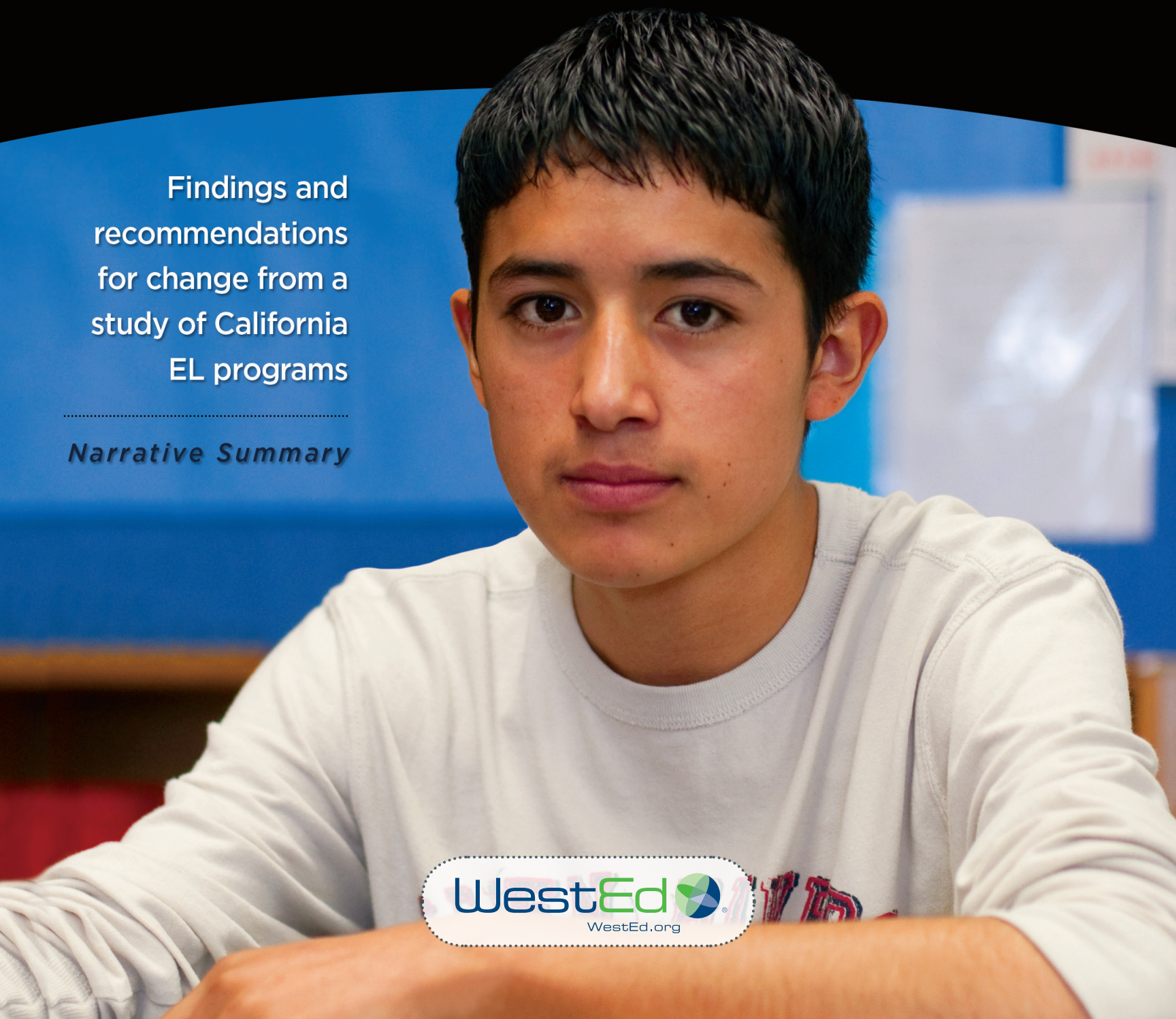
MAY 2010

WHAT ARE WE DOING TO Middle School English Learners?



Findings and recommendations for change from a study of California EL programs

Narrative Summary

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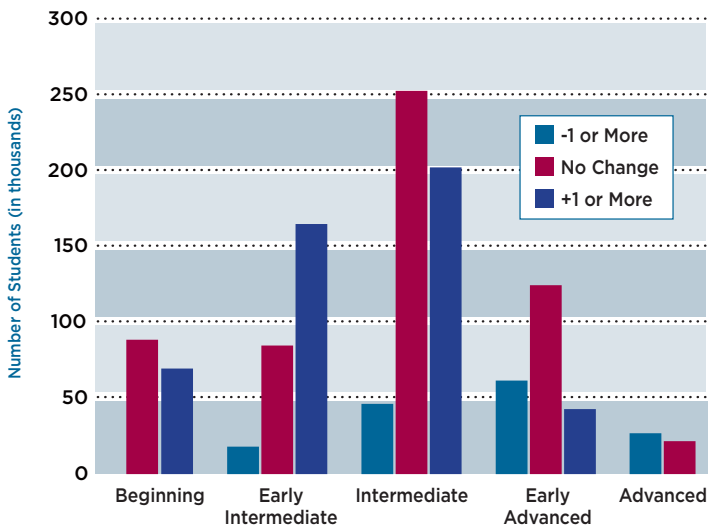
WestEd

What are we doing to middle school English Learners?

Findings and recommendations for change from a study of California EL programs

What if your child were enrolled in an education program that produced these results: In a given year, most students make less than a year's progress and not an insignificant number actually regress (California Department of Education, 2008)? That is the picture shown below of English Learner education in California, home to more than 30 percent of the nation's English Learners (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2008).

Change in CELDT proficiency level 2006-07 to 2007-08, by previous year proficiency level



Source: California Department of Education, 2008.

The CELDT

The California English Language Development Test (CELDT) is given to newly enrolled students whose primary language is not English and to English Learners as an annual assessment. It is a test of the four domains of English language arts: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It is not related to the academic uses of English that students encounter in disciplinary classes.

Test scores on the CELDT rate students from level 1 to 5: beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced. The state considers levels 1–3 to be less than "reasonably fluent."

Furthermore, what if the population of these underserved, underperforming students were growing exponentially, with projections that in the next decade they would represent 25 percent of all students across the country (U.S. Department of Education, 2006)?

Chances are you would recognize the urgent need to rethink the education of English Learners in the United States. This reality prompted the undertaking of the study reported here — what programs for English Learners look like in California. The study, conducted by researchers in the Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) program at Wested, was funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to understand what districts and middle schools are doing for their ELs, to find instances of promising practices that others could learn from, and to identify the enduring challenges that must be faced.

Study Participants

Fifty districts in California enroll 52 percent of the state's English Learners. From that group, 13 districts participated in this study, including 9 of the 13 districts that have the greatest number of English Learners in the state. Sixty-four middle schools in those districts also participated. Surveys were conducted with the person at the district level most responsible for English Learners, typically the directors of specialized EL departments or offices. At the school level, surveys were conducted with those identified as "most knowledgeable" about EL instruction, and included principals, assistant principals, and EL coordinators.

Case studies were developed for five representative study schools, and they contextualize the recommendations made later in this report.

Why a Study of English Learners in Middle School?

Adolescent English Learners in California middle and high schools do not fare well in school, socially or academically, and they fall increasingly behind native English speakers year by year. It is not surprising that they struggle. In addition to the challenge of simultaneously learning the academic uses of English and subject matter content, they are more likely to have unqualified teachers and to lack access to a quality curriculum (Gándara and Rumberger, 2003).

The decision to focus a study on middle schools reflects the understanding that the middle school years are a critical transition period for all adolescents, one that determines their academic and social futures; for adolescent second language learners, this period is especially complex.

- Students begin to more consciously explore their identity, including their academic identity, and to find their individual role within the family and diverse social groups.
- What young people do and learn during their adolescent years can establish their interests, strengths, and limitations for the rest of their lives (Wilson and Horch, 2002).
- Indeed, the academic and social experiences of middle school students have a potent effect on their intellectual confidence and interest and motivation in school (Eccles, 2008).

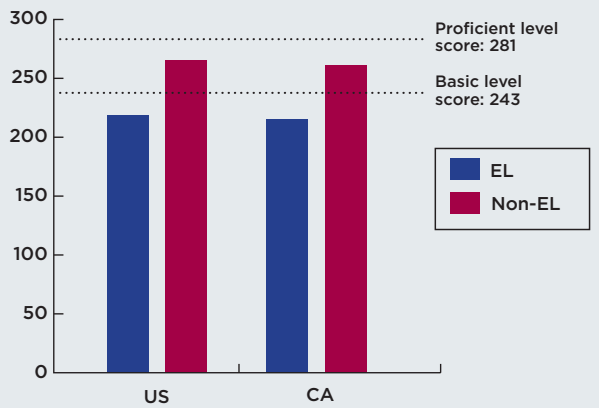
- Furthermore, students' middle school success or failure is a strong predictor of high school academic performance and completion (Rumberger and Lim, 2008).

The Double Gap

To succeed academically, all English Learners must overcome a "double gap," first to equal the (relatively low) achievement of their native-speaking counterparts, and then to reach a level of achievement that is considered grade-level "proficient." Nationwide, an alarming 70 percent of eighth grade English Learners read below the proficient level on the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress, although many middle school students who are native speakers of English do not perform well on these measures, either.

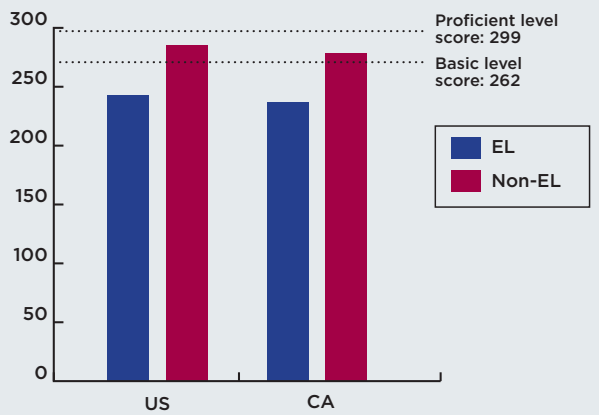
- Figure 1 shows that, on average, eighth graders who are second language learners perform at a scale score of 219 in reading, while their native-speaking counterparts score 265.
- However, all eighth graders should attain proficiency at the eighth grade level (281 on the scale).
- Figure 2 shows a similar double gap in the achievement of adolescent English Learners in mathematics.
- In California, the double gap parallels the national situation in both subjects.

Figure 1. Grade 8 reading average scale score, by status as English Learner in the U.S. and California: 2009



Source: NCES, The Nation's Report Card, Reading 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress at Grades 4 and 8.

Figure 2. Grade 8 mathematics average scale score, by status as English Learner in the U.S. and California: 2009



Source: NCES, The Nation's Report Card, Mathematics 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress at Grades 4 and 8.

Since English Learners have more ground to cover than other students, policies and practices that accelerate their access to standards-based instruction (in contrast to low-level ELD instruction) would appear to be necessary.

The first phase of this study focused on what policies and practices are, in fact, defining the education of middle school English Learners in California.

The Landscape of Instruction for Middle School English Learners in California

In California, state policy sets minimal EL programmatic requirements:

- EL students must have access to classes that are either Structured English Immersion (SEI) or English Language Mainstream.
- SEI classes, often referred to as "sheltered instruction," are characterized by SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English) approaches specific to the instruction of English Learners. The state recommends but does not mandate SEI for students who have less than "reasonable fluency" (CELDT levels 1–3).
- If EL students are placed in mainstream classes, the state requires that they receive extra support (leaving the determination of support vague) until such time as they are redesignated "fluent English proficient" — by the district — after meeting a minimum state cutpoint on the CELDT (districts may set higher cutpoints) and meeting district-defined cutpoints on state standards tests and any other criteria the district chooses to require.
- Mainstreamed English Learners who are two or more years below grade level on state standards tests must be enrolled in an "intensive" intervention, which typically takes the form of remedial reading instruction designed for native speakers of English.

District EL Programs Vary Widely and Are Differentially Implemented Within Districts

Because California allows districts to set their own criteria for reclassifying English Learners as "fluent" and no longer in need of special instruction, it was not surprising in this study to find that districts' approaches to the instruction of English Learners vary — to a degree that lacks coherence.

More surprising, perhaps, is the study finding that even within a district, the implementation of English Learner programs and policies — defined and supported by the district — varies from school to school or even within a school.

- In some middle schools, English Learners encounter an extended ELD program that focuses on the literacy skills tested by the CELDT (see the Bay City Middle School case study).
- In other middle schools, the focus is on quick transition into mainstream courses where ELs

will encounter grade-level, standards-based instruction (see the Inland City Middle School case study).

- There are also schools that have dramatically different "tracks" for different groups of ELs (see the Valley City Middle School case study).

As shown in table 1, schools' definition of "sheltered" can include English only (EO) students in a class that, by definition, is designed for ELs. Table 2 shows that English learners even at CELDT level 1 may be mainstreamed rather than sheltered for content area instruction. On the other hand, in some schools, English Learners remain segregated in sheltered classes even at CELDT levels 4 and 5.

The lack of coherence in how academic content is provided to middle school ELs, even within a district, points to a larger problem: English Learners' access to standards-based academic content depends on the school they attend.

EL Teaching Practices and Support for EL Teaching Are Inadequate

Districts identifed three primary challenges in supporting instruction of ELs' language acquisition and academic development. Responses focused on ineffective teaching practices, the dearth of appropriate professional development, and concerns about inconsistent implementation of the district EL program across its middle schools. (See box 1.)

Table 1. Study schools reporting sheltered content instruction, by CELDT levels and the presence of English Only students

CELDT Levels	1	2	3	4	5
Sheltered with no EO students	31	28	20	10	9
Sheltered with EO students	14	14	12	7	6
Sheltered with no EO/EL listed	1	1	0	0	0
Total schools reporting sheltered	46	43	32	17	15
Total schools reporting sheltered or mainstreamed	63	63	63	62	61

Note: These counts reflect the number of schools that report a sheltered class in any subject area (i.e., at least one subject area). Therefore, a given district may be represented more than once in a given column.

Table 2: Study schools reporting mainstream instruction, by CELDT levels, by subject area

CELDT Levels	1	2	3	4	5
ELA	18	22	34	41	46
Math	28	32	45	49	54
Science	29	33	47	50	56
Social Studies	26	30	44	49	54
Total schools reporting mainstreaming with SDAIE	29	33	48	51	57

Likewise, schools also identified poor teacher effectiveness and inadequate training and support as a major challenge in educating ELs, although they more often focused on ineffective institutional support, followed by students characterized as underprepared and unmotivated. Schools also cited lack of parent involvement as a challenge. (See box 1.)

Box 1: Biggest challenges in the instruction of middle school English Learners	
District Interview Data	School Interview Data
1. Ineffective teaching practices	1. Ineffective institutional (district and site) support
2. Ineffective/insufficient teacher professional development	2. "Deficits" in student development (low motivation and limited education)
3. Inconsistent program implementation across district schools	3. Ineffective preparation/ support for EL teaching and low content area teacher motivation to teach ELs
	4. Lack of parent involvement

Inadequate EL Materials and Pacing Guides Determine EL Instruction to a Large Degree

While districts recognize the need to improve EL instruction, school interviews reveal that teachers are most influenced by the EL textbooks chosen by the district and the pacing guides developed at the district level, and not by professional development efforts to improve instructional approaches. Additionally, it is noteworthy that interviewees focused on EL materials and did not mention content area materials. According to school respondents, EL students simply are not being supported to access subject matter content that the state requires, either through instructional materials or, by and large, through professional development.

Implications

- Both the lack of coherence in programs for ELs at the middle school level and the "implementation gap" between districts and schools point out the need for comprehensive reform. The status quo must go. Building the capacity of administrators to support EL instruction in middle schools may help, but no districts provide for it in their EL plans or program supports.
- Districts clearly recognize the need for teacher professional development to support the instruction of English Learners. The short supply of teachers well prepared to work with ELs is a challenge to all districts. In both ELD and content area classes, teachers are felt to lack pedagogical or subject matter skills to support English Learners, regardless of CLAD credentials. Schools echoed the need to increase teacher effectiveness. These district and school findings underscore the need for unpacking what constitutes effective, high-quality professional development for ELD and content area teachers of middle school ELs, and making it widely available.

- An important issue that emerges from school findings is a lack of alignment between schools' primary supports for and challenges to their ELs' academic development and linguistic acquisition. Teachers' and students' lack of motivation were identified as primary challenges, yet, only 6 of 62 school interviewees identified a focus on student engagement as a support they offer. None identified a focus on teacher engagement and motivation. Similarly, parental involvement was identified as a major challenge by school interviewees, but only 2 of 62 schools identified a focus on involving parents as an important support they provide.
- The complexities not only in programs, services, and supports for ELs but also in definitions and relationships between the various levels of authority that influence the instruction of ELs are myriad (see the full report, *What are we doing to middle school English Learners: Findings and recommendations for change from a study of California EL programs* [Research Report]). However, case studies developed from a subset of participating schools reveal at the school and classroom level what it can mean to be an English Learner in a California middle school, based on the choices that schools make in the placement of EL students and in the teaching and learning practices that are promoted in their academic programs.

Recommendations Based on Case Studies and Best Practices

In addition to mapping the EL landscape in California middle schools, study researchers also investigated the specific instructional context of middle schools through case studies of five middle schools where students were performing above state averages. Based on what these schools demonstrate about current practices, and how consonant or dissonant these practices are with current knowledge on instructed second language acquisition, researchers made recommendations that can be considered from several vantage points: state, district, school, and classroom.

Case Study Schools

Researchers intended to identify a small subset of schools where "promising practices" for the instruction of English Learners could be reported for consideration by other middle schools. Schools were identified by triangulation of student data (substantially higher than average EL performance on standardized measures), survey responses, and district recommendations.

Researchers conducted preliminary observations and interviews in 12 schools and selected 5 schools as representative "cases." In some schools, researchers did find promising practices. In other schools, "unpromising practices" could not be ignored. Examples of both kinds are reported and merit attention.

Guiding Assumptions

A coherent program of instruction for English Learners will be guided by a coherent set of assumptions about who the learners are, what they are capable of, and the practices that will support them. In two of the case study schools, coherent but different sets of guiding assumptions highlight the importance of those assumptions.

At Bay City Middle School, English Learners in the school's ELD program are vigorously "sheltered" from grade-level content, while English Learners no longer eligible for ELD sink or swim in mainstream classes (the district limits the number of years students can stay in ELD).

Bay City Middle School

The Bay City Middle School is a neighborhood school in a neighborhood of newly arrived immigrants and other Latino families who have settled in the inner city. As has been true for the past 15 years at Bay City, about 4 of every 10 students enter the school as English Learners. Over the years, a highly structured, multi-level ELD program has been constructed to serve a minority of these students.

Twenty-two percent of Bay City's English Learners are enrolled in the ELD program. Typically, they spend three years with ELD *High Point* curriculum, which the school *decelerates*, so that students exit eighth grade having completed fifth-grade content. In other content areas as well, these students are "sheltered" from core grade-level content and curriculum. Instead, the school offers many levels of ELD or sheltered content instruction. Even students at CELDT level 5 can find themselves placed in sheltered math and science classes. Teachers report that the ELD program does not prepare students to enter the core curriculum classes.

On the other hand, the 78 percent of English Learners who are not eligible for ELD (English Learners who have already exited ELD in earlier grades) are placed in mainstream content area classes, where teachers are not prepared to support them. Many of these students are two or more years below grade level on the state's standardized language arts test, and so must enroll in one of the school's two reading interventions. Forty percent of the school's EL students populate these courses.

In 2009, English Learners at Bay City redesignated fluent English proficient at the rate of 12.2 percent, compared with the state average of 10.8 percent.

At Inland City Middle School, the focus is on getting English Learners out of ELD and into grade-level courses. A related emphasis is acceleration rather than remediation.

Inland City Middle School

Inland City Middle School is located in a solidly middle-class neighborhood, but neighborhood students tend to enroll elsewhere. The school is in its fifth year of Program Improvement. Yet in the past two years, the school's API index has risen impressively, a total of 71 points.

The bedrock of the school's focus on improvement has been universal access to grade-level content. For example, all students who are not ready for algebra are placed in intensive double-period, gender-segregated prep classes with some of the school's best teachers. In 2009, eighth grade ELs performed unusually well, with 34 percent scoring proficient or higher, far above the state average of 14 percent. Forty percent of ELs enroll in mainstream courses; their classmates are native English speakers, their teachers all have CLAD credentials, and the content is at grade level or above. Even English Learners at the lowest CELDT levels participate in the school's improvement culture, finishing the three-year *High Point* sequence in two years, for example, in classes where teachers use it only as a supplement to the grade-level content they otherwise provide. Any student in the school, EO or EL, who is struggling in language arts enrolls in a two- or three-period block that uses a grade-level curriculum aligned with grade-level content standards rather than a below-grade-level reading intervention. Even so, only 6 percent of ELs are in these courses.

Reclassification rates for the school's English Learners are double the state rate, even though the school's reclassification criteria are the most stringent among the case study schools. A concern is that these criteria may be unnecessarily stringent, delaying reclassification for many of the 49 percent of Inland City ELs who are early advanced or advanced by CELDT standards

Recommendations about remediation and acceleration:

- **Accelerate the pace at which English Learners engage with grade-level content.**
- **Provide additional grade-level support (not below-grade-level remediation) to students who need it.**
- **Reconsider redesignation criteria to favor access to grade-level content.**

Structural Supports

How can schools be organized to best support English Learners? What structures need to be in place? Foothill City Middle School, a small, autonomous school, is an example of a school that is built to support learners. The school flourishes to a large degree because of its strong outreach to parents and a staff that is committed to everyone's growth — students', parents', and their own. It is a true learning community.

Foothill City Middle School

Foothill City Middle School is a small, autonomous school of about 300 students. Anyone in the district may attend, but the school demographics reflect the school's low-income Latino and Asian neighborhood. About half of students are English Learners.

Adults and students know each other at Foothill. First period every day is "Advisory," and every teacher and administrator in the building is involved. Advisory groups are small and have two purposes, academic and personal. As a matter of course, advisory leaders keep track, with students, of students' progress on assignments and learning goals. Advisory is also a place for community building, character building, and what the school calls "challenge activities." Challenge activities are developed by three grade-level Advisory coordinators, who plan together and with their grade-level teachers each Friday for the following week's Advisory classes. For example, one Advisory period students were involved in a teacher-designed game about academic choices, "College for All." Explicit in the game's design is the message that every student in the school will attend college.

The school's Family Resource Center offers English classes to parents three days a week and other parent education classes once a month. It also serves as a catalyst for parent engagement and support of students. Sign-in sheets from recent meetings reflect that an

average of 75 parents attend monthly School Site Council meetings and another 25 attend meetings of the English Learner Advisory Council. The director of the family center is a paid position, funded through the after-school program, but all other personnel are volunteers, and there is no shortage of them.

Teachers at Foothill City invest in their own learning. A fulltime "instructional facilitator" leads two series of ongoing professional development each year, one of which focuses on ELs. Teachers also select personal target areas to work on. In focus groups, they support one another's action research, and the culmination for each teacher is a formal presentation to peers. Teachers post their presentation materials in the school hallways, publicly demonstrating their commitment to students and to their own professional growth.

For English Learners specifically, the school structures a before-school period known as "AM Boost," designed to prepare ELs stalled at CELDT levels 3 and 4 to enroll in mainstream, not ELD, classes by the time they get to high school. In AM Boost classes, students practice using the academic language they will need later that day in their English/humanities courses. ELD teachers use the district's ELD course of study instead of *High Point* curriculum and are also supported by the instructional facilitator to develop their own standards-based materials. (AM Boost is also available for students who are below grade level in math, as is an after-school math program.)

Support for English Learners extends into the mainstream classes, where instructional practices mirror those of the ELD and AM Boost classes: interactive, language-rich tasks that structure high levels of collaboration and student talk about grade-level academic content and processes. ELD level 1 and 2 students have their own self-contained English and social studies class, but they are mainstreamed for math and science. For these classes, a tutor accompanies the students and helps with translation and clarification on the spot.

While Foothill City English Learners redesignate at a relatively high rate of 19.2 percent, faculty and administrators remain dissatisfied with students' progress. "We need to do everything we are doing, but do it better," says the instructional facilitator.

Recommendations about structural supports:

- **Create small schools, or schools within schools, where relationships count.**
- **Hire and nurture talented advocates for ELs, in leadership and teaching roles.**
- **Bring parents into the school in meaningful ways.**
- **Create Advisory periods that are academically and socially meaningful.**
- **Invest in ongoing professional development that involves all teachers in understanding how to support English Learners.**
- **Provide targeted support, such as AM Boost, for ELs who need it.**

Placement Decisions

English Learners' encounter with school begins with placement decisions. At Valley City Middle School, isolating and stigmatizing placements for ELs tend to be self-fulfilling sentences for many students, while affirmative placements seem to create their own rewards.

Valley City Middle School

Valley City Middle School enjoys a school culture steeped in success. About 1,200 of the school's 2,300 students are enrolled in the campus GATE program. Another 850 or so have won lottery places in the magnet science, math, and technology program. A third program serves about 350 neighborhood students.

The small percentage of students who are English Learners are placed in one of two dramatically different academic trajectories. The highest scoring 20 percent are mainstreamed into all content area classes except ELA. The other 80 percent spend their days in sheltered classes, grouped with special education students and any students identified with serious behavior problems. Thirty-one percent of Valley City ELs redesignate as fluent English proficient, but not many of them come from the isolated, demotivating sheltered classes. The school's EL coordinator observes, "The students with good models have moved quickly. Those without good models don't move forward, they get stuck."

Recommendations about placement decisions:

- **Avoid EL placements that are isolating and stigmatizing. Do not deny any group of EL students a well-supported experience of challenging mainstream classes.**

Because EL placement is so important, both initially and as students learn and grow, recognize the variables that go into EL placement. Some English Learners have had very little schooling or are not literate in their first language (L1); they need to first develop rich literacy skills in their own language since it is not possible to learn to read with understanding in an unknown language. Other ELs may be highly literate in their L1; they should be supported to transfer these skills into their new language through accelerated development of oral English. In different content areas, English Learners' disciplinary knowledge should determine their appropriate courses and the extra supports they may need to accelerate their development and mainstream them into regular subject matter courses as soon as possible.

Timing of EL testing is also important. Often, CELDT results come too late to inform placement decisions. Students take the CELDT between July and October, but scoring is done by the state and results are typically not made available to students' schools until January or February, long after most class assignments have been made.

Recommendations about placement testing:

- **Make EL placement more nimble. Know what students know, including in their L1.**
- **Know enough about students' skills to make appropriate placements in the absence of CELDT scores. (A more direct recommendation would be to the California Department of Education: Adjust CELDT timing to make it useful to schools.)**

Curriculum Supports

In the study survey of ELD programs, schools overwhelmingly cited the curriculum and pacing guides provided by the districts as the most influential component of districts' programs for English Learners. In four of the five case study schools, districts had prescribed the *High Point* ELD program, and most teachers and administrators bemoaned the limitations of this protracted below-grade-level approach. Many ELD teachers either supplemented *High Point* with grade-level curriculum or they made *High Point* the supplement in classes driven by grade-level curriculum. (At the small, autonomous Foothill City Middle School, where ELD teachers were free not to choose *High Point*, they didn't. And they were supported by the school's ELD coordinator and instructional facilitator to create their own materials.)

As for content area courses, study respondents reported that subject matter texts do not support access by English Learners, and that, by and large, professional development does not fill the gap.

Recommendations about curriculum supports:

- **Accelerate the pace at which English Learners engage with grade-level content. (Purposely, this recommendation is being repeated!)**
- **Support ELD teachers in supplementing below-grade materials with grade-level materials and in creating their own materials.**
- **Demand content area materials that support access for English Learners.**

Pedagogical and Professional Development Supports

Complaints about the preparation and ongoing professional development of teachers to support English Learners was a recurring chord in the study survey of ELD programs. District and school respondents alike expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of instruction provided to ELs. Classroom observations in case study schools did little to allay those concerns. It was the unusual teacher who understood and could implement quality, accelerated instruction for English Learners.

Acceleration presupposes that teachers know how to provide students with lessons in which high challenge is balanced with high support — notably, a wide variety of scaffolding techniques. Furthermore, designing and teaching well-scaffolded lessons presupposes that teachers have robust subject matter knowledge, understand the linguistic demands of their discipline, and have the pedagogical expertise to put these together for English Learners.

It is not the case that ELs first need to learn English and then subject matter content. Guadalupe Valdes and colleagues (2009) have proposed that a serious problem in the teaching of English Learners has to do with the curricularization of language, that is, breaking down and segmenting language so that it can be "taught," "learned," and "tested" in gradual increments. Likewise, as Rod Ellis (2005) has pointed out, the atomistic teaching of language structures may render good results in atomistic testing, but it does not produce competent users of language. Instead, students need to be invited to engage in activity that has them explain, compare and contrast, and hypothesize — in collaboration with others.

Such a prescription necessarily involves an emphasis on three key elements: oral interaction, and students' metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness. The importance of practicing English orally in sustained discourse about academic ideas and processes cannot be overstated. Even in the case study schools, where ELs perform better than in other schools, students did not get nearly as much practice in talking through ideas with others as research suggests is necessary (Schleppegrell, 2009; Gibbons, 2009). The development of students' language awareness and metacognitive processes is pivotal in fostering their autonomy. If students understand disciplinary processes at work in English, and how to learn, they will own the tools for becoming competent learners as the exigencies of language and content increase during their academic lives and beyond.

Recommendations about pedagogical supports:

- **Design lessons that are demanding but enticing. Scaffold students' access to important disciplinary content and processes.**
- **Design lessons that involve students in explaining, comparing, and hypothesizing — in collaboration with others.**
- **Make sure that all students talk — about key disciplinary concepts and processes!**
- **Develop students' awareness of language and learning so that they can support their own future learning.**

Most teachers will need to be supported in meeting the pedagogical recommendations above. The goals of professional development should be to create in all educators at a school a shared vision of effective teaching — for all students and for English Learners in particular — and to provide supported practice enacting this vision.

In the earlier description of Foothill City Middle School, a very strong culture of professional growth and adult learning was shown to permeate the school. Time, resources, and staff commitment have all been necessary ingredients there. At Ocean City Middle School — where 96 percent of students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch, 40 percent are English Learners, and student turnover is 40 percent a year — a commitment has also been made to professional growth for teachers. All new teachers attend a five-day induction program in which four days are dedicated to EL instructional strategies and lesson planning. All teachers in the school attend SDAIE training. Cross-disciplinary use of graphic organizers has been a focus of recent professional development for all teachers, and the school has on-site math and literacy coaches who conduct professional development, give demonstration lessons, and observe and coach in the classrooms of their peers.

Other case study schools offer much more limited professional development, none of it focused on supporting English Learners across the school.

Decades ago it was assumed that ELs were the responsibility of teachers who were part of the bilingual or English as a second language program. Given current demographics and the projected growth of the EL population in California and nationwide (Fix and Passel, 2003; Papademetriou and Terrazas, 2009), it is safe to assume that all teachers will have ELs in their classes and, thus, should have the expertise to address ELs' needs with quality. Futhermore, knowledge about how to work with ELs in middle and high school is discipline-specific; thus, all secondary teachers need to consider themselves teachers of their subject matter, of reading in their content area, and of the disciplinary uses of English required to engage in valuable and discipline-specific activities (Carnegie Council for Advancing Adolescent Literacy, 2009). Likewise, all administrators need EL-specific professional development so they can

support teachers to do an increasingly better job for English Learners.

Helping all teachers and administrators at a middle school refine their skills continuously has the added advantages of multiplying the number of advocates for the quality education of ELs and other students and of replenishing the pool of knowledgeable and committed educators who can keep the vision clear and the work progressing.

Recommendations about professional development:

- **Create a shared vision across the school of effective teaching — for English Learners and all students.**
- **Create a culture of adult learning that includes time for teachers to work collegially.**
- **Expand teachers' understanding of disciplinary teaching.**
- **Support teachers in problematizing disciplinary texts — analyzing the difficulties EL students will encounter and reformulating content and pedagogy to increase students' access.**
- **Provide administrators with the professional development that allows them to be instructional leaders on behalf of English Learners.**
- **Make ELs everyone's responsibility.**

Finally...

English Learners are not going to go away. In fact, students who were born in this country or educated exclusively in U.S. schools represent the area of greatest growth in the EL population. (Goldenberg, 2008; Batalova, Fix, and Murray, 2007). Students labeled "long-term" ELs (those identified for seven years or more as having limited English proficiency) have been the most severely punished by inadequate academic support. Most schools and districts do not keep separate statistics on their long-term English Learners, but everyone in schools knows who they are: "lifers," as some interviewees dismissively referred to them.

In this country, where we promise a first-rate education for all children, we cannot permit conditions that doom an entire population to something far less. This study is only a tiny part of the work that needs to be done to honor the promise of all students who enter our schools. Within the next decade, 25 percent of all students in the United States will be English Learners (U.S. DOE, 2006). It is far from hyperbole to insist that English Learners are everyone's responsibility.

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