CHAPTER 8

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

## What Really Works for English Language Learners: Research-Based Practices for Principals

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One of every five students enrolled in U.S. schools are speakers of languages other than English. More than half of these students are not yet proficient in English, and these English language learners (ELLs) are the fastest-growing demographic group in public schools in all regions of the United States. While all languages of the world are represented among our linguistically diverse students, including many languages indigenous to the United States, 75% of ELLs are of Spanish-speaking background. The majority of ELLs (65%) are born in the United States and thus are U.S. citizens (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2010).

## THE CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

### Federal Requirements

We are obligated to educate ELLs *meaningfully* (*Lau v. Nichols,* 1974, U.S. Supreme Court decision), and all students, whether undocumented

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immigrants or citizens, are guaranteed the right to free public education (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982, U.S. Supreme Court). The *Plyler* decision states that public schools are *prohibited* from (1) denying undocumented students admission to school; (2) requiring students or parents to disclose or document their immigration status; or (3) requiring Social Security numbers, resident visas, or proof of citizenship. One additional court decision informing school administrators throughout the United States is *Castaneda v. Pickard* (1981), a federal Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals decision in Texas that has been used as a standard for all succeeding court cases. The *Castaneda* ruling articulates three criteria that are required for programs serving ELLs. The program must be: (1) based on sound educational theory recognized by experts in the field; (2) implemented effectively, with adequate resources and personnel; and (3) evaluated and found effective in both the teaching of languages (English and students' first language if the program is bilingual) and in access to the full curriculum (math, social studies, science, language arts, and specials) (Carrera, 1989).

## Types of Federal Influence

Since 1968, U.S. federal legislation has provided some stimulus funding to improve programs for ELLs, but this is a small percentage of total school budgets with minimal impact overall. The amount of federal funding for competitive grants for programs for ELLs has been extremely limited, especially when compared to other federal education funds for children of poverty, migrant education, and special education (Ovando, Combs, & Collier, 2006).

Since 2001, an important change in the federal No Child Left Behind Act has required that achievement data be disaggregated by groups, including racial/ethnic groups and ELLs, with the goal of closing the achievement gap between groups over time. This requirement puts ELLs' needs in the spotlight, since they are the lowest-achieving group nationwide, but schools are not yet being given the resources to meaningfully address their needs. Furthermore, cross-sectional analyses (e.g., comparing last year's 3rd-graders to this year's 3rd-graders) are inappropriate and unfair comparisons. Appropriate assessments should follow the same students longitudinally across time, to measure how far each student has come from where that student started (Collier & Thomas, 2009).

One more type of federal influence on programs for ELLs can be initiated by the U.S. Office for Civil Rights (OCR), which can cite school districts as out of compliance with federal court orders, including the *Castaneda* criteria required for serving ELLs. Your school district's central administration is

responsible for responding to OCR, but the negotiated agreement can strongly influence services for ELLs in your school.

## State Assistance

The largest influence on U.S. school policy for ELLs comes from state legislation and from decisions at the state and local level. A few examples from the history of state legislation illustrate the ups and downs of the politics of the field of bilingual/ESL education. In the early part of the 20th century, several states had statutory prohibitions against the use of languages other than English for instruction in school (Crawford, 1999). But with the federal passage of the 1968 Bilingual Education Act, many states passed legislation to assist local school districts with implementation of bilingual/ESL services. As of 2009, 42 states encourage or allow bilingual instruction, and 8 states restrict or ban native language instruction for ELLs. Restrictions exist in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Tennessee, and Wisconsin (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2009, p. 26). Since 1998, the English-only movement has succeeded in defeating bilingual education legislation through voter referenda in Massachusetts, California, and Arizona, but not in other states. New Mexico, an official bilingual state, was in 1969 the first to authorize instruction in languages other than English, and in 2002 passed the most comprehensive state funding plan for developing enrichment bilingual/ESL programs based on the effectiveness research in bilingual/ESL education (Collier & Thomas, 2009). The state of Texas has a strong law in place requiring transitional bilingual education services for students in Grades pre-K–5, and has passed enabling legislation to encourage the expansion of dual language education (an enrichment model) for all students to graduate as proficient bilinguals for the workforce of the 21st century. There are many varied forms of bilingual and ESL schooling for ELLs, and large differences among them in effectiveness. In this chapter we shall examine some of the chief characteristics of more effective program models.

# BEST PRACTICES

As ELLs in your school are going through the process of acquiring the English language, there are many factors that influence their academic achievement. These factors strongly impact the types of instructional services provided for ELLs. Thus we will begin this discussion of best practices with an overview of some major issues to consider in designing your school programs for ELLs.

## Facilitating Acquisition of English as a Second Language (ESL)

Acquiring a second language is a process that does not require explicit instruction of the language at all times. In fact, ESL is best acquired by doing interesting things in English that connect to what you already know. The teacher facilitates this process. In the beginning stages, the ESL teacher is an important support for getting that natural process going, so that 1st-year and 2nd-year ESL students benefit greatly from ESL classes with an ESL teacher who has been trained in courses on second language acquisition and English linguistics (Collier, 1995; Krashen, 1981; Samway & McKeon, 2007).

But in addition, the teacher needs to be dual-certified. This means certified in both ESL and the curricular subjects being taught (elementary ed. certification for K–5; specific subject areas for grades 6–12). Why? Because ESL classes can substantially speed up students' growth when the teacher can provide ESL instruction through academic content. This accelerates the natural second language acquisition process and at the same time gives students meaningful access to the full curriculum (Echevarria & Short, 2010; Egbert & Ernst-Slavit, 2010). The old ways of teaching language by memorizing isolated vocabulary words and teaching grammar points out of context are no longer helpful. Instead, listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the second language is taught as an integrated whole, focusing on meaning, within the context of exciting academic content that connects to students' lives outside the classroom (Collier, 1995). ESL taught through academic content also needs to be provided in a socioculturally supportive environment through collaborative peer teaching and learning, while at the same time challenging students to work at an age-appropriate level through their second language (Collier & Thomas, 2007).

As you, the principal, make hiring decisions, the more you can find dual-certified teachers, or teachers who are willing to collaboratively team together, the better your staff will be qualified to address the needs of the diverse students at your school. Teaching partnerships can be cost-effective if the total number of students assigned to the two teachers in a partnership is equivalent to the student-teacher ratio throughout the school (i.e., two classes shared by the two teachers). This is typical practice for dual language schools, in which two classes exchange instructional time between the two teachers, one of whom teaches in English, and the other in the non-English language featured by the program (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2003). This team-teaching model does require more commitment of the teachers, because they have a larger number of total students whom they teach each day, and it especially requires more joint planning time, organized by the principal in the master schedule, and professional development support.

An alternative is the inclusion model, in which the ESL teacher provides team-teaching support for the ESL students in a mainstream class. This may be less cost-effective if extra staff are needed beyond the typical student-teacher ratio. However, more schools are trying the inclusion model using the current staffing ratios, with co-teaching and co-planning between ESL teachers and classroom teachers. We are seeing examples of places where leadership commits to inclusive ESL services, and this has resulted in using the same resources to provide inclusive ESL, while getting better results in student learning (Pardini, 2006; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011; Zehr, 2006).

At the elementary school level, the most common but least effective ELL program is the ESL pullout model, in which ESL students are pulled out of their mainstream classes to get special instruction with the ESL teacher for a portion of their school day (Collier & Thomas, 2009). These pullout classes are more effective when the ESL teacher is teaching ESL through academic content. This means that the ESL teacher must be elementary-certified and prepared to teach all subject areas using ESL methods. At the secondary level, ESL is included as a subject in the master schedule. For example, beginning ESL students might receive three classes with the ESL teacher, 2nd-year students two classes of ESL, and 3rd-year students one class of ESL. Ideally all of these classes are taught as ESL content classes, in which they are getting some subject-area instruction along with their English development. A secondary school with a large percentage of ESL students might develop a 1st-year ESL content program in which students attend all of their content classes taught by ESL-certified teachers who are dual-certified in the subjects they are teaching. With each succeeding year of English acquisition, it is important for ESL students to have increasing exposure to mainstream classes as soon as they are deemed ready by ESL staff.

## Important Research Findings on Second Language Acquisition

As the principal, you will need to know about some common misperceptions that you might encounter when talking with parents about the process students are going through as they acquire ESL. Here's what the language acquisition research actually tells us:

1. Just as children acquire their first language naturally, we use the same natural developmental processes to acquire our second language, through being in real situations and communicating about important and interesting things. The only difference is that second language learners are older when beginning the new language and thus are more cognitively mature (with the exception of children raised bilingually

from birth). Children's first language does not "interfere" with the second language—it is very important and serves as a resource for figuring out the second language (Collier, 1995).

2. Our first language is so crucial to second language acquisition because first language is intimately connected to cognitive development. Students who continue developing their thinking skills in their first language until age 12 do very well in their second language. Students whose first language development is discontinued before age 12 may experience negative cognitive effects in second language development (Collier, 1995; Collier & Thomas, 2009). (We could eliminate a lot of referrals to special education if U.S. schools understood this point!)
3. Younger is not necessarily better when acquiring a second language. Older students are much more efficient learners, and those schooled well through their first language reach advanced levels in their second language much earlier than young children (Collier, 1987, 1995; Samway & McKeon, 2007). An advantage young children have is developing native-like pronunciation in the second language. Also, older students find that language for their age group is much more cognitively and linguistically complex, whereas the hands-on, playful nature of preschool lends itself to the natural language acquisition process. Yet it is crucial to remember that young children require equal access to cognitive development in their first language for long-term success in second language schooling.
4. Mastering academic second language across the curriculum is a complex process. It takes many years for ELLs to reach grade-level achievement, since native English speakers are constantly advancing, gaining another year's knowledge each year. ELLs, who initially score below grade level on tests in English, have to make *more* progress than native English speakers every year to eventually demonstrate on the tests in their second language that they have mastered the curriculum for their age group. This is no easy feat! For those who have been schooled in both first and second languages, it takes an average of 6 years to reach grade level in the second language. For those groups of students who have received no schooling in their first language, it takes an average of 10 or more years to reach grade level in the second language (Collier & Thomas, 2009).
5. Cummins (1979, 2000) first introduced the concept of the difference between social and academic language, illustrating that the level of proficiency that students develop in the second language depends on the contexts in which they are going to use the new language. Social language is context-embedded, negotiated through many contextual clues to meaning. Students quickly learn how to request essential

needs in the second language and to confer with peers, with this level of conversational language taking 2 to 3 years to master. In contrast, academic language includes language and cognitive skills and knowledge required across all content areas, increasing in great complexity with each grade level, with fewer contextual clues to meaning. Cummins (1981) found that it takes students 5 to 7 years to master academic second language, and Collier and Thomas (2009) concluded after conducting many longitudinal studies that first language academic development is a key predictor in successful acquisition of academic second language.

6. Social and cultural factors can strongly influence students' success in acquiring English and success in school. ELLs need to feel safe and secure, respected and valued for their rich life experiences from other cultural contexts that they bring to the classroom. ELLs' academic achievement is highest when students' bicultural knowledge is used as a knowledge base for curricular experiences; when there is less discrimination, prejudice, or open hostility expressed toward linguistically diverse students and when administrative and teaching staff understand and support intercultural knowledge-building among students. Furthermore, instructional practices such as ability grouping and other ways of segregating students in classes can create social distance between groups. Staff and students may come to view these separate groupings as remedial, designed for the low achievers, and classwork is unintentionally watered down. School practices that encourage inclusion and positive perceptions among students have real potential to transform negative societal social and cultural patterns (Collier, 1995).

## Common Program Models for ELLs in U.S. Schools

***ESL pullout and ESL content programs.*** We have already introduced basic descriptions of typical ESL programs at elementary and secondary levels. ESL taught through academic content is an important component of every program for ELLs, including bilingual schooling, so every principal should have some ESL content staff who are dual-certified to teach ESL and subject areas combined, and who are prepared to team with other teachers as needed. Since ESL pullout is the most expensive and least effective model, it is important for principals to reflect on alternatives to this practice (Collier & Thomas, 2009). Problems with this model include lost time in students' access to the full curriculum and students' perceptions that they are stigmatized and isolated by attending a remedial class. Also, ESL pullout fails to address the complex needs of each student, who when sent to the ESL teacher may be of different age groups, varying levels of proficiency in

English, and missing a variety of subject areas while they are removed from their mainstream classes. Some classes are taught by itinerant ESL staff who have to travel to several schools in one week and have minimal time to coordinate lessons with partner teachers (Ovando, Combs, & Collier, 2006).

Alternatives to ESL pullout are inclusion models, the most promising being a dual-certified ESL teacher teaming with the mainstream teacher, where the two teachers share equal teaching responsibilities for the whole class, have joint planning time, and collaborate well together. Least effective inclusion is an ESL teacher placed in the back of the classroom tutoring ESL students using worksheets not directly connected to the mainstream curriculum.

ESL content (sometimes referred to as "sheltered instruction") can be a self-contained class for beginning ESL students at elementary school level, but the ideal is ESL content taught as an inclusion model, so that ELLs are not isolated from the curricular mainstream and from their mainstream peers. At the secondary level, beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of ESL content classes should include significant amounts of curricular material, so that students can master enormous amounts of English vocabulary across subjects and acquire spoken and written English through meaningful academic uses of the language in thematic units. Again, to include ESL students in the curricular mainstream and avoid the stigma of remedial classes and isolation, teaming of ESL and mainstream staff can be an important strategy for middle and high school teachers, but the partnerships need to be highly collaborative, with planning time provided in the master schedule (Echevarria & Short, 2010; Egbert & Ernst-Slavit, 2010).

***Structured immersion.*** This is a misnamed program model, promoted by English-only proponents. The name was taken from Canadian immersion programs, which are very strong bilingual programs with academic instruction through French and English for grades K–12. But the form promoted in the United States is simply *another form of ESL content teaching* in a self-contained class, with the crucial academic work in students' first language eliminated (and thus not a true "immersion in two languages" as intended by the originators of this program name).

When first developed in 1982, structured immersion encouraged the use of highly structured, sequenced materials for teaching ESL, and the first programs used materials designed for students with learning disabilities. Evaluations of these programs found that as ESL students moved through the grades, their scores plummeted as they reached 5th and 6th grade, and many of these students were then placed in special education (Collier, 1992). *Highly structured and sequenced materials do not match the second language acquisition process,* which is not sequential at all and very complex, as well as varying

greatly with each individual student (Collier, 1995; Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2005; Snow & Katz, 2010). Thus ESL content classes should focus on discovery learning that is cognitively stimulating, comprehensible, exciting, and connecting to students' life experiences. In high-quality enrichment ESL content classes, students can close half the achievement gap (making more than 1 year's progress each year) within a 3-year period (Collier & Thomas, 2009). That is dramatic progress, but closing the second half of the gap is more challenging, as we will see when we discuss bilingual programs below.

***Newcomer programs.*** For school districts with large numbers of newly arriving immigrants, newcomer programs provided at the secondary level combine ESL content teaching with some first language academic support when feasible, as well as social service information for families. These services may be housed in a separate building, but newcomer services are best when done as an inclusion model at the students' neighborhood school. In special cases where students have not had the opportunity to attend formal schooling before or have lost many years of schooling, newcomer programs may extend the time that students are given special support.

***Transitional or early-exit bilingual education.*** This is a remedial, segregated model of bilingual schooling, designed for ELLs who are just beginning to acquire English. Students receive instruction across the curriculum in ESL content classes and in their native language for typically 2–3 years and are then exited into the English mainstream. A number of states have provided state funding to support this model, and it does provide much more support than ESL pullout (Ovando, Combs, & Collier, 2006). When students are receiving academic work through their first language, they are not getting behind on schoolwork, and in this program the other half of the instructional time is focused on acquiring the English language (again, through academic content). But while student achievement is slightly better in this model than in ESL content, it is not dramatically better, because students are exited after only 2 or 3 years of this support. Students attending transitional bilingual classes close slightly more than half the achievement gap, making dramatic gains while in the program, but once students move into the mainstream class, they typically make the same amount of 1-year gains that native-English speakers make, and do not close the gap further—thus the second half of the achievement gap is not closed (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2006).

While the transitional bilingual program model has potential, the problems are the students' isolation from the mainstream, the stigma attached to the classes because the mainstream views them as remedial, and the

common misconception on which the length of the program is based that 2 or 3 years is sufficient time to learn academic ESL. Bilingual teachers in these programs sometimes complain that they feel so much pressure to implement all-English instruction that they unintentionally water down academic content in students' first language, reducing the cognitive complexity of the work in either language, and thus lowering test scores dramatically (Collier & Thomas, 2009). It is for these reasons that more enrichment, mainstream models of bilingual schooling have grown in popularity over the past two decades in U.S. schools.

***Dual language education.*** This program model was one of the earliest forms of bilingual schooling developed in the United States in the 1960s. As principals have heard about dual language education, many have come to understand the tremendous benefits this model can provide for all students, as dual language is when the mainstream curriculum is taught through two languages for all students who choose to participate. This model celebrates bilingualism and intercultural understanding for all. It is an integrated, enrichment form of schooling, very different from remedial classes. Dual language promotes additive bilingualism—as students acquire their second language, they continue to develop cognitively and academically in their first language. Additive bilinguals can out score monolinguals on achievement tests, because developing two languages is a stimulus for intellectual expansion and leads to greater capacity for problem-solving, creativity, and divergent thinking (Baker, 2011).

Students in dual language classes are educated together throughout the day with cognitively challenging academic content in interactive classes that emphasize solving problems in authentic, real-world contexts. Alternating between the two languages takes place not by translation, but by subject or thematic unit or instructional time, so that gradually all students attending this program become academically proficient in both languages of instruction across all subject areas. Two-way dual language classes mix English language learners and native English speakers together, and the two groups serve as peer tutors for one another across the two languages.

Since native Spanish speakers are the largest demographic group among linguistically diverse populations in U.S. schools, Spanish-English dual language schools are becoming increasingly common in programs for ELLs (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, 2010; Soltero, 2004). The popularity of these programs with English-speaking parents often leads to a waiting list for enrollment. Other languages paired with English in U.S. schools include Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Arabic, French, and Russian. The demographics of your neighborhood determine what language you might consider for your school program. Two-way classes serve ELLs as the highest priority, as they are the most at-risk group. Having

classes with approximately half of the students native English speakers and half the other language group is "ideal," but at least one-third native English speakers is sufficient to provide the rich language models for peer natural language acquisition to occur.

A second alternative with equal potential to two-way dual language classes is a one-way program, in which one language group is schooled through the two languages. For example, a one-way school with large numbers of students of Spanish-language heritage can include all who wish to participate in the dual language classes, some of whom are ELLs, along with others who are bilingual, while still others are only proficient in English. Another example of a one-way context would be use of an indigenous language, such as the Navajo-English programs in New Mexico and Arizona on the Navajo reservation. Schools on the border with Mexico often include large numbers of ELLs, with very few native English speakers. In these one-way demographic contexts, all students can greatly benefit from schooling through two languages, leading to high academic achievement, gap closure for all, and high school graduates who are ready for the workplace of the 21st century (Collier & Thomas, 2009).

In recent years these one-way and two-way dual language programs have been expanding exponentially throughout all regions of the United States, with increasing numbers of ELLs. While these programs are very popular, any principal eager to implement dual language needs to study the research, understand the model, and be prepared to serve as a pioneer. The biggest initial challenges are hiring the qualified bilingual staff, providing the ongoing professional development for your teachers, choosing the appropriate curricular materials in English and the other language, and developing parent advocacy groups who will sell the program to succeeding parents and who will commit to keep their children enrolled in the program throughout at least the first 6 years, which is the length of time needed for most students to reach grade-level achievement in the second language (Collier & Thomas, 2009).

Typically, these programs are grown one grade per year, beginning with classes at kindergarten level, adding 1st grade the next year, creating a K–1 program; then a K–2 program; and so on. After several years as a strand (e.g., 2 out of 4 Kindergarten classes might become dual language classes), a school with committed parents might choose to make it a whole-school model. Articulation with the feeder middle and high schools is crucial, since dual language typically continues into the middle school years with half the curriculum taught in English and at least two subjects for the non-English language—for example, language arts and one other core subject such as science or social studies. High school dual language programs are rare, but they are beginning to develop in school districts that have been implementing dual language for a number of years.

# EQUITY

## Access

***Integration and inclusion.*** Throughout this chapter we have emphasized the importance of keeping ELLs in the flow of the mainstream. In the early stages of English acquisition (the first several years), ELLs need the special support of the bilingual/ESL teachers, who have the training in first and second language acquisition as well as teaching the content areas. This special support is best provided in an integrated inclusion model, so that students are not placed in a socially stigmatized class that is perceived as remedial. ESL content classes taught by teaming with mainstream English-speaking certified teachers, as well as dual language classes, are fully integrated with the mainstream. Dual language is the most comprehensive mainstream program model that can include all students.

When the demographics at the school include a sufficient number of speakers of one non-English language, the elementary school principal can pave the way for development of a dual language program. First steps are to hire bilingual staff who are fully certified and deeply academically proficient in the non-English language, starting with Kindergarten level (or preschool, if it exists at the school) and moving up grade by grade. To make this cost-effective, each new teacher can be hired when a position opens up as teachers leave the school system through retirement or transfer. ESL content staff can include mainstream English-speaking teachers at the school who choose to add ESL certification to their qualifications. When several schools are ready to implement dual language classes, school districts usually hire a director of the program at the central administrative level, and that bilingual coordinator provides guidance and support for program design and implementation.

As principal of a dual language school, you are in a unique position to create a cutting-edge reform that leads to high achievement by all your students. In every longitudinal study we have conducted throughout all regions of the United States, we have found that all groups benefit in this powerful inclusion model—with time, the achievement gap is fully closed for ELLs, African Americans, students of multicultural heritages, and students of low socioeconomic background.

***Grouping strategies.*** Once you realize that dual language programs (the most inclusive of all models) lead to much higher achievement than ESL pullout classes, the stark contrast can help us create opportunities for our ELLs that provide the richest support system to help them make more

than 1 year's progress each year. When ELLs spend lots of time in classes separate from the mainstream that are focusing on discrete points in English development, taking one small step at a time, they do not connect the material to meaningful concepts, and thus get further behind the constantly advancing native English speaker. To make good use of grouping strategies, cooperative/collaborative learning provides ways for teachers to mix heterogeneous students into meaningful groupings that enhance the cognitive complexity of the activity while teaching the curricular concepts.

Here is another way to understand some of the problems with separate ability groupings of ELLs for a large portion of the school day, focused on only acquiring English. There are natural, innate developmental processes that occur in second language acquisition (Ellis, 1994). The rate at which learners reach each stage varies with each individual student, and the process is not at all linear. Gradually students pick up each aspect of the language by using the language, but formal teaching does not speed up the developmental process. This means that lockstep, sequenced curricular materials that insist on mastery of each discrete point in language before moving on to the next are a disaster for second language acquisition. Instead, acquisition of ESL is a dynamic, creative, innate process, best developed through contextual, meaningful activities that focus on language use, combined with guidance along the way from the teacher that sometimes involves a focus on language form. Errors that students make need not be viewed as lack of mastery, but as positive steps in the process. As students move along in the process of English acquisition, they are able to increasingly self-correct as they internalize the way the new language works. Many "rules" of language cannot be explicitly taught but are best acquired subconsciously by using the language with native-speaking peers who have already internalized the rules. Thus, when ELLs are given a safe and supportive context and they are valued and respected as partners in the learning process, they best acquire the English language and the mainstream curriculum in collaboration with English speakers, taught by teachers who understand the process of second language acquisition and who know how to facilitate learning in heterogeneous classes.

## Equitable Processes and English Language Learners' Education

As you make decisions and guide your school staff to create equitable and excellent opportunities for all students, it is important to address all special issues for English language learners as a whole school staff from an enrichment perspective, rather than approaching your decisions for ELLs as a remedial, separate program within your school. While we have discussed

these processes throughout this chapter, here we will highlight some key issues to consider.

- Hire dual-certified bilingual/ESL staff with every hiring opportunity through retirements, transfers, or new teaching allocations for your school.
- Include planning time for teaching teams in the master schedule.
- Make sure that regular faculty meetings include ongoing planning for your services provided for ELLs.
- Provide ongoing professional development for all staff that supports their understanding of the process of second language acquisition, cross-cultural awareness, and instructional strategies that enhance ELLs' access to the academic curriculum.
- Provide staff planning time and funding for acquiring curricular materials and developing a wide variety of hands-on discovery learning materials.
- Be prepared to respond to parents' questions and concerns by becoming knowledgeable about the key points presented throughout this chapter regarding the second language acquisition process and the importance of continuing first language development.
- Let your decisions reflect that bilingualism and intercultural knowledge-building are crucial for all students and staff at your school.

## Outcomes

Throughout this chapter, we have referred to dramatically different student achievement outcomes depending upon the type of program provided for ELLs. We authors have conducted many longitudinal studies on large cohorts of ELLs from 1985 to the present, analyzing over 6.2 million student records to date in urban, suburban, and rural K–12 public schools in all regions of the United States. Summaries of our research are available in Collier and Thomas (2009) and other publications listed on the web site www.thomasandcollier.com. Overall, we have found that the type of school program makes the biggest difference in student achievement. Student background factors can influence success in school, but a high-quality program can help students overcome poverty, experience with war, discrimination, and many other stressful life experiences that affect the learning process.

We have found that students in well-implemented dual language programs have elevated self-esteem, attend school more regularly, have a lower dropout rate than all other programs for ELLs, and achieve high rates of completion of a university degree. Graduates of Spanish-English dual language programs typically score above grade level on the norm-referenced tests (which are much more difficult than most state tests) in both English

and Spanish after 6 years of schooling through the two languages, as well as at the completion of high school. In contrast, ELLs who attend ESL content classes with no first language support, or transitional bilingual classes for 2 to 3 years, close half the achievement gap on norm-referenced tests, with no further gap closure after being exited into the mainstream. ELLs attending minimal ESL pullout services, or English-only services under Proposition 227 in California, are among the lowest achievers, finishing school at the 10th percentile, or leaving school without graduating (Collier & Thomas, 2009; Lindholm-Leary, 2001, 2007; Thomas & Collier, 1997, 2002). We also found that ELLs whose parents refuse bilingual/ESL support for their children and place their children in sink-or-swim English mainstream classes have the highest dropout rate of any group, or finish school at the 10th percentile (Thomas & Collier, 2002). It is very clear that equity issues, as well as the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Lau v. Nichols*, demand that our ELLs receive meaningful instruction with assistance from bilingual/ESL staff who help students navigate successfully within the mainstream.

## WHAT LEADERS NEED TO KNOW AND DO

The principal, assistant principals, and instructional leaders need to work together to ensure that every student in your school has equal access to the full curriculum. As you work with staff in designing, implementing, and improving services for ELLs and working with their families, the following research findings can guide your decisions:

- Achievement gaps begin when four developmental processes are not adequately addressed—linguistic, academic, cognitive, and sociocultural development in students' first languages and in English. Dual-language programs provided for at least 6 years fully address all four dimensions in students' two languages, but typical transitional bilingual classes and ESL classes provided for only 2 to 3 years only partially address these dimensions (for more information on the Prism Model, see Collier & Thomas, 2009).
- First language support is crucial for full gap closure and for accelerating ELLs' learning because it allows them to continue normal cognitive development while they continue to master the curriculum. When all ELL program types are examined, research shows that the number of years of instruction through the first language is the most powerful and important influence on long-term ELL achievement in English. Older immigrants arriving in the United States in their high school years who are well-schooled in their home countries are the highest achievers, along

with graduates of U.S. dual-language programs. Parents who have been formally educated are important partners with the school in the teaching of first language literacy.

- Student cognitive development is directly connected to continuous first language development through age 12. Interrupted cognitive development in the first language before age 12 leads to potential negative cognitive effects and lower long-term achievement. Conversely, a child who has reached full cognitive development in two languages enjoys cognitive advantages over monolingual peers. It is extremely important that families continue using their home language(s) with children to assist with this process of nonstop cognitive development. Parents, as adults, are cognitively mature, regardless of the amount of formal schooling they have had the opportunity to receive—cognition is developed through life experiences. All languages of the world, including nonstandard varieties, are rich and complex language systems that stimulate cognitive development (Phillipson, 2000).
- Emotional, social, and cultural support is crucial for all students. School practices need to encourage inclusion and provide cross-cultural counseling and positive perceptions of the heterogeneous mix of students and staff, rather than treating ELLs as outsiders who should adjust to the existing school environment.
- Some schools experience arrivals of refugees seeking refuge from war or severe economic conditions or political oppression. These students bring to our classes special social, emotional, and academic needs, while at the same time they are risk-takers with human potential who hope for a better life. They may need lots of first language academic support so they can make faster progress to make up for missed years of schooling, as well as emotional support and counseling to deal with the scars and continuing trauma of establishing stable family relations in their new country and meeting their basic survival needs.
- Scripted and sequenced instruction does not assist with the second language acquisition process. ELLs need cognitively stimulating, comprehensible, exciting instruction that connects to their life experiences to be able to match native English speaker performance long-term. Creating thematic curricular units that interconnect subject areas and help students prepare for real-world problem-solving is powerful at both elementary and secondary levels. Use of oral and written language in which meaning is negotiated between ELLs and native English speakers is central to the language acquisition process.
- School districts must "think across the K–12 grades" and adopt a systems approach to closing ELL achievement gaps and keeping them closed. The full ELL achievement gap may not be evident in late elementary

test scores, especially when using an easier state test, but the gap can widen dramatically in middle and high school as the cognitive demand of instruction increases greatly. Former ELLs must receive substantial cognitive development in their first and second languages in elementary school (not just minimally pass the state test) to match native English speaker performance on cognitively demanding tests and curricula in the secondary years. Secondary feeder schools need to be prepared to continue the services provided at the elementary school level, and to serve new ELL arrivals appropriately. This can best be coordinated by the bilingual/ESL director at the school district level.

In summary, it takes a long time to reach grade-level achievement in the second language, because the gap is large and ELLs must outgain constantly advancing native English speakers to close that gap. To create an environment in which our ELLs flourish, we principals and instructional leaders need to connect to their cross-cultural, linguistic, and academic needs; hire the bilingual/ESL staff who can make quality curricular decisions and provide the social and emotional support for students; create a collaborative staff environment by providing continuous staff development; and gather curricular resources for meaningful teaching in integrated, heterogeneous class settings. In doing so, we are working on creating 21st-century schools for a globally interconnected world.

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