique solutions to problems.	☐ Yes	☐ No
Effective Classroom Learning Environment	1. The physical environment optimizes student engagement.	☐ Yes	☐ No
	2. Social development and group responsibility are promoted.	☐ Yes	☐ No
	3. Standards for student behavior are clear and maintained.	☐ Yes	☐ No
	4. Classroom procedures and routines support student learning	☐ Yes	☐ No
	5. Instructional time is used effectively.	☐ Yes	☐ No