Kappa Delta Pi Group Discussion Resource
Topic: Effective Practices for English Learners

What Does Research Say about Effective Practices for English Learners?
A four-part series of articles written for the *Kappa Delta Pi Record*
by Rhoda Coleman and Claude Goldenberg

Rhoda Coleman is research fellow at The Center for Language Minority Education and Research at California State University, Long Beach, where she also teaches in the College of Education. She was a California State Teacher of the Year and Milken recipient.

Claude Goldenberg is Professor of Education at Stanford University. His research focuses on academic achievement among English Learners. He was on the Committee for the Prevention of Early Reading Difficulties in Young Children and the National Literacy Panel.

Article Titles

- **Introduction and Part I: Oral Language Proficiency**
  Kappa Delta Pi Record 46(1): 10–16

- **Part II: Academic Language Proficiency**
  Kappa Delta Pi Record 46(2): 60–65

- **Part III: Promoting Literacy Development**
  Kappa Delta Pi Record 46(3): 106–111

- **Part IV: Models for Schools and Districts**
  Kappa Delta Pi Record 46(4): 156–163

Resource Summary

English Learners (ELs)—students whose second language is English and who are not fully proficient in English—constitute the fastest growing portion of the K–12 student population. By 2025, according to U.S. government estimates, as many as one in four students in the United States will come from a home where a language other than English is spoken. Because many of these students tend to do poorly in school, teachers are encouraged to regularly use research-based practices to improve these students' academic achievement. Yet knowing which practices actually are research-based—that is, they are supported by research demonstrating impact on student outcomes—is not clear to many educators. This series of articles will help educators identify students' levels of oral and academic language proficiency, offer interactive and direct techniques to promote literacy development, and build and maintain effective programs for ELLs.

Suggestions for use (e.g., learning community, professional development time)
Carving out time to explore the topic of ELLs, using these articles as an aid to discussion, can be beneficial for both administrators and teachers—and, of course, for students. You might consider discussing one article per week during after-school professional development time, or incorporating this timely topic into the schedule for your school's learning community. Another option is to build a half- or full-day workshop around this topic during professional development days.

Expectations (objectives)
- To know the differences between oral language and academic language development.

- To recognize and be able to implement effective, research-based strategies for ELLs.

- To explore effective interactive and direct techniques to use with ELLs.

- To become familiar with various models for ELL programs and to determine what might be most effective for ELL students in your school or district.

Study Questions

Introduction and Part I: Oral Language Proficiency
Establishing oral communication and developing levels of oral language proficiency are critical to ELL students' learning and achievement.

1. What is the difference between oral language and academic language?

2. Describe the various levels of oral language development for an English Learner.

3. What are some strategies for promoting oral language development within a group of English Learners?

4. What are some strategies for differentiating instruction and promoting oral language of English Learners within a diverse classroom?

5. Think about an English Learner in your classroom and describe for the group that student's level of proficiency. What techniques might be effective for promoting that student's oral language proficiency?

Part II: Academic Language Proficiency
Using strategies and techniques that make academic content more accessible, classroom teachers can help ELL students keep pace academically.

1. Compare and contrast academic and conversational language.

2. What types of language prerequisites are necessary to enable an English Learner to access the curriculum?

3. What is sheltered instruction and what might it look like in the classroom?

4. What roles do vocabulary and background knowledge play in studying a content area? How can a teacher differentiate instruction for English Learners to gain proficiency and become better prepared for content study?

5. To better prepare English Learners for content study, what cues and other study aids might you use in your classroom?

Part III: Promoting Literacy Development
Using interactive and direct techniques, classroom teachers can help English Learners develop their English reading and writing skills.

1. Describe how the same literacy development techniques can be effective with both English Learners and English speakers.

2. What are two basic types of strategies for helping English Learners develop English reading and writing skills?

3. Do students need to develop literacy skills in their first language before they can develop them in English? Why or why not?

4. Describe how interactive techniques for English Learners might look in your classroom?

5. Think of an English Learner in your classroom and describe how using scaffolding strategies might be effective for helping that student attain literacy.

Part IV: Models for Schools and Districts
With consistent and coherent policies in place, schools and districts can build and maintain effective programs for English Learners.

1. What are some characteristics of a school that has an effective English Language Development program?

2. What are some initial steps a school might take toward the goal of improving achievement in the English Learner population?

3. How can the regular assessment of English Learners achieve results? What types of assessments might be implemented?

4. Why might some teachers resist implementing specific strategies with English Learners in their classrooms?

5. How might a school or district promote the implementation of effective strategies with English Learners?

Next steps
1. Classroom teachers may identify 2–3 strategies suggested, as appropriate for their ELL students, to implement during the coming weeks.

2. After several weeks, meet again in your learning community to discuss specific outcomes and reflect on needed modifications of various approaches.

3. Administrators may meet with peers within the district to compare and evaluate ELL programs, their effectiveness, and suggested modifications.

What Does Research Say about Effective Practices for ENGLISH LEARNERS?

Introduction and Part I: Oral Language Proficiency

by Rhoda Coleman and Claude Goldenberg

Establishing oral communication and developing levels of oral language proficiency are critical to ELL students' learning and achievement.

English Language Learners (ELLs)—students whose second language is English and who are not fully proficient in English—constitute the fastest growing portion of the K–12 student population (Goldenberg 2008). By 2025, according to U.S. government estimates, as many as one in four students in the United States will come from a home where a language other than English is spoken (Spellings 2005). Because many of these students tend to do poorly in school, teachers are encouraged to regularly use research-based practices to improve these students' academic achievement. Yet knowing which practices actually are research-based—that is, they are supported by research demonstrating impact on student outcomes—is not clear to many educators.

In this series of four articles, the authors will demystify what is and is not "research-based" as determined by two recent reports—*Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth* (August and Shanahan 2006); and *Educating English Language Learners* (Genesee et al. 2006)—and select publications that have appeared since.

Uncertainty about Best Practices

To gain a sense of how school districts make instructional decisions for English Language Learners in an era of high-stakes testing and district-wide reform, the first author collected observational and interview data (Coleman 2006). Three large urban districts—each of which had selected very different English Language Development (ELD) programs and approaches— participated in her study.

When interviewed about how they decided which approach or materials to use when teaching ELLs, teachers and administrators in the three districts expressed consistent frustrations. Although many were told they should use research-based practices, they often were not given adequate guidance for how to do so. One administrator shared (Coleman 2006, 119):

There are only theories about what works. Until the research gives us some definitive answers, we're just guessing. I went to the accountability institute from the Department of Education and they don't have the plan. There's no plan, no prototype, a lot of problems discussed and a lot of expectations, and it's been that way for 20 years. We need a plan! They tell us to do it, but they don't tell us how. They don't know how, and they have nothing to give us. We need to find out what works and have some consistency—a well-trained teacher, a good program, and consistency.

Some educators are not well-informed about the state of current knowledge about educating ELLs. They may assume that determining effective practices is a matter of picking a philosophy, choosing among competing theories, or perhaps simply guessing. Consider one teacher's comments (Coleman 2006, 124):

We believed in the philosophy of teaching English through content. Our school's program had a good reputation. I had heard a lot of schools were using it. You hear about the program all the time—not about data or research, but about using it. I'm sure the research was included. But its reputation, not outcome data, influenced us. We agreed with the philosophy because it fits in with the SDAIE strategies and BICS and CALP. In my master's class, we thoroughly reviewed ELD programs, and it came out on top. Everyone agreed.

Overwhelmed with mandates, others interviewed are doing the best they can with the information and time

Rhoda Coleman *is research fellow at The Center for Language Minority Education and Research at California State University, Long Beach, where she also teaches in the College of Education. She was a California State Teacher of the Year and Milken recipient.*

Claude Goldenberg *is Professor of Education at Stanford University. His research focuses on academic achievement among English learners. He was on the Committee for the Prevention of Early Reading Difficulties in Young Children and the National Literacy Panel.*

they have. One ELD teacher shared (Coleman 2006, 127):

> There's so much to teach, so many student needs. My colleague is here practically every day until it's dark, and I applaud her. She puts in long, long hours. I have a family I have to go home and cook for. So I have to choose what's the best, what's the quickest, what's going to make the best impact, and I have tons of things to choose from. I've got GLAD and SDAIE. I've been through all the ELD workshops; and so I take what I learned and I apply it. My plate's pretty full right now.

Undoubtedly this is a confusing, difficult, and ideologically charged area. But current and ongoing research is suggesting some answers that go beyond philosophy, theory, and guessing. Educators must know about this research and its implications for what they should do in their classrooms. At the same time, they also must know about areas where research does not yet provide clear answers and where educators must make informed "best guesses" until a firmer basis exists to guide practice and policy.

About **the ELL Series**

This four-part series of articles written exclusively for the *Kappa Delta Pi Record* summarizes what research says about effective practices for ELLs—and what it does not say. The authors focus on several recent reviews of the research (August and Shanahan 2006; Genesee et al. 2006; Goldenberg 2008; Saunders and Goldenberg, in press), providing the key findings and explaining how those conclusions might inform classroom practice. Readers are encouraged to seek out these references to deepen and broaden their understanding of this challenging, but increasingly important area of research.

This first article in the series covers some of the research on oral language proficiency, and the second article (to appear in *Record* Winter 2010) addresses the differences and similarities of academic and conversational language. The third article (*Record* Spring 2010) deals with literacy, both in English and in students' first language. Article four (*Record* Summer 2010) takes this research into practice by describing an observation tool (CQell) that is useful for planning and coaching teachers in preparation for implementing effective strategies in their classrooms. The final article also offers practical implementation recommendations for administrators and teacher leaders so that the research can more readily translate into practice.

Part I: Oral Language Proficiency

ELD instruction must be a priority from the moment students walk into school. Whether students are in primary language or English-only programs, ELD instruction needs to be emphasized. Establishing oral communication and developing levels of oral language proficiency is critical to ELL students' learning and achievement. So that focus is generally a starting place for working with ELL students.

What practices are most effective for establishing and developing oral language proficiency? Though there is a large reservoir of worldwide literature on second language instruction, the research base to guide teachers of ELLs in U.S. schools—which represent a particular context for second language instruction—is surprisingly small. The authors summarize here key conclusions about ELL's oral language proficiency from research and research reviews, and then provide a classroom scenario that illustrates effective strategies in practice.

English oral language is best taught through explicit, direct instruction and interactive approaches.

Genesee et al. (2006, 139–40) reported, "The best recommendation to emerge from our review favors instruction that combines interactive and direct approaches. . . . Presenting direct instruction in interactive learning environments ensures that it is meaningful, contextualized, and individualized. The choice of methods will depend in large part on the objectives of instruction and learner characteristics."

Educators should explicitly teach ELLs the elements of English (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, conventions) and social conventions (e.g., greetings, conversational conventions). To the extent that explicit teaching helps ELLs acquire English, effective teaching for these students is similar in many ways to effective teaching for most students. As do all learners, ELLs benefit from clear goals and objectives, well-structured tasks, adequate practice,

opportunities to interact with others, frequent assessment, and reteaching when needed, as well as other elements of effective instruction identified in the professional and research literature.

Interactive approaches provide opportunities for authentic communication.

Despite issues and controversies in the field of second language acquisition, there is consensus that a combination of explicit teaching and plentiful opportunities for meaningful and authentic communication helps promote learning a second language (Ellis 2005; Spada and Lightbown 2008). Researchers can say with some assurance that both types of experiences are necessary, and each can contribute to learning a second language.

ELLs also must have ample opportunities for authentic and functional use of English. Learning the elements of a language is very useful; but without extensive use (comprehending and producing the language), it is very difficult—perhaps impossible—to acquire high levels of proficiency. Interactions with teachers and fellow students may be open-ended or may encourage more complex linguistic attributes, preferably both.

Structuring tasks and preparing students for interactions with English speakers enables them to focus on productive verbal exchanges. It is helpful to teach and model strategies for successful interactions between ELLs and English speakers. Educators want to ensure that ELLs have the language skills to interact productively with English speakers on academic tasks. This means that cooperative group work should provide opportunities for structured practice, not just spontaneous conversation.

Though authentic opportunities to use the language are a valuable outcome of cooperative learning, educators also must provide structured opportunities. Without structured opportunities to practice Standard English, students often develop what has been referred to as "Learnerese"— an interlanguage pidgin (Schmida 1996) that can deviate considerably from Standard English. Fillmore and Snow (2000, 24) suggested, "when there is no direct instruction in such situations, children either can make little progress learning English, or they can learn it from one another." The outcome is "Learnerese," about which Fillmore and Snow (2000, 24) cautioned:

Students who speak this variety have settled into a variety of English that is fairly stable and that many of them speak fluently and with confidence. They are no longer language learners, because they are no longer working out the details of English.

These students "fossilize" and arrest their development at an intermediate level of proficiency and become fluent speakers of non-standard English. Scarcella (2003) also warned that imperfect practice doesn't lead to advanced proficiency unless supplemented with intensive, specialized instructional intervention and carefully delivered instruction.

Daily oral English language instruction that targets language acquisition is recommended, about 45 minutes per day.

However, research is lacking to make firm, data-based guidelines on the number of minutes. In addition, a separate ELD block that targets language acquisition appears to be somewhat more effective than relying exclusively on "integrating" ELD with other parts of the curriculum. Integrating ELD may be useful in preparing students for comprehension of the content of their core lessons and may be helpful for second language learning per se. Nonetheless, the evidence currently available suggests that a separate ELD period, or block, makes a distinct contribution to English Language Development.

Students need to learn expressive as well as receptive language.

Using sheltered strategies (see Echevarria, Vogt, and Short 2008) makes academic content comprehensible; that is, students develop *receptive* language in order to comprehend or, at least, get the gist of a lesson. As a result of such lessons, they do not necessarily develop *expressive* language so that they can speak and write in the language. Therefore, students need to be taught expressive language so that they can answer questions, participate in discussions, and be successful at showing what they know on assessments (Lightbown and Spada 2006).

Grouping by proficiency level for ELD instruction may be helpful.

Second language learners are likely to go through successive levels of language proficiency as they progress from being nonspeakers to acquiring native-like proficiency. Though no particular set of stages is universally agreed upon, thinking of second language development as proceeding along a fairly predictable sequence of levels may be helpful. Table 1 illustrates one such sequence.

Table 1. Levels of Oral Language Proficiency

As a simplification of a complex phenomenon, proficiency levels can be briefly and generally described as follows (Krashen and Terrell 1983; California Department of Education 2008).

Beginning (Level 1). At first there might be no verbal response (sometimes referred to as "preproduction" or "silent period"); but later, students respond in single-word and two-word phrases. Students can repeat words and short phrases, and answer simple "who, what, where, when," and "yes/no" questions requiring one- or two-word responses. They can understand and follow a few simple commands and, after listening to a story prompt, participate in telling a story using isolated words.

Early Intermediate (Level 2). Students hear and repeat the beginning, middle, and end speech sounds. They use routine expressions and common vocabulary, and can respond using phrases and simple sentences. They can ask and answer simple questions, describe a picture prompt using common vocabulary, understand and follow simple commands, and tell a story using incomplete sentences and fragments after listening to a prompt.

Intermediate (Level 3). Students respond in longer sentences and with more detail. There is more experimentation with sentence patterns. They know a variety of verb forms and, after listening to a story prompt, tell a story with some complete sentences. These students can follow simple instructions in an academic context and participate (although haltingly) in simple academic discussions when the vocabulary is controlled and supports are provided (e.g., illustrations, demonstrations, gestures, and other redundant information to aid comprehension).

Early Advanced (Level 4). Students respond with detail and a more extensive vocabulary within more complex sentences. They can sustain a conversation. Early-advanced students understand implied meaning and use standard grammar with fewer errors than before. After listening to a story prompt, they can tell a story in a logical sequence using details and basic sentence construction. These students can follow more difficult directions in an academic context and participate more fully in academic discussions, even when provided with fewer supports.

Advanced (Level 5). Students initiate and negotiate appropriate discourse using varied grammatical structures and vocabulary. They comprehend multiple meanings and figurative and idiomatic language. Advanced students can follow complex instructions in an academic context and tell a story using fluent sentences and details after listening to a story prompt. Their proficiency is near native-like and they face few, if any, linguistic obstacles to full academic participation.

There is no research that directly examines the effects of grouping by English proficiency level. Research in reading and math, however, has suggested that within-class instructional grouping by achievement levels helps promote student achievement (Slavin, 1987; 1989). ELLs within general classrooms should be grouped carefully and *not* segregated by language proficiency levels. However, during ELD instruction *specifically*, grouping should be by language proficiency with instruction carefully tailored to students' language-learning needs.

Educators can differentiate instruction in several ways—or even combinations of ways. Some examples include:

- Many schools have teachers within each grade level who exchange students during an ELD block. Students are typically grouped so that levels 1 and 2 go to one teacher, level 3 goes to another teacher, levels 4 and 5 to another, and English Only (EO) to another.
- Whether or not this occurs, teachers may do a whole group lesson and then break into small groups to reteach and address the needs of specific proficiency levels.
- Some teachers do small-group instruction based on proficiency level first—to "frontload" the language needed for the upcoming lesson—and then teach the whole group.

Other teachers differentiate within a heterogenous larger group by providing comprehensible input, using graphic organizers and sentence frames, as well as adjusting the phrasing of the questions to each individual student's proficiency level. This also may mean phrasing a sentence so that the beginning proficiency student needs to respond with only one word while the advanced student is encouraged to respond with a complex sentence structure such as "I predict that _____ because _____." Although educators presently lack strong evidence that these "sentence frames" promote language learning, the strategies have potential for helping ELLs develop facility with important language structures.

A word of caution about grouping: Not all differentiation designed for native-speaking students is helpful for specific ELL needs. Some teachers group ELLs with native-speaking struggling readers because each group may score within the same range on literacy assessments. However, their needs can be very different. The low scoring native speaker may have decoding and comprehension processing issues, whereas the beginning ELL student

may have been a fluent decoder who is able to comprehend in the primary language. The ELL's issue more likely is related to vocabulary knowledge, whereas the native speaker may not have this underlying problem.

Academic language—not just conversational language—should be emphasized.

As will be discussed in the next article in this series, academic language is critical for academic success (see, e.g., Scarcella 2003; Bailey 2007; Short and Fitzsimmons 2007). ELD instruction should help provide the language needed for learning content in math, language arts, social studies, science, and all other curricular areas. Ideally, ELD and content area instruction are well articulated to let students apply the language they learn to academic tasks.

Just what is academic language? Academic language refers to the vocabulary, syntax, and other language forms necessary to participate in classroom lessons and various other types of academic interactions. Compared to conversational language, academic language tends to be more abstract and cognitively demanding, and makes more assumptions about what speakers and listeners already know. Instruction in academic English for ELLs must include language lessons designed to ensure that students will understand the content taught in English. This awareness and understanding of the language used in learning a certain subject differs from everyday speech and conversation. Both academic and conversational English are essential to language proficiency, which is the ability to use language for both basic communicative tasks and academic purposes.

Language used for communication skills in everyday social interactions is known as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is the oral and written language related to literacy and academic achievement (Cummins 1984). For academic achievement, students need to be fluent in academic language, idioms associated with schools, and the vernacular of texts and formal writing (Fillmore and Snow 2000). In the next article, the authors take a closer look at the similarities and differences between academic and conversational English, and how students' level in each shapes their learning and social skills.

Closing Thoughts

There can be little doubt that developing high levels of English oral language proficiency should be a priority for teachers of English learners. This conclusion is not to suggest that students' primary language (e.g., Spanish) should be ignored. On the contrary, educators know from research that primary language instruction meaningfully contributes to ELLs' achievement in English (Goldenberg 2008). Nonetheless, it is imperative that teachers help these students acquire English language proficiency quickly and at a high level to increase the chances of their academic success throughout school.

There are still many unknowns and unresolved issues about how to accomplish this goal. But the outline of a productive overall framework is beginning to emerge. The authors close this article with an example of how a lesson might look in classroom practice.

Glossary of Terms

Academic Language: The language associated with schools; the language of texts and formal writing. It consists primarily of the language functions needed for academic content and requires use of higher-order thinking skills.

BICS: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills. These are the communication skills used in everyday social interactions (Cummins 1984).

CALP: Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. This is a proficiency of oral and written language related to literacy and academic achievement (Cummins 1984).

ELD: English Language Development, sometimes referred to as English as a Second Language (ESL). This is a specific curriculum that takes place within a dedicated time block where ELD is the content area. The purpose of ELD is to establish a solid foundation in the English language. Students often are grouped by proficiency levels.

ELL: English Language Learner, often used interchangeably with EL. This term describes a student whose second language is English and who is not yet fully proficient in English.

GLAD: Guided Language Acquisition Design. This design has an integrated language arts approach using a variety of reading, writing, listening, and speaking strategies that integrate well with content instruction.

Sheltered Instruction/SDAIE: Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English. The terms are often used interchangeably. Strategies and techniques, such as visuals, gestures, and graphic organizers are used to make grade-level content comprehensible. Content is determined by grade-level content standards.

Elementary ELD Instruction

Ms. B has all five levels of proficiency in her regular class. But every day at a set time, the 2nd-grade teachers trade students so that the students are grouped by proficiency level for 45 minutes of ELD instruction. This trade occurs schoolwide, with each grade level determining the allotted time for ELD groupings. There are 20 students in Ms. B's ELD class, all early intermediate and intermediate levels. Sometimes she teaches a large group lesson; other times she teaches in small groups. Today she is "frontloading" the vocabulary with the early intermediate students before beginning the whole group lesson.

Ms. B tells her early-intermediate group of seven students that today they will talk about pets and how they are the same and different. Her lesson objective is that students will use compare/contrast words such as "both" and "but" to talk about various pets. These same sentence structures will be applied later to their discussion of the history social-science standard of comparing and contrasting now and long ago. During the small group lesson, the intermediate-level students work independently on a related assignment—writing a story and drawing a picture with labels about a pet they have or would like to have.

She begins the small group lesson by showing various colorful pictures of different pets and asking the students to find their shoulder partner and answer the question, "What pet would you like to have?" Ms. B lets them talk for a few minutes while she walks around actively listening to what they are saying. Then she asks them to report out, "What are some pets you would like to have?"

On the board, Ms. B creates a word web of different kinds of pets. Ms. B chooses two frequently mentioned pets from the list and draws a Venn diagram so that students can generate vocabulary describing the similarities and differences of the two pets. Ms. B records the students' responses on the Venn diagram. Now Mrs. B wants them to start using these terms in sentences so they can talk about the pets. To encourage students to respond in complete sentences, she writes on the board:

A _____has _____, but a _____has _____.
Both _____and _____have _____.

She models, "A dog has fur, but a goldfish has scales. Both a dog and a goldfish have tails." Ms. B gives several examples. She then says, "Turn to your partner, choose some other descriptive words from the chart, and tell your partner something else that is alike and something that is different about a dog and a goldfish." They are encouraged to use versions of the patterns on the board, but may use other verbs such as "is" and "are." Students do this several times and report out to the group. Using the frames, they practice writing the sentences on paper. This small group is now ready to join the larger group for the whole group lesson on comparing and contrasting various kinds of pets. They got a head start by having the language frontloaded for them.

When all the 2nd-grade teachers get together to plan for the social studies unit Now and Long Ago, they all will incorporate into their content lesson the Venn diagram and compare/contrast frames the students learned during ELD.

References

August, D., and T. Shanahan, eds. 2006. *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Bailey, A. L., ed.. 2007. *The language demands of school: Putting academic English to the test.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

California Department of Education. 2008. *California English Language Development Test (CELDT): Reporting and using individual 2008–09 results.* Sacramento: California Department of Education. Available at *www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/resources.asp.*

Coleman, R. 2006. The role of school districts in the selection and support of English language development programs and approaches. Unpublished doctoral diss., University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Cummins, J. 1984. Wanted: A theoretical framework for relating language proficiency to academic achievement among bilingual students. In *Language proficiency and academic achievement,* ed. C. Rivera, 2–19. Clevedon, Avon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Echevarria, J., M. Vogt, and D. J. Short. 2008. *Making content comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP® model,* 3rd ed. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Ellis, R. 2005. Principles of instructed language learning. *System* 33(2): 209–24.

Fillmore, L. W., and C. E. Snow. 2000. What teachers need to know about language. In *What teachers need to know about language,* ed. C. T. Adger, C. E. Snow, and D. Christian, 7–53. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Genesee, F., K. Lindholm-Leary, W. M. Saunders, and D. Christian. 2006. *Educating English Language Learners.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Goldenberg, C. 2008. Teaching English Language Learners: What the research does—and does not—say. *American Educator* 32(2): 8–23, 42–44.

Krashen, S. D., and T. D. Terrell. 1983. *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom.* Hayward, CA: Alemany Press.

Lightbown, P. M., and N. Spada. 2006. *How languages are learned,* 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Scarcella, R. 2003. *Accelerating academic English: A focus on the English Language Learner.* Oakland: Regents of the University of California.

Schmida, M. 1996. "I don't understand what she be saying": Reconsidering the interlanguage and semilingual theories and explanations for first language loss and limited SLA. Unpublished manuscript, University of California at Berkeley.

Short, D. J., and S. Fitzsimmons. 2007. *Double the work: Challenges and solutions to acquiring language and academic literacy for adolescent English Language Learners.* A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Slavin, R. E. 1987. Ability grouping and student achievement in elementary schools: A best-evidence synthesis. *Review of Educational Research* 57(3): 293–336.

Slavin, R. E., ed. 1989. *School and classroom organization.* Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Spada, N., and P. M. Lightbown. 2008. Form-focused instruction: Isolated or integrated? *TESOL Quarterly* 42(2)**:** 181–207.

Spellings, M. 2005. Prepared remarks for Secretary Spellings at the Fourth Annual Celebrate Our Rising Stars Summit hosted by U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition, Dec. 1, Washington, DC.

What Does Research Say about Effective Practices for
ENGLISH LEARNERS?

Part II:
Academic Language Proficiency

by Rhoda Coleman and Claude Goldenberg

Using strategies and techniques that make academic content more accessible, classroom teachers can help ELL students keep pace academically.

This is the second in a four-part series written exclusively for the *Kappa Delta Pi Record*. Each article summarizes what research says about effective practices for ELLs. The authors draw on several recent reviews of the research (August and Shanahan 2006; Genesee et al. 2006; Goldenberg 2008; Saunders and Goldenberg, in press). The first article in the series (which appeared in the Fall 2009 *Record*) covered research on English oral language instruction. This, the second article, deals with academic language and literacy in English. Article three (*Record* Spring 2010) takes this research into practice by describing an observation tool (the CQell) that is useful for planning and coaching teachers who want to implement effective strategies in their classrooms. The final article (*Record* Summer 2010) is about school and district reform and offers practical recommendations for administrators and teacher leaders so that the research can more readily translate into practice.

Academic language is a vital part of content-area instruction and is one of the most pressing needs faced by English Language Learners (ELLs). The fundamental challenge ELLs in all-English instruction face is learning academic content while simultaneously becoming proficient in English. Because of this challenge, we, as educators, do not know to what extent ELLs can keep pace academically with English speakers; nonetheless, our goal should be to make academic content as accessible as possible for these students and promote English language development as students learn academic content.

Academic language differs from everyday language and knowing the differences is important for effective academic instruction. *Academic language* refers to the sort of language competence required for students to gain access to content taught in English and, more generally, for success in school and any career where mastering large and complex bodies of information and concepts is needed (Fillmore and Snow 2000). Academic language, the language of texts and formal writing, is different from everyday speech and conversation, what Cummins (1984) has referred to as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). BICS, in general, is language used for communication skills in everyday social interactions.

In contrast, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is the oral and written language related to literacy and academic achievement (Cummins 1984).

The terms BICS and CALP have somewhat fallen out of favor, in part because they imply a hard dichotomy that might be misleading. There is likely to be a great deal of grey area, where language has both conversational and academic elements. Nonetheless, BICS and CALP identify a useful distinction between (a) language that is relatively informal, contextualized, cognitively less demanding, used in most social interactions, and generally learned more easily; and (b) language that is more formal, abstract, used in academic and explicit teaching/learning situations, more demanding cognitively, and more challenging to learn.

Fluency in academic language is especially critical for academic achievement. Knowledge of academic disciplines—science, social studies, history, mathematics—is, of course, the primary objective of content-area instruction. Just as important is the language needed to learn about and discuss academic content. Most ELLs eventually acquire adequate conversational language skills, but they often lack the academic language skills that are essential for high levels of achievement in the content areas.

Educators must focus on the academic language needed for academic achievement. Yet, we are lacking a solid research base that identifies effective techniques and approaches. There are, however, promising directions—

Rhoda Coleman is Research Fellow at The Center for Language Minority Education and Research at California State University, Long Beach, where she also teaches in the College of Education. She was a California State Teacher of the Year and Milken recipient.
Claude Goldenberg is Professor of Education at Stanford University. His research focuses on academic achievement among English learners. He was on the Committee for the Prevention of Early Reading Difficulties in Young Children and the National Literacy Panel.

e.g., Dutro and Moran (2003), Schleppegrell (2001); Lyster (2007), and Zwiers (2008). Educators are strongly encouraged to learn about them, implement them in their classrooms, and try to determine which best meet the needs of English learners.

For both oral and academic language, students need to be taught expressive as well as receptive language.

Using sheltered instruction strategies makes grade-level academic content comprehensible; that is, students develop *receptive* language in order to comprehend or, at least, get the gist of a lesson. From this type of instruction, students do not necessarily develop *expressive* language so that they can speak and write in the language. Students need to be taught expressive language—"comprehensible output" (Swain 1985)—so that they can answer questions, participate in discussions, and be successful at showing what they know on assessments.

Because content instruction may be an excellent opportunity to teach language skills in a meaningful context, teachers may integrate both types of instruction throughout the day. There is no reason to believe these types of instruction are mutually exclusive. This support for ELLs in the general classroom may be offered in addition to a separate English Language Development (ELD) block.

Academic and conversational English are different . . . and similar!

It is important to note that there *is* a connection between conversational and academic language; they are not completely distinct from each other. Using students' everyday experiences can help students learn academic language. That is, if students are familiar with a task in a social context, they may be able to adopt appropriate language from that task and transfer it to school-based tasks.

For example, a student might know how to retell what happened on a favorite television show or present an argument for why he should be able to go out and play basketball at the park. Accordingly, that student may be able to transfer the language he or she uses to express cause and effect regarding behavior and consequences to a science experiment, an if-then hypothesis structure, or a historical sequence of causally linked events. If a student can compare and contrast dogs and cats, this same structure applies to comparing and contrasting two systems of government. To help students make these language connections, teachers should bring this skill to a conscious level. Though students may be able to make comparisons in their everyday life, they may need to learn how these structures are transferable to school-based situations.

There is not a clear line separating conversational from academic language. Table 1 describes the differences between conversational and academic language and also shows the grey area where the two overlap. Categories used in the table are based on Goldenberg and Coleman (in press).

Academic language instruction should include not only the vocabulary of the content subjects, but also the syntax and text structures. Schleppegrell (2001) distinguished between academic language and everyday speech and explained how academic language is about so much more than learning content-specific, or technical, vocabulary. Students may know the meanings of individual content-specific words, yet still not be able to understand the larger meaning when reading them in a sentence or be able to combine them to write a sentence.

Academic language and curriculum content are closely intertwined. It is not sufficient for a student to comprehend only text and teacher-talk well—that is, to have receptive understanding. The student also must be able to express his or her complete thoughts orally and in writing using academic language. For example, students need to understand how to construct a sentence or paragraph (orally and in writing) that expresses compare/contrast or cause and effect (Dutro and Moran 2003).

Language development and sheltering techniques should be incorporated into content instruction.

Sheltered instruction strategies, or SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English), provide comprehensible input for any content area. The term *comprehensible input* refers to strategies that enable ELLs to understand the essence of a lesson by means of context or visual cues, clarification, and building background knowledge that draws on students' experiences (Krashen and Terrell 1983).

What is often overlooked is that sheltered instruction calls for all lessons to have clearly stated language objectives in addition to providing comprehensible input. Short (1994) discussed the importance of explicit language instruction along with content-area instruction. She advocated developing language objectives in addition to content-area objectives for ELLs to provide them access to the core curriculum. The SIOP® model for making content comprehensible to English Learners also emphasizes the need for a language objective along with a content objective (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short 2008) and suggests the language goals be adjusted for the students' proficiency-levels (Genesee et al. 2006, 191).

Table 1. The Continuum of Conversational to Academic Language

	Conversational language tends to . . .	"Hybrid" area	Academic language tends to . . .
Shared background knowledge	. . . be embedded in meaningful contexts, drawing upon shared background knowledge, or existent in the moment of the conversation. When people converse, they often talk about a specific topic about which they both have at least some direct knowledge, experience, and relevant information.	While discussing unfamiliar content, adequate background knowledge is purposefully provided by a speaker. Both presentation and text may make ample use of visuals, such as charts, posters, and photos, to make the academic content more highly contextualized for the reader/listener.	. . . be relatively decontextualized, relying largely on information contained in the language of the oral or written text. The reader or listener has to provide his or her own relevant background knowledge or context necessary for understanding.
Paralinguistic cues	. . . be fundamentally interpersonal. Face-to-face exchanges allow for contextual and interpersonal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and intonation.	Speakers often use interpersonal cues such as gestures, speaking rate, pauses, and intonation to make the message more comprehensible.	. . . be fundamentally impersonal. Emphasis, mood, and tone must be communicated primarily through words and content. Face-to-face exchange is very limited or nonexistent.
Vocabulary	. . . use more familiar everyday words. Precise meanings generally are not as important as maintaining conversational flow and adequate mutual understanding.	Speakers and texts use unfamiliar words and expressions that make relatively simple concepts more difficult to understand.	. . . use specific and less familiar vocabulary that can be technical, abstract, and carry precise meanings the listener/reader is expected to understand.
Grammatical shortcuts	. . . frequently use grammatical shortcuts, such as "and" or pronouns, whose meanings are apparent to the participants in the context of the conversation. Talk can include nonstandard, colloquial speech.	Speakers and writers can make their content-rich message more accessible by using a conversational tone, which can include figures of speech, familiar expressions, and less density of ideas.	. . . frequently use specific grammatical, organizational, and presentation elements. Writing and speech is more formalized and structured. To establish authority, tone is set by an impersonal, declarative style. Language is denser with more ideas presented.
Language to express cognitive functions	. . . place fewer explicit cognitive demands on the reader or listener. Events and persons are known, familiar, and concrete. Inferences, analyses, and presenting reasoned arguments are typically less prominent.	Everyday conversational events can be cognitively complex and challenging, such as a child logically retelling a television episode and showing a causal sequence, or presenting an argument for why he should be able to stay out late without parents' direct supervision.	. . . be used for more complex cognitive functions, such as summarizing, analyzing, and explaining; relating what is read to other ideas; evaluating and critiquing arguments; composing reasoned, well-developed texts; and interpreting and solving word problems.
Examples	Husband and wife exchange information about what they did at work that day; each is generally familiar with what the other one does and with his or her work colleagues. In an animated conversation, friends discuss a date the night before. Two experienced divers, planning a scuba-diving trip, decide locations and gear they will need. Softball players argue over whether a player was out when she ran to first base. Family members order from a menu at a restaurant. Friends watch a movie and make occasional comments, observations, and jokes to one another. Children take turns during show and tell, sharing with the class a favorite toy from home.	An individual trying to follow a conversation about unfamiliar persons and complicated events is provided background information or shown pictures. A student converses with someone who speaks with little expression, uses little eye contact, and does not respond to others' behaviors or responses. A speaker uses expressions such as "if you juxtapose the two" instead of "if you put them side by side," or asks, "What are the parameters here?" instead of "What do we need to consider?" A person describes a television program to her friend and explains why she found it so moving and insightful.	A student reads a book or listens to a lecture on recent advances in genetics. A teacher shares an encyclopedia article on the Electoral College. A professor of contemporary literature presents a postmodern, post-structuralist analysis of *The Sound and the Fury.* A sociologist is interviewed on a news program and asked to explain the impact of the economic downturn on community-based organizations. A student must explain his reasoning, in writing, when solving a mathematical word problem. Co-workers at a public relations firm must present and argue for their proposed campaign to rehabilitate the tarnished image of a client.

For example, students studying how the saguaro cactus survives in the desert in science (content objective) have a language objective of writing cause-and-effect sentences using signal words "because" and "as a result of." For example, "Because its accordian skin holds water, the saguaro cactus can survive in the desert." and "As a result of its shallow roots, which capture surface water, the saguaro cactus can survive in the desert." A social studies teacher having students interview a grandparent or other elder to learn about the past can instruct students on how to correctly phrase interview questions (language objective). An English teacher having students write about setting (content objective) can use this as an opportunity to teach a lesson on adjectives (language objective). However, the language objectives, like the content objectives, should not be chosen randomly. They should be selected based on the proficiency level and grade level standards appropriate to the students.

Educators must take care that ELD does not displace instruction in academic content. Content-based ELD, which is driven by the ELD standards, does not replace content instruction driven by the content standards. In other words, just because an ELD lesson is about a science topic does not mean it meets the requirements for standards-based science instruction in that grade level. A sheltered lesson makes standards-based content instruction accessible. A content-based ELD lesson has language as a focus, but uses a content area as the medium. This type of lesson is not the same as standards-based content instruction.

Closing **Thoughts**

Most ELLs take years to develop the level of academic English proficiency required for full participation in all-English classrooms (Genesee et al. 2006). It does not take much imagination to conclude that if (a) students are functioning at less than high levels of English proficiency; and (b) instruction is offered only in mainstream academic English, these students will not have access to the core academic curriculum. They will have virtually no chance of performing at a level similar to that of their English-speaking peers. Whether students are in primary language (that is, "bilingual") or English-only programs, educators must focus intensively on providing them with the academic language skills in English they will need to succeed in school and beyond.

To move this discussion from research to practice, let's take a look at a scenario that incorporates some of these recommendations. This is an actual lesson taught by a 5th-grade teacher.

Elementary Academic Instruction

Mrs. C is teaching a 5th grade social studies lesson on immigration. ELD levels range from early intermediate to fluent English. The language objective is for students to write cause-and-effect sentences about the immigrant experience—e.g., "Because we wanted a better life, my family immigrated to the United States" or "My family immigrated to the United States because we wanted a better life." This lesson is designed to motivate interest in and build background for a chapter on immigration in the history textbook that students will read later.

Before students read the state-adopted history textbook, Mrs. C looks for key passages. She analyzes them for any words, phrases, or concepts that may need clarification and any concepts for which she may need to build background knowledge. She also looks for supportive visuals in the textbook, such as charts, graphs, maps, and photos.

Mrs. C begins the lesson by sharing pictures of her family members who were immigrants. Next she puts on a *babushka* (Russian for scarf) and a long skirt and becomes her own immigrant grandmother. Speaking in the first person, she tells the story of when, how, and why she came to America. She points to Russia on a map. As she tells her story, "grandmother" holds up vocabulary cards with the words *immigrant, motivation, perspective, ancestor,* and *descendant*, and she uses each word in context. For example, "I am an immigrant from Russia. I used to live in Russia, but I came to live in America. My motivation or reason for coming to America was . . . ."

Students are then invited to interview her—that is, ask her questions—in preparation for their assignment to interview an immigrant. The person can be a family member or, if that is not practical, a neighbor or teacher. The students and Mrs. C. discuss possible interview questions, using the target vocabulary words, and decide: "From what country did you immigrate to the United States? When did you arrive? What are some things you remember about that experience? What was your motivation for coming/leaving? What was your perspective, or how did you feel about immigrating?" When the students return with their interview responses, Mrs. C records them on a graphic organizer with these headings: Person, Country, Motivation for Immigrating, and Perspective.

Mrs. C models how to turn the answers into cause-and-effect statements, using sentence frames:

_____because _____.

Because_____, _____.

Students respond with sentences orally and in writing—such as,

My great-grandmother immigrated to the United States from Russia in 1903 because she wanted religious freedom. My grandmother likes it here because

she can attend a synagogue.

Because of the potato famine, my ancestors immigrated to the United States from Ireland. They were sad because they had to leave some family members behind.

Following are examples of sentence frames associated with higher-level thinking and text structures found in textbooks. Refer to Dutro and Moran (2003) for modifications by proficiency level.

COMPARE	*Both_____and _____are/have _____.* Both Mars and Venus are planets. Both Saturn and Jupiter have rings.
CONTRAST	*_____are _____, but/ however _____ are_____.* Eukaryotes are found in plants and one-celled organisms, however prokaryotes are found in animals. *While _____,_____.* While eukaryotes carry out all processes of life, prokaryotes rely on many cells working together to function.
CAUSE AND EFFECT	*_____because _____.* Many people came to California around 1849 because gold was discovered there. *Because of _____,_____.* Because of the potato famine around 1850, many Irish immigrated to America. *As a result of _____,_____.* As a result of drought, poor farming methods, the Great Depression, and dust storms, many people lost their farms in the 1930s.
SEQUENCING	*First, _____. Next, _____. Then, _____. Finally, _____.* How Some Volcanoes Are Formed First, the earth plates move, creating friction and heat. Next, the plates melt and become molten magma. Then, the molten magma rises into a gap in the earth's crust. Finally, the volcano erupts and spews lava.
DESCRIPTION	*A _____is/has _____.* *For example, _____.* *In addition, _____.* A saguaro cactus has numerous ways to survive in the desert. For example, it has an accordion skin that expands to hold the limited precipitation. In addition, it has many shallow roots to capture what little rain falls on the surface of the desert.

References

August, D., and T. Shanahan, eds. 2006. *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Cummins, J. 1984. Wanted: A theoretical framework for relating language proficiency to academic achievement among bilingual students. In *Language proficiency and academic achievement,* ed. C. Rivera, 2–19. Clevedon, Avon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Dutro, S. 2005. *A focused approach to frontloading English language instruction for Houghton Mifflin reading, K–6,* 4th ed., California Reading & Literature Project. Santa Cruz, CA: ToucanEd.

Dutro, S., and C. Moran. 2003. Rethinking English language instruction: An architectural approach. In *English learners: Reaching the highest level of English literacy,* ed. G. G. Garcia, 227–58. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Echevarria, J., M. Vogt, and D. Short. 2008. *Making content comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP® model,* 3rd ed. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Fillmore, L. W., and C. E. Snow. 2000. What teachers need to know about language. In *What teachers need to know about language,* ed. C. T. Adger, C. E. Snow, and D. Christian, 7–53. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Genesee, F., K. Lindholm-Leary, W. M. Saunders, and D. Christian. 2006. *Educating English Language Learners.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Goldenberg, C. 2008. Teaching English Language Learners: What the research does—and does not—say. *American Educator* 32(2): 8–23, 42–44.

Goldenberg, C., and R. Coleman. In press. *Promoting academic achievement among English learners.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Krashen, S. D., and T. D. Terrell. 1983. *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom.* Hayward, CA: Alemany Press.

Lyster, R. 2007. *Learning and teaching languages through content: A counterbalanced approach.* Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Pub.

Saunders, W. M., and C. Goldenberg, C. in press. Research to guide English Language Development instruction. In *Improving education for English Learners: Research-based approaches,* ed. D. Dolson and L. Burnham-Massey. Sacramento, CA: CDE Press.

Schleppegrell, M. J. 2001. Linguistic features of the language of schooling. *Linguistics and Education* 12(4): 431–59.

Short, D. J. 1994. Expanding middle school horizons: Integrating language, culture, and social studies. *TESOL Quarterly* 28(3): 581–608.

Swain, M. 1985. Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In *Input in second language acquisition,* ed. S. M. Gass and C. G. Madden, 235–56. Rowley, MA: Newberry House Publishers.

Zwiers, J. 2008. *Building academic language: Essential practices for content classrooms, grades 5–12.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

What Does Research Say about Effective Practices for
ENGLISH LEARNERS?

Part III:
Promoting Literacy Development

by Rhoda Coleman and Claude Goldenberg

Using interactive and direct techniques, classroom teachers can help English Learners develop their English reading and writing skills.

This is the third in a four-part series written exclusively for the *Kappa Delta Pi Record.* Each article summarizes what research says about effective practices for English Learners. The authors draw on several recent reviews of the research (August and Shanahan 2006; Genesee et al. 2006; Goldenberg 2008; Saunders and Goldenberg, in press). The first article in the series (which appeared in the Fall 2009 *Record*) covered research on English oral language instruction. The second article (Winter 2010 *Record*), dealt with academic language and literacy in English. This, the third article, addresses the topic of literacy. The authors discuss learning to read in English, a language English Learners are simultaneously learning to speak and understand. They also look at some of the ways learning to read in one's native language can support learning to read in a second language and, when that's not possible, how primary language support—that is, strategic use of the student's home language—can help literacy instruction in English. The final article (*Record* Summer 2010) will address school and district reform and offers practical recommendations for administrators and teacher leaders so that the research can more readily translate into practice.

A fundamental challenge facing students who are English Learners is the interplay of oral language development—being able to speak and understand a language—and literacy development—learning to read and write the language. This interplay is especially challenging because each developmental process—oral language development and literacy development—is complex in and of itself, and each one influences the other. With English Learners, teachers have to deal with both developmental processes simultaneously, using techniques that are not generally needed with children who already speak English.

Of course, there is a huge range of oral language proficiencies even among English speakers. However, children who have grown up speaking English understand and speak it in a way that children who have not grown up speaking English simply do not. Thus, for English Learners (ELs)—also referred to, interchangeably, as English Language Learners (ELLs)—teachers must differentiate instruction to manage, promote, encourage, and stimulate both oral and written language development concurrently.

To promote higher levels of literacy attainment among ELs, educators and policy makers can use research conducted over the past 25 years as a guide. The research suggests a number of principles that may be put into practice in the classroom. In this article, these research-based principles are identified and presented along with specific techniques teachers may consider adopting.

The foundation of an effective English literacy program for English Learners is similar to that of an effective literacy program for English speakers.

Many kinds of instruction can make a contribution to ELs' literacy development: phonemic awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing (August and Shanahan 2006). In the earliest stages of learning to read—when the focus is on sounds, letters, and how they combine to form words that can be read—progress by ELs might be expected to be roughly comparable to that of English speakers.

If instruction is clear, focused, and systematic, it is plausible that when language requirements are relatively low—as they are for learning phonological skills, letter-sound combinations, and decoding—ELs can make progress that is close to that of English speakers. ELs face more serious challenges when reading requires increasingly higher levels of language skills, such as those needed to comprehend complex academic texts. Here is where the gaps between English Learners and English speakers become increasingly large.

Rhoda Coleman *is Research Fellow at The Center for Language Minority Education and Research at California State University, Long Beach, where she also teaches in the College of Education. She was a California State Teacher of the Year and Milken recipient.*

Claude Goldenberg *is Professor of Education at Stanford University. His research focuses on academic achievement among English learners. He was on the Committee for the Prevention of Early Reading Difficulties in Young Children and the National Literacy Panel.*

Adequate background is critical for English Learners' literacy development.

Certainly, success as a reader is not determined solely by reading skills such as decoding, fluency, or use of reading strategies. Readers need to know content—and the vocabulary that goes with it—if they are to comprehend what they read. Background knowledge that readers bring to the text is critical for reading comprehension.

Students need ample opportunities to learn content that will provide the knowledge essential for successful reading. Content-area instruction is therefore critical for promoting students' literacy growth. Just as comprehension is difficult for students who cannot read words accurately and fluently or don't know the meanings of most of the words, comprehension is also arduous for students who lack the requisite background knowledge to make sense of what they are reading.

It is critical that teachers work to develop ELs' content knowledge and their English oral language skills—particularly vocabulary—from the time they start school, even before they have learned reading "basics." While English speakers from about middle elementary grades and up can be expected to learn by reading, English Learners must be more familiar with the content they are reading if the material is to be comprehensible to them. Teachers always must keep in mind that the job of comprehension is made doubly challenging for English Learners because these students must comprehend content written in a language that they are simultaneously learning.

English Learners need to be taught literacy skills explicitly.

Though most students benefit from explicit instruction, ELs generally require it because they have the double challenge of learning literacy skills while learning to speak and understand English. Particularly students who are the most limited in their English proficiency will not fare well if instructions are vague or open-ended, or if expectations are ambiguous. Explicit instruction means a clearly stated objective, clear input, modeling, repeated practice before students work independently, and consolidation of learning at the end of the lesson.

In addition to using explicit skills instruction, teachers should incorporate interactive teaching to challenge English Learners cognitively and linguistically.

Interactive teaching refers to the kind of verbal interaction that creates opportunities for student talk, particularly increasingly elaborated student talk. Instead of listening passively, EL students get to practice and use language. As important as direct teaching is for ELs, these students also need opportunities for engaging in challenging interactions.

Teachers must be careful to structure interactions appropriately, depending on students' language and skills levels. These interactions may be between the teacher and the student or between student and student. They may be open-ended, in which conversation and responses are elaborated upon in the students' own words. For example, in a small group, the teacher may ask students to express ideas on a topic, saying "Tell your partner about . . ." or "Share in your group about . . . ." Interactions may occur in cooperative group work that either stimulates use of language in an authentic way (open-ended) or encourages students to use specific linguistic structures—such as completing the phrase, "I predict that . . . ."

Teacher-student interactions may be structured to intentionally encourage specific, increasingly advanced linguistic responses. Applying the latter technique, the teacher directs students to use a particular grammatical feature or vocabulary words in their responses. A more advanced linguistic response can be simple sentences. For instance, the teacher asks a beginning proficiency level student, "What kind of pet do you have?" and the student replies, "dog" or "a dog." The teacher prompts, "Can you say it in a complete sentence?" The student replies, "I have a dog." An example for an even more advanced student: The teacher asks, "Why is communication faster now?" The student replies, "We have cell phones." The teacher prompts, "That's a good sentence, but see whether you can answer with a sentence that uses the word 'because.' The student answers, "Communication is faster now because we use cell phones."

The bulk of the research evidence has suggested that effective direct instruction and use of interactive approaches that challenge ELs academically make a positive contribution to their literacy growth. Clearly, modifications are needed if educators are to make English literacy instruction as effective for ELs as it is for English speakers.

Teachers should use instructional modifications to help English Learners acquire literacy skills.

Instruction in the components of literacy and instruction using more multifaceted approaches tends to get positive results, but the results are generally more modest than they are for English speakers. The most likely explanation for this is that English Learners do not benefit from instruction in English to the same extent that English speakers do for the simple reason that ELs are limited in their English proficiency. Language and literacy are inextricably

woven together. Reading comprehension requires not only the skills of reading—accurate and fluent word recognition, understanding how words form texts that carry meaning, and how to derive meanings from these texts—but it also requires fundamental language proficiency—knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, and conventions of use that are the essence of *knowing* a language. Learners who know the language can concentrate on the academic content. But learners who do not know the language, or do not know it well enough, must devote part of their attention to learning and understanding the very language in which that content is taught.

As a result, ELs generally require certain instructional modifications or adaptations for the instruction to be fully meaningful. Though research on these modifications and adaptations is sparse, the following are likely to be effective approaches:

- Make instruction and expectations extremely clear, focused, and systematic.
- Display visuals to illustrate concepts.
- Incorporate additional practice and repetition.
- Offer reading matter with familiar content.

When possible (see scenarios later in this article), use the primary language for "support." This means the lesson is predominantly in English, but the teacher uses students' home language briefly and strategically to make the content more accessible. For example, prior to a lesson all in English, teachers might preview the content for the students in their primary language. Using cognates (e.g., democracy and *democracia)* for vocabulary instruction is another type of primary language support.

If the teacher is not familiar with the student's primary language, scaffolding strategies, such as visuals and role play, provide support. While scaffolding strategies are critical for the English learners, all students—including native English speakers—will benefit from these effective practices. Teachers also may find it helpful to do some research and discuss with parents basic principles of their primary language.

Regarding the use of familiar content, one possibility is to provide reading materials that resonate with students' experiences. For instance, Carlo et al. (2004) incorporated texts and topics on immigration for the Mexican and Dominican immigrant students who participated in their study of enhanced vocabulary instruction for ELs. However, using *culturally* familiar material is not the only way to make content familiar. Another approach is making sure students have sufficient exposure to the content in texts they will read prior to reading the material. For

example, teachers can teach a unit in which students *learn* about a topic for several days before being expected to read and comprehend.

For teachers accustomed to teaching English Learners, some of these suggestions already may be part of their daily practice. For teachers new to teaching English Learners, following are some excerpts of explicit, interactive literacy lessons incorporating some of the modifications described earlier.

Elementary Phonics Lesson Scenario

Mr. G is teaching his 20 first grade students a phonics lesson on the *ea* sound prior to reading an anthology story about going to the beach. Most are English Learners whose primary language is Spanish; a few students are Vietnamese. Based on the state English Language Development assessment, most of these English Learners are at early intermediate English proficiency levels. Mr. G speaks some Spanish, but does not know Vietnamese and therefore cannot provide beginning level support in Vietnamese.

Mr. G shows a picture of children playing in the sand at the beach and asks students to identify the beach and the sea in the picture. He tells his students they are going to be learning to read words that have the long *e* sound that they hear in the words *beach* and *sea*, and then they are going to listen to a story about going to the beach. But first he says, "Let's review the way we learned to make the long *e* sound yesterday. Tell your partner the way we learned to spell long *e.*" Mr. G gives the class a minute to do this task while he walks around to gauge what students remember from the day before.

After partners share, Mr. G draws a web with *ee* in the center and lines going outward, like wheel spokes. He asks students to think of words with *ee.* After giving them 15–20 seconds to think, he calls for volunteers. Students then offer *sleep, bee, keep,* etc. Mr. G goes on: "Okay, a new way to write the long *e* sound is *ea.*" Mr. G points out that in Spanish this is the same sound that is made by the letter *i* or the word *y* (and).

Mr. G has the students practice saying single syllable, medial long *e* words. He shows students the long *e* (eagle) card from the reading program the school uses and explains that they are learning words where the *ea* says long *e.* As he writes each *ea* word on the board, the students use a blending routine. *S-ea . . .* sea, *b-ea-ch . . .* beach, *b-ea-d . . .* bead. Mr. G shows a picture of the sea, the beach, and a necklace bead. He models blending several words and then students repeat after him.

Elementary Vocabulary Lesson Scenario

Mr. G has the class gather and sit on the rug to begin the vocabulary portion of the lesson before reading aloud a story about the beach. Mr. G already has decided on seven vocabulary words he wants the students to know: *beach, castle, tunnel, sea, dig, build,* and *sand*. To tap prior knowledge and generate vocabulary, he asks students whether they have ever been to the beach and what things they might see there. If they haven't been to the beach, he asks them whether they ever have seen a movie about the beach or the sea (such as *Finding Nemo* or *Little Mermaid*). To build background knowledge, he also shows several pictures of the beach and the sea, and he has students pass around and touch the sand in a small jar he brought to class.

Using the pictures and their prior knowledge as support, he writes on a chart, "Things I can see at the beach!" Students name things they might see at the beach as he records the words under the heading. Next, Mr. G does a "picture walk" with the book, asking students what they see in the pictures; students offer new additions to the word chart. If students have not offered the identified target words, Mr. G points to where they are illustrated in the pictures.

Mr. G has sentence strips on the board that say, "What is this?" and "This is (a/an) _____." He instructs students to listen while he asks, "What is this?" and answers his own question, "This is sand." He then asks students, "What is this?" He holds up his hand as a wait signal, pauses two or three seconds, and then signals students to answer in unison, "This is sand." For the verbs, he asks, "What is he is doing?" and models the response, "He is digging." He proceeds this way with the other target vocabulary words.

He uses cognates (along with pointing) to clarify and help the Spanish-speaking students connect concepts they already know in Spanish to the words in English. For example, "The children are building a castle, *un castillo,* and digging a tunnel, *un tunel,* in the sand." He has students role play that they are building a castle and digging a tunnel.

He asks students, based on the pictures and the vocabulary words, to tell their partners what they think will happen in the story. Then Mr. G gives some examples of using the target vocabulary in sentences. He says, "I think they will swim in the sea. I think they will build a castle in the sand."

One obvious challenge in a situation such as Mr. G's, where there is more than one non-English lan-

guage and it is possible to provide some primary language support to one group of students, is making sure that *all* students' time is spent productively. The Vietnamese students probably will not benefit from the cognate references aimed at the Spanish-speakers. The teacher must, therefore, either provide the cognate instruction to Spanish speakers before or after the lesson while the Vietnamese students are productively engaged in other tasks, make the references during the lesson very brief, or both.

If possible, students should be taught literacy skills in their primary language.

A number of studies have suggested that teaching ELs to read and develop literary skills in their primary language will boost their reading achievement in English (Willig 1985; Greene 1997; Rolstad, Mahoney, and Glass 2005; Slavin and Cheung 2005; Francis, Lesaux, and August 2006). Additionally, teaching ELs subject matter content in their primary language might be beneficial because doing so is probably a more efficient way to promote content knowledge than teaching content in a language students do not understand well.

Teaching literacy skills in students' own language, unfortunately, may not be possible. Schools may not provide primary language instruction. That may be a policy decision, or there may not be enough qualified bilingual teachers at a school. Also, there may be multiple languages in one class, and it is generally impossible to provide primary language instruction for multiple languages. However, many schools do provide primary language instruction, especially when one or two languages (in addition to English) predominate. For example, a school might have bilingual classes for Chinese students or for Spanish-speaking students.

Students still can be taught literacy skills in English while they are learning literacy skills in their primary language. Children are able to learn to read in both languages simultaneously. In situations where children are learning to read in both languages, generally reading in each language is taught separately. This practice probably helps avoid confusion, but studies that address this question directly are lacking.

Even if students are not taught literacy skills such as reading in their primary language, bilingual teachers in all-English classes can incorporate instructional support in the primary language to preview, clarify, and explain. For example, new content and skills can be introduced and reviewed in the primary language before and after lessons are taught in English. However, too much direct translation is probably not helpful because students can

tune out and wait for the translation (Legarreta 1979; Legarreta-Marcaida 1981).

Focusing on the similarities and differences between English and the primary language is probably helpful for ELs. For example, pointing out cognates and other similarities and differences between the languages might help ELs learn more vocabulary and other features of English. However, the research on this topic is not very conclusive.

Even in an all-English instructional environment, if at all possible, teachers should assess language, literacy, and academic skills in students' primary language. While state assessments provide yearly information, ongoing assessment can be provided by a bilingual resource specialist or by the teacher if the teacher is bilingual. Before being able to effectively help students consciously transfer the skills and knowledge from their primary language to English, teachers need to find out what students know and can do in their primary language. Table 1 identifies some ways that students' primary language can be used to support their learning in English.

Table 1. Possible Primary Language Supports for English Instruction

- Clarify and explain in the primary language.
- Preview-review. Introduce, or "preview," new concepts in the primary language, and then review the new content again in the primary language. Teach the lesson itself in all English.
- Focus on similarities and differences between the primary language and English (e.g., cognates, orthographic features).
- Teach a strategy in the primary language followed by the student applying it in English.
- Assess students' literacy skills in their primary language.

English Language Development instruction must be emphasized regardless of whether the literacy program is in the primary language or in all English.

Educators and parents alike have expressed concern when a child, attending a school since kindergarten, is still at an intermediate proficiency level in fifth grade. The issue here is not with bilingual education itself, but with the way some programs are implemented. Sometimes students do not receive enough formal or informal English instruction to attain higher levels of proficiency.

Closing Thoughts

EL students learning to become literate in English and English speakers learning to become literate (in English) need to learn the same skills and concepts. Both groups benefit from explicit help and instruction in the components of literacy and from instruction that provides more enriched, complex literacy learning opportunities. ELs clearly benefit from good instruction in some of the components of literacy (phonological and phonics skills, vocabulary, writing), while the evidence for the benefits of instruction in other components (oral reading fluency and reading comprehension) is more tenuous. This does not mean that promoting fluency and providing comprehension instruction do not matter for ELs. The authors strongly suspect they do. But research has not been done to confirm this.

Good evidence does exist, however, to argue that multifaceted approaches to promoting literacy development among ELs—that is, instruction not focused on any one literacy component, such as decoding or vocabulary—also can be effective. Additionally, the bulk of the research evidence suggests that effective direct teaching and teaching using interactive approaches that challenge ELs academically make a positive contribution to their literacy growth. It is almost certain, though, that modifications are needed if educators are to make English literacy instruction as effective for ELs as it is for English speakers. ◾

References

August, D., and T. Shanahan. 2006. *Developing literacy in second-language learners,* Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Carlo, M. S., D. August, B. McLaughlin, C. E. Snow, C. Dressler, D. N. Lippman, T. J. Lively, and C. E. White. 2004. Closing the gap: Addressing the vocabulary needs of English-language learners in bilingual and mainstream classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly* 39(2):188–215.

Francis, D. J., N. K. Lesaux, and D. August. 2006. Language of instruction. In *Developing literacy in second-language learners,* Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth, ed. D. August and T. Shanahan, 365–414. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Genesee, F., K. Lindholm-Leary, W. M. Saunders, and D. Christian, eds. 2006. *Educating English Language Learners: A synthesis of research evidence.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Goldenberg, C. 2008. Teaching English Language Learners: What the research does not—say. *American Educator* 32(2): 8–23, 42–44.

Goldenberg, C., and R. Coleman. In press. *Promoting academic achievement among English Learners: A guide for teachers, administrators, and policy.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Greene, J. P. 1997. A meta-analysis of the Rossell and Baker review of bilingual education research. *Bilingual Research Journal* 21(2–3): 103–22.

Legarreta, D. 1979. The effects of program models on language acquisition by Spanish-speaking children. *TESOL Quarterly* 13(4): 521–34.

Legarreta-Marcaida, D. 1981. Effective use of the primary language in the classroom. In *Schooling and language minority students: A theoretical framework,* ed. D. P. Dolson and G. Lopez, 83–116. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.

Rolstad, K., K. Mahoney, and G. V. Glass. 2005. The big picture: A meta-analysis of program effectiveness research on English Language Learners. *Educational Policy* 19(4): 572–94.

Slavin, R. E., and A. Cheung. 2005. A synthesis of research on language of reading instruction for English Language Learners. *Review of Educational Research* 75(2): 247–84.

Willig, A. C. 1985. A meta-analysis of selected studies on the effectiveness of bilingual education. *Review of Educational Research* 55(3): 269–318.

What Does Research Say about Effective Practices for
ENGLISH LEARNERS?

Part IV:
Models for Schools and Districts

by Rhoda Coleman and Claude Goldenberg

With consistent and coherent policies in place, schools and districts can build and maintain effective programs for English Learners.

This is the fourth article in a four-part series written exclusively for the *Kappa Delta Pi Record.* Each article summarizes what research says about effective practices for English Learners. The first article in the series (which appeared in the Fall 2009 *Record*) covered research on English oral language instruction. The second article (Winter 2010 *Record*) dealt with academic language and literacy in English. The third article (Spring 2010 *Record*) addressed the topic of literacy.

In this final article, the authors look at how research on effective instruction for English Learners translates into schools and districts—in other words, where the research meets the classroom. The authors begin by discussing some models for school and district support for English Learner programs. Then, drawing examples from actual schools and districts, they suggest some possible scenarios of how these programs might look. In the last part of the article, the authors discuss professional development and suggest some specific practices for classroom teachers.

All four articles are available from Kappa Delta Pi electronically at *https://webportal.kdp.org/Purchase/ SearchCatalog.aspx.*

Genesee et al. (2006) argued that classroom practices must be linked to a larger school or district-wide vision of effective practices for English Learners (ELs). In other words, educators must build coherence across schools and districts rather use a grab-bag of strategies and techniques (Genesee et al. 2006, 231):

Educators need more than an array of specific methods or activities that they can draw on when planning literacy or academic subjects. They need comprehensive frameworks for selecting, sequencing, and delivering instruction over the course of an entire year and from grade to grade.

Over the past 10 years, educators have witnessed an increasing number of attempts at school and district school levels to try and provide coherent instruction for English Learners through the adoption of consistent programs and approaches (Coleman 2006). What do we know about the impact of these efforts on the achievement of English Learners?

General consensus in the research and professional literature holds that a sustained and coherent focus in schools and districts leads to higher student achievement. Various aspects of school and district functioning, such as leadership, goals, consistent curricula, professional development, ongoing support and supervision, and regular assessments that inform instruction help shape the academic experiences of students (e.g., Edmonds 1979; Good and Brophy 1986; Joyce, Showers, and Rolheiser-Bennett 1987; Bliss, Firestone, and Richards 1991; Black and Wiliam 1998; Fullan 2007).

Anderson (2003, 9) found the following in a review of the literature on district factors:

Current characterizations of effective districts normally highlight district efforts to establish greater coherence in curriculum content, materials, and to a certain extent delivery across the system. The emphasis on curriculum coherence often extends to advocacy and support for the use of specific instructional approaches and strategies said to work well with the content, learning outcomes, and learners in play.

Though there is less research conducted with English Learners that links school and district factors to measures of student achievement, recent studies point in the same direction: What gets emphasized in schools and districts will influence—though in no way guarantee—what teachers do and English Learners learn (Goldenberg 2004;

Rhoda Coleman is Research Fellow at The Center for Language Minority Education and Research at California State University, Long Beach, where she also teaches in the College of Education. She was a California State Teacher of the Year and Milken recipient.
Claude Goldenberg is Professor of Education at Stanford University. His research focuses on academic achievement among English learners. He was on the Committee for the Prevention of Early Reading Difficulties in Young Children and the National Literacy Panel.

Parrish et al. 2006; Saunders, Goldenberg, and Gallimore 2009).

As Genesee et al. (2006, 186) concluded:

Schools with high quality programs have a cohesive school-site vision, shared goals that define their expectations for achievement, a clear instructional focus on and commitment to achievement, and high expectations. The importance of these characteristics has been found in mainstream schools, low-performing schools, and bilingual programs serving English Language Learners.

Getting from Here to There

With a few exceptions, most of the studies that identify school or district factors tell educators very little about how to make a school go from less to more effective with its EL population. The studies describe the characteristics of schools considered to be effective with ELs, but do not reveal how they got to be that way. In addition, several of the studies report on "exemplary" or "high-quality programs," but what criteria are used to make that determination is unclear. Often these schools are nominated by educators who feel the school has a strong or exemplary EL program, but no comparison exists to determine whether the achievement of students in the school is any better than the achievement of students in other schools.

Nonetheless, the one thing that seems to surface when looking at the studies as a whole is the importance of a coherent academic program where teachers and administrators focus on doing whatever is necessary to ensure the academic achievement of ELs. In other words, higher achievement levels for ELs appear to be the result of focused, sustained, and coordinated work among educators committed to the educational success of these students. In her study of eight "exemplary" elementary and middle schools for English Learners, McLeod (1996, Conclusion section, para. 2) made the following observation:

In each case the elements fit together like puzzle pieces to form a coherent overall program. Each piece of the puzzle relies on the others for its success. For example, a smooth transition for LEP [Limited English Proficient] students from native language or sheltered instruction to all-English instruction depends on collaboration between teachers of LEP students and teachers of English proficient students, which in turn is greatly facilitated by setting aside common planning time during which these teachers regularly confer, which itself relies on a reorganized daily class schedule.

There are probably numerous ways of accomplishing this sort of coherence, and the research provides useful clues. Some studies have examined the effects, over a year or more, of explicit efforts to improve the achievement of ELs (e.g., Livingston and Flaherty 1997; Slavin and Madden 2001; Goldenberg 2004; McDougall, Saunders, and Goldenberg 2007). Others begin by identifying schools and districts that are relatively successful, according to some criteria, and then trying to figure out what distinguishes them from schools and districts that are less successful (e.g., Weaver and Sawyer 1984; Lucas, Henze, and Donato 1990; McLeod 1996; Parrish et al. 2006; and Williams, Hakuta, Haertel, et al. 2007). Taken as a whole, the studies provide some reasonable insights for educators interested in improving EL students' achievement in their schools and districts.

Explicit Academic Goals

One way to develop consistency and coherence in schools and districts is to begin with setting explicit academic goals that are understood and shared by the school community—principally teachers and administrators, but also students and families. This was a finding of several studies. Parrish et al. (2006), for example, found that schools with higher EL achievement set academic goals by maintaining:

- school-wide focus on English Language Development (ELD) and standards-based instruction;
- shared priorities and expectations with regard to educating English Learners; and
- curriculum and instruction targeted to English Learner progress.

Similarly, Williams et al. (2007, 16) found that schools with higher EL achievement levels had "a coherent, standards-based curriculum." Teachers at these schools reported that their schools had identified essential standards that guided classroom instruction. Their schools also used pacing guides that specified what teachers should be teaching at a particular point in time. Principals at schools where ELs had the highest achievement reported the district had "a coherent grade-by-grade curriculum [and] expected its principals to ensure that curriculum was implemented" (Parrish et al. 2006, 9).

Studies reported by Goldenberg (2004), McDougall et al. (2007), and Saunders et al. (2009) are informative on this point because they are the only ones where faculties and administrators worked to set explicit school-wide academic goals for students. For example, faculties focused on various aspects of reading (e.g., word recognition, reading fluency, reading comprehension) and

writing development (e.g., writing summaries, expository writing) to begin to develop a coherent school-wide focus on specific curricular needs. Examples of student learning goals are readily available. A project described by McDougall et al. (2007) and Saunders et al. (2009) used published state standards as the starting point for the explicit student learning goals around which faculties and administrators focused their efforts. Over a period of several years, school achievement improved in absolute terms and in comparison to the rest of the district.

Ongoing Student Assessment

Explicit goals, agreed upon by administrators and teachers, are important for achieving substantive improvements because they are vital for maintaining a coherent and stable student-centered vision. Assessments that then measure ongoing progress toward agreed upon goals—often referred to as "formative assessments"—reinforce the importance of the goals and help teachers and administrators gauge their goal-directed efforts. This finding has been one of the most common in the literature on school effectiveness, and it has been reported in the research reviewed here on ELs: Consistent use of achievement indicators to track student progress is related to improvements in student outcomes (Black and Wiliam 1998).

For example, the Success for All model (Dianda and Flaherty 1995; Livingston and Flaherty 1997; Slavin and Madden 2001) gauges student progress every six weeks or so by administering reading and writing development tests. Regular and systematic student assessment—explicitly linked to school-wide goals—is also a key aspect of Getting Results, the school change approach reported in Goldenberg (2004), McDougall et al. (2007), and Saunders et al. (2009). In these studies, student assessments (usually in the form of student writing to measure both writing development and comprehension of texts students read) were carried out school-wide three times during the year. They were implemented much more frequently as teachers met in their grade-level teams and collected student work to evaluate progress toward learning goals. The assessments could comprise writing samples, oral reading episodes, summaries of texts to demonstrate comprehension—in short, anything that would provide teachers with useful insights regarding student progress on learning goals.

Educators need comprehensive frameworks to provide continuous, coherent, and developmentally appropriate educational interventions. This structure is absolutely critical if ELs are to be successful. One of the ways to ensure that students receive such a program—and, most importantly, benefit from it—is to monitor progress on a regular basis. *Monitoring* does not refer to standardized and high-stakes assessments exclusively, but also includes instructionally illuminating assessments that provide teachers with timely feedback about the effects of instruction on student growth and learning. Information from these assessments then informs instructional decisions made for students.

Leadership

Leadership is another school attribute—and, to a lesser degree, a district attribute—that has been associated with higher student achievement. A school or a district can increase the probability of program success if it puts the full force of its resources behind that program. When a district pays attention to a particular program, provides it with needed resources, and holds schools accountable for it, that district is communicating how much that program is valued. Assembling and deploying resources and effectively communicating values and priorities require effective leadership.

When leadership is effective, the likelihood increases that what is valued will be reflected in what is taught in the classroom, as Coleman (2006) reported from her study of how schools choose which EL programs to adopt. However, leadership is not solely the domain of administrators; leadership from teachers—including instructional specialists whose focus is on ELs (August and Shanahan 2006)—is also essential. A culture of high expectations and accountability, encouraged by leaders at all levels and supported by tangible steps, helps everyone accomplish instructional goals for students.

McDougall et al. (2007) found that implementation of the Getting Results (GR) school change model in schools with large EL populations was dependent on the organizational and educational leadership provided by the school principal. Active principal engagement and clear indication that change efforts were a priority were essential to success. McDougall et al. (2007, 70) found:

> Principals at most GR schools demonstrated greater awareness, focus, and participation in the day-to-day academic plans and actions of teachers at each grade level. The tighter academic linkages between teachers and administrators at GR schools facilitated more effective execution of goal-directed plans than at comparison schools, where the evaluator observed more frequent "slippage" between intended actions and actual implementation of academic initiatives.

The importance of leadership became clear in Goldenberg's (2004) case study of successful change at one

school. When leadership support for the school improvement efforts disappeared, student achievement fell below levels of the year in which reform was initiated. As funding ended and key participants left, new district priorities took over, and school staff went on to other projects.

Professional Development

Professional development is usually identified as another key factor in promoting higher achievement for ELs. Both the Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth (August and Shanahan 2006) and the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) report (Genesee et al. 2006) have taken strong positions on this point. For schools to be effective with ELs, there must be sustained and focused professional development (Genesee et al. 2006, 232):

Attention needs to be paid to teachers, including their levels and kinds of professional development, their understanding of different instructional and assessment approaches, their knowledge and application of second language acquisition theory, and the processes that are required to ensure that new teachers acquire competence in using new approaches.

In their studies of schools with large EL populations whose achievement improved over time, Goldenberg and Gallimore (1991), Goldenberg (2004), McDougall et al. (2007), and Saunders et al. (2009) observed a shift in teachers' beliefs following implementation of practices that led to improved achievement. Both beliefs and expectations about student learning changed when teachers changed their practices and began observing results previously not seen with students. This then had the effect of raising their expectations for what students could actually accomplish.

Many teachers initially were skeptical of curricular and instructional changes intended to present students with more challenging material that would bring them up to grade level. They changed their expectations, however, as practices and achievement changed. McDougall et al. (2007, 74–77) reported that school-wide efforts to improve teaching and learning

fostered a group ethos among [teachers]—a collective willingness and commitment to formulate, adapt, implement, and evaluate instructional processes that targeted student achievement. . . . Through collaborative goal setting, analysis of indicators, and reflection on teacher-controlled instructional variables, [the changes] impacted teachers' expectations for student achievement.

However, a solid research base on the knowledge and skills teachers must have to be effective with English Learners is lacking. It is likely that teachers of ELs should have the knowledge and expertise, for example, to combine content and language instruction, to make academic content accessible to students with limited English proficiency, to understand second language acquisition and incorporate techniques that promote second language development, and to work effectively with diverse families and communities. What exactly each of these means is difficult to pinpoint, because there are many unknowns about what constitutes effective practice with ELs. Moreover, it is likely that to be effective with ELs, teachers also must possess instructional skills that are important for effective teaching in general, not just for ELs. This issue is discussed further later in this article.

The professional development used in the study reported by Saunders et al. (2009) was highly contextualized and consisted largely of assistance provided by colleagues, administrators, and instructional specialists on an ongoing basis rather than as one or more events, workshops, or presentations. Assistance was primarily offered during grade-level or other meetings where teachers, either among themselves or with administrators, discussed how efforts to accomplish agreed-upon learning goals were faring. This type of professional development, rarely seen in schools, was designed to help teachers address the concrete issues and challenges they faced as they sought to accomplish specific and ambitious learning goals with students.

Particularly because a robust research base is lacking, schools and districts should consider such a conception of professional development for teachers of English Learners: situated assistance, provided by colleagues and others, which specifically addresses the instructional challenges teachers face on a day-to-day basis. This is what Gallimore et al. (2009, 2) called "moving the learning of teaching closer to practice." Readers can see videos of teacher meetings, classroom instruction, and teacher reflections on the process as it took place at one school with a large EL population at *www.stanford.edu/~claudeg/CD1/video_menu.html.*

Other School and **District Factors**

Numerous other school and district factors have been cited by various studies as important for promoting the achievement of English Learners. Following are brief descriptions of that research.

- Parrish et al. (2006) and Williams et al. (2007) found that "adequate resources" to support the academic program distinguished more and less effective schools

for ELs. In the Williams et al. study, teachers and principals reported that "availability of resources" was the second most important factor (after use of assessment data) distinguishing more and less effective schools.

- Parrish et al. (2006) and Williams et al. (2007) also found that "parent and community outreach and involvement" significantly differentiated between more and less effective schools. In the Williams et al. study, however, this factor was the least important of seven factors that distinguished more and less effective schools for ELs.

- Genesee et al. (2006) reported a diverse group of studies whose conclusions have supported the importance of a "culture of high expectations." This culture includes a belief by staff that all children can learn; a positive, orderly, safe, caring school environment that facilitates learning; a meaningful, challenging, and enriched (not remedial) curriculum; a curriculum grounded in sound theory and best practices; consistent and sustained programs; and programs where ELs are integrated into the general population. As suggested earlier, high expectations are probably, at least in part, a *result* of what effective schools and classrooms do to promote achievement among ELs. Educators should not assume that a culture of high expectations is a prerequisite for, and therefore must precede, the development and evolution of effective programs.

Components of **Professional Development**

Effecting change in classroom practice is a time-consuming process that requires considerable investment and energy. Efforts can take one to three years and involve trainings and workshops, meetings, intensive summer programs, follow-up in classrooms, and ongoing, continuous efforts to improve practice and student outcomes. Studies reviewed in this article suggested that professional development cannot be of the one-shot workshop variety. Instead, it must be embedded in the work lives of teachers and the routines of teaching. Specifically, it must provide direct and concrete assistance in addressing the challenges of practice teachers face daily.

Two scenarios provide illustrations of effective professional development.

Scenario 1: Using Assessment to Inform Instruction

The principal, EL coach, and teachers at Riverside Elementary School identify student learning needs by looking at formative assessments (which all teachers conduct four times a year) and, to some extent, state assessment scores. In addition to gauging student achievement, assessments help them to identify professional development needs. The fall formative assessments revealed that early advanced and even advanced ELs in the upper grades were weak in general academic vocabulary (e.g., analyze, abandon, suspicious) and content-specific vocabulary (e.g., society, climate, evolution). Among beginning and early intermediate EL students in the lower grades, verb tenses needed work.

All teachers in this school have weekly one-hour grade-level meetings focused on a single topic. An example topic, based on the formative assessments, might be strategies to teach students to speak in the future tense. Or the topic might be how to create lessons that develop vocabulary—specifically, to teach important academic words that will come up in the next social studies unit. Teachers do some of their planning together and arrange for small-group instruction based on students' proficiency levels as determined by the formative assessment results.

The teachers will then present the lessons and bring back student work to discuss and analyze their results with colleagues at the next meeting. They do this routinely, working systematically over time to improve student learning in identified areas. The formative assessments help them track their progress.

Scenario 2: Ongoing Professional Development

Mr. G teaches first grade at Buena Vista Elementary School, which is collaborating with two faculty members at a state university to promote early literacy development among English Learners. The purpose of the university's grant project is to develop a coaching model that will help consultants and teachers work together to improve early literacy attainment for ELs.

At the start of the project, the K–2 teachers attend a half-day session where the university faculty members explain the goals and solicit their involvement. Following this kickoff, participating teachers attend monthly training sessions conducted by the university faculty members. In addition, teachers are observed once a month by researchers. Each observation period includes pre- and post-coaching conferences. In between trainings, teachers meet in grade level teams to work on agreed-upon goals for student learning. To make sure these meetings are regular weekly events, the principal hires two experienced aides to provide each grade level with a physical education program. Thus, teachers are free to meet during this time *and* students have at least one weekly physical activity where they are learning

games and skills they otherwise would not have an opportunity to learn.

The principal makes clear his expectation that teachers are to focus on specific instructional issues at these meetings. Together, teachers and researchers identify specific learning goals for students. They track student progress using formative assessments, systematic teacher observation, and collection of student work.

Instructional Practices

What instructional practices should professional development target? What constitutes effective instructional practices in English for ELs—and, therefore, what should constitute professional development for teachers of ELs being instructed in English—are major unresolved questions. As indicated elsewhere in this series of articles, though many important findings are emerging from research, there is still much educators do not know. It seems very probable, however, that effective practices for ELs consist of instructional elements that have been shown to be effective for learners in general ("generic effective instruction") and instructional elements that are necessary because ELs are learning academic content in a language they are simultaneously learning to speak and understand. At the moment, educators do not know how much of effective instruction for ELs is simply good generic instruction and how much is instruction specifically tailored to the language needs of English Learners. Most likely, there are aspects of both.

What might these instructional practices comprise? A substantial educational research base suggests that the following are examples of *generally* effective instructional practices:

- The lesson addresses one or more learning objectives.
- The teacher explicitly links new concepts to students' background experiences and past learning.
- The teacher provides clear inputs and models skills, strategies, and concepts.
- The teacher provides structured opportunities for students to practice and consolidate skills, strategies, and concepts.
- The teacher uses techniques designed to engage all students.
- The teacher uses formative assessment during instruction to monitor student learning.

English Learners almost certainly require additional support, however. Many supports have been suggested and can be found in the professional literature. They have varying degrees of empirical evidence and include elements such as:

- *Lesson objectives target both content and language.* This is one of the hallmarks of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Echevarría, Vogt, and Short 2008), probably the most popular instructional model currently available for English Learners.
- *The teacher organizes instruction to accommodate all levels of students' English proficiency.* In a heterogeneous classroom, the teacher might use small group instruction differentiated by proficiency levels to frontload information or review prior learning. The teacher might differentiate assignments and assessment expectations according to English proficiency levels.
- *The teacher provides primary language support during lessons in English.* This is distinct from primary language *instruction*, which is where students are taught academic content; for example, reading in their primary language. Primary language support means limited and strategic use of students' primary language—e.g., brief explanations, pointing out cognates, or previewing a lesson in the primary language.
- *The teacher uses strategies to adapt content and language instruction for students with limited English proficiency.* For example, the teacher uses sentence frames and familiar words, adjusts the rate of speech, adds gestures, and incorporates role play, demonstrations, and picture walks.
- *The teacher uses materials and redundant cues to clarify and illustrate concepts.* These might include textual and non-textual visuals, realia, technology, graphic organizers, or songs.
- *Students have opportunities for interactions that encourage student language production.* These include both open-ended language production (discussions and explanations) and structured language production based on language forms students are learning (e.g., subject-verb agreement, stating and defending an inference).
- *The teacher uses predictable and consistent classroom management and routines.* Though all students may benefit from clear and consistent classroom routines, these might be particularly important for ELs who can become "overloaded" with the many demands of the classroom. One way to diminish the load and keep it more manageable is by establishing and following predictable routines and management systems.

The authors are currently developing an observational instrument—Classroom Quality for English Language Learners, or CQELL—that will permit educators to look into classrooms and reliably determine the extent to which these elements are present and, if they are, the extent to which they predict student achievement. The authors are hopeful that this instrument will help advance educators' understanding of what, in fact, constitutes a high-quality classroom environment for English Learners. For more information on the CQELL instrument, please contact Rhoda Coleman at *rcoleman@csulb.edu.*

Final Thoughts

Consistent and coherent school- and district-wide policies can help build an effective program for English Learners. In closing, here are some recommendations for these sorts of policies.

- Ensure that administrators are sufficiently knowledgeable in research on improving ELs' achievement. These administrators are best able to make informed choices about programs, policies, and practices likely to influence students' school success.
- Set clear and challenging academic goals for students. The goals must be explicitly articulated and understood by all school and district personnel and embedded in well-structured curriculum.
- Provide support for coherence from school to school, grade to grade, and class to class regarding the selection, sequencing, and delivery of instruction. Accountability measures, such as implementation checklists, will be more useful if there is general buy-in among administrators and staff members.
- Conduct ongoing, systematic assessment that provides teachers with timely information about how students are progressing with respect to these academic goals. Use uniform accountability systems to measure student outcomes in academic subjects and English language development.
- Be sure that leadership is effective, visible, and engaged, as well as articulates at every opportunity the importance of providing challenging and meaningful learning opportunities for students.
- Provide ongoing professional development, from within school staff members or outside trainers, focused on helping teachers achieve the learning goals for students.
- Support professional development with routine and systematic collaboration among teachers focused on achieving specific academic goals with students.
- Supply adequate resources to support the academic program.
- Involve parents and reach out to the community for support of the academic program.
- Maintain a culture of high expectations and accountability at all levels that is supported by tangible steps to help teachers accomplish instructional goals for students.

References

Anderson, S. E. 2003. *The school district role in educational change: A review of the literature,* ICEC Working Paper No. 2. Ontario, Canada: International Centre for Educational Change, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

August, D., and T. Shanahan, eds. 2006. *Developing literacy in second-language learners:* Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Black, P., and D. Wiliam. 1998. Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education* 5(1): 7–74.

Bliss, J. R., W. A. Firestone, and C. E. Richards, eds. 1991. *Rethinking effective schools: Research and practice.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Coleman, R. 2006. The role of school districts in the selection and support of English language development programs and approaches. Unpublished doctoral diss., University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Dianda, M. R., and J. Flaherty. 1995. *Promising practices, and program adaptations & successes,* Annual Report. Los Alamitos, CA: Southwest Regional Laboratory.

Echevarría, J., M. Vogt, and D. Short. 2008. *Making content comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP model,* 3rd ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Edmonds, R. 1979. Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership* 37(1): 15–27.

Fullan, M. 2007. *The new meaning of educational change, 4th ed.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Gallimore, R., B. A. Ermeling, W. M. Saunders, and C. Goldenberg. 2009. Moving the learning of teaching closer to practice: Teacher education implications of school-based inquiry teams. *Elementary School Journal* 109(5): 537–53.

Genesee, F., K. Lindholm-Leary, W. M. Saunders, and D. Christian, eds. 2006. *Educating English Language Learners: A synthesis of research evidence.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Goldenberg, C. 2004. *Successful school change: Creating settings to improve teaching and learning.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Goldenberg, C., and R. Gallimore. 1991. Local knowledge, research knowledge, and educational change: A case study of early Spanish reading improvement. *Educational Researcher* 20(8): 2–14.

Good, T. L., and J. E. Brophy. 1986. School effects. In *Handbook of research on teaching,* 3rd ed., ed. M. C. Wittrock, 570–602. New York: Macmillan.

Joyce, B., B. Showers, and C. Rolheiser-Bennett. 1987. Staff development and student learning: A synthesis of research on models of teaching. *Educational Leadership* 45(2): 11–23.

Livingston, M., and J. Flaherty, J. 1997. *Effects of success for all on reading achievement in California schools.* Los Alamitos, CA: WestEd.

Lucas T., R. Henze, and R. Donato. 1990. Promoting the success of Latino language minority students: An exploratory study of six high schools. *Harvard Educational Review* 60(1): 315–40.

McDougall, D., W. M. Saunders, and C. Goldenberg. 2007. Inside the black box of school reform: Explaining the how and why of change at "Getting Results" schools. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education* 54(1): 51–89.

McLeod, B. 1996. *School reform and student diversity: Exemplary schooling for language minority students*. NCBE Resource Collection Series No. 4. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education. Available at: *www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/rcd/BE020491/School_Reform_Student_Diversity.pdf.*

Parrish, T. B., et al. 2006. *Effects of the implementation of Proposition 227 on the education of English Learners, K–12: Findings from a five-year evaluation.* Final Report for AB 56 and AB 1116. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research; and Los Alamitos, CA: WestEd.

Saunders, W., C. Goldenberg, and R. Gallimore. 2009. Increasing achievement by focusing grade-level teams on improving classroom learning: A prospective, quasi-experimental study of Title I schools. *American Educational Research Journal* 46(4): 1006–33.

Slavin, R. E., and N. A. Madden. 2001. *One million children: Success for all.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Weaver, B., and D. J. Sawyer. 1984. Promoting language and reading development for two Vietnamese children. *Reading Horizons* 24(2): 111–18.

Williams, T., K. Hakuta, E. Haertel, et al. 2007. *Similar English Learner students, different results: Why do some schools do better?* A follow-up analysis based upon a large-scale survey of California elementary schools serving high proportions of low-income and EL students, Report of findings. Mountain View, CA: EdSource.