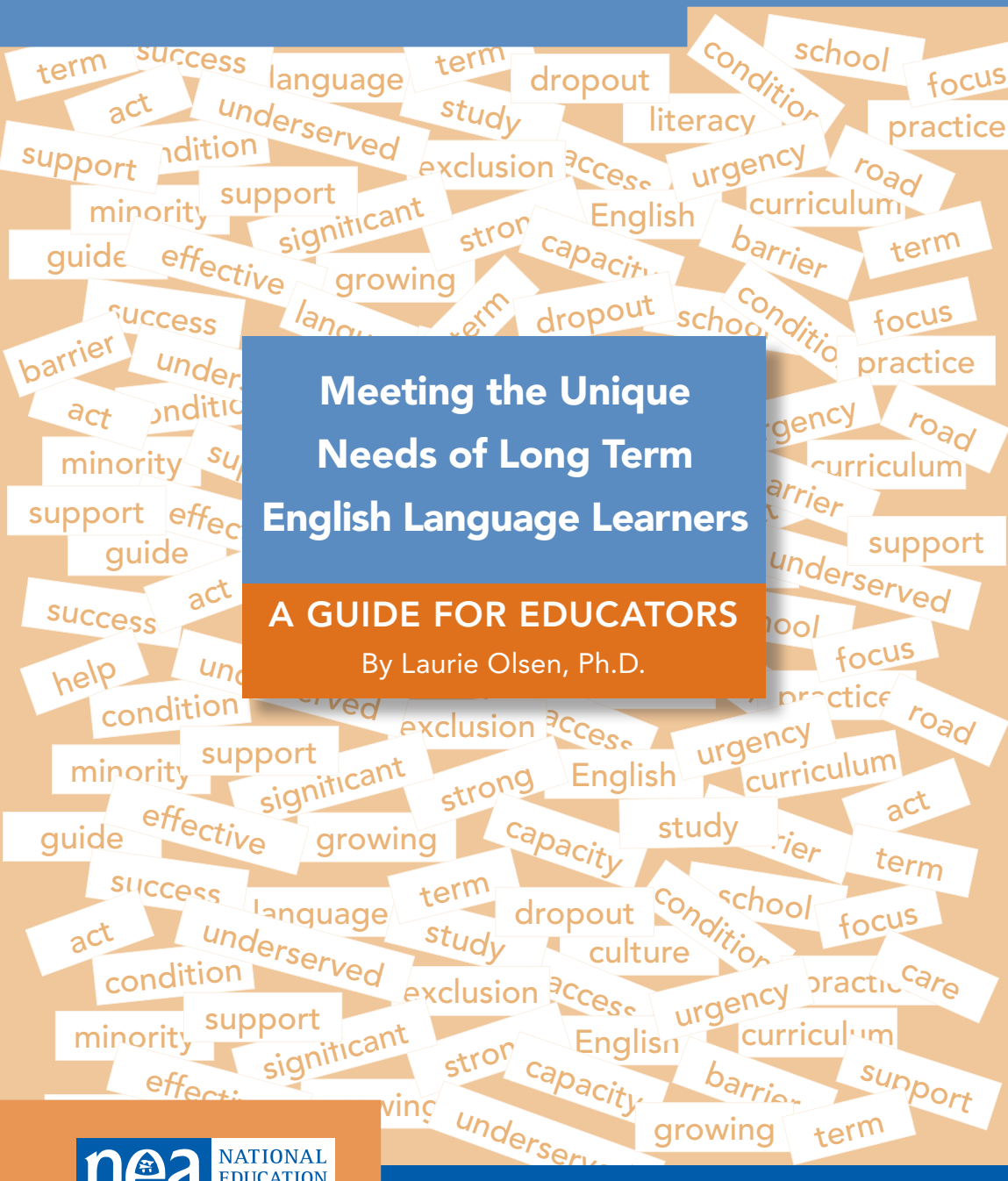
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Meeting the Unique Needs of Long Term English Language Learners

A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

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The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing over 3 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired teachers, and students preparing to become teachers.

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Written for educators, administrators, and policymakers, this booklet provides a research-based overview on the large number of Long Term English Language Learner students, who despite having been enrolled in United States schools for more than six years, are not progressing towards English proficiency but are continuing to struggle without the English skills needed for academic success.

Information and recommendations highlighted in this booklet are backed by expert research, data on more than 175,000 Long Term English Language Learners (LTELs) in California schools, and the documented experiences of educators and schools piloting best practices to meet the needs of current LTELs and prevent the creation of new generations of LTELs.

The genesis of this booklet on meeting the needs of Long Term English Language Learners is NEA New Business Item 50, adopted by the 2012 NEA Representative Assembly.

> "NEA will work with partner organizations to highlight best practices that meet the unique educational needs of Long Term English Learners, through NEA's existing social network and other electronic media. Long Term English Learners are students who have remained Limited English Proficient for six or more years."

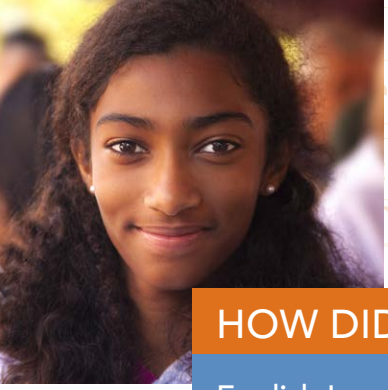


INTRODUCTION

Every year across this nation, hundreds of thousands of children enter kindergarten as "English Language Learners"—children whose home language is not English and who lack the English language skills to participate in and access a curriculum taught in a language they do not comprehend. These students carry on their young shoulders the dreams of families and communities who hope their children will gain the language and the skills for full participation in an English-speaking world.

Educators dedicated to their students' success greet them. Yet, when parents leave a five-year-old child at the schoolhouse door for the first time, when a kindergarten educator greets her new students, and when an English Language Learner sits in the circle on that first day of school, none suspect that some of these children are embarking on a long term journey to master academic content they cannot access, and that many will end up years later still not proficient in English.

What can and must be done to prevent the continuing creation of Long Term English Language Learners? Who are these students? Why is this happening? And what are the best practices for meeting their needs? This booklet provides information and guidance for educators who are seeking answers to these questions, and who are committed to ensuring educational access and opportunity for English Language Learners.



HOW DID WE GET HERE?

English Language Learners are the nation's fastest-growing student population, yet they are disproportionately underserved and underachieving.

It has been four decades since the courts sought to end a long history of exclusion in education for language and cultural minority groups in the United States by formally recognizing English Language Learners (ELLs) as a group denied equal educational access due to a language barrier. The historic Lau v. Nichols Supreme Court decision, in 1974, established that schools throughout the nation have an obligation to address the language barrier preventing English Language Learners from participating fully in the educational system.[i]

Since that time, understanding of the needs of English Language Learners has grown, a large body of research and field knowledge has contributed to effective instructional strategies, and program models have emerged for meeting the needs of this increasingly large population. Most schools have built capacity to at least partially implement these practices and provide some level of services for English Language Learner students.

The 4.7 million English language learners enrolled in U.S. K–12 schools comprise 10 percent of the student population—an increase of over 60 percent in the last decade. They are the fastest-growing group of students in our nation's schools; however, with a language barrier to participation and access in the education system, they are also disproportionately underserved and underachieving.

The growth in ELLs has paralleled the growth of stronger accountability policies and more rigorous standards-based practices. The federal No Child Left Behind Act designated English Language Learners as a "significant subgroup," shining a light on the longstanding and persistent underachievement of English Language Learners, and adding urgency and pressure for school districts to provide the instruction, curricula, and supports needed to make real the promise of educational opportunity.

Yet what is occurring in most schools is still far from adequate to teach strong academic English to English Language Learners and to ensure their access to grade-level curriculum. ELL students continue to have disproportionately high dropout rates, low graduation rates, and low college-completion rates.

The large population of Long Term English Language Learners (LTELs) is the starkest evidence of a school system still too unaware, ill prepared, and inadequately focused on the needs of English Language Learners. It is particularly striking that this group of students has remained unnoticed and their needs unaddressed in a time of strong accountability measures, intense scrutiny of student achievement, and major school improvement initiatives designed to meet the needs of "all students." Now, as the Common Core standards usher in a new, more rigorous era in public education, the urgency of addressing these gaps is greater still.



WHO ARE LONG TERM ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

"Long Term English Language Learners" are students who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for six years or more, are stalled in progressing towards English proficiency without having yet reached a threshold of adequate English skills, and are struggling academically.[ii]

"Being stuck"—academic struggles and lack of progress toward English proficiency—is the key to defining Long Term ELLs, not the number of years it takes them to become English proficient.

Normally, a child who enters school with little or no English makes steady progress and is able to attain English proficiency within five to seven years. Long Term English Language Learners, however, read and write below grade level and, as they enter and move through secondary schools, their grades typically plummet. The general profile of a Long Term English Language Learner is a student with a grade point average of less than 2.0.

Most English Language Learners are U.S.-born children of immigrants. While newcomers enter the nation's schools at all grade levels, the vast majority of English Language Learners currently in middle and high schools have been enrolled in U.S. schools since kindergarten. Estimates are that between one-quarter and one-half of all ELLs who enter U.S. schools in primary grades become Long Term ELLs. In California, three out of five English Language Learners in grades 6–12 are Long Term. [iii]

By the time Long Term English Language Learners arrive in secondary schools, they exhibit complex academic and linguistics characteristics:

Long Term English Language Learners have distinct language issues.

- LTELs function socially in both English and their home language. However, their language is imprecise and inadequate for deeper expression and communication, and they lack the vocabulary, syntax, and grammar of native speakers in both languages. Despite the fact that English tends to be the language of preference for these students, the majority are "stuck" at intermediate levels of English oral proficiency or below.
- LTELs lack oral and literacy skills needed for academic success. They struggle reading textbooks, have difficulty understanding vocabulary, and are challenged by long, written passages. They lack understanding of academic genres and display weak English syntax, grammar, and vocabulary.
- Observant educators often notice that LTELs have significant deficits in writing, which LTELs approach as written-down oral language. Because they perform below grade level in reading and writing, and lack academic vocabulary, they struggle in all content areas that require literacy.
- Despite coming from homes in which a language other than English is spoken, many LTELs use their home language only in limited ways. Fossilized features of the home language are superimposed with English vocabulary in what is commonly referred to as "Spanglish" or "Chinglish." While these dialects may be expressive and functional in many social situations, they do not constitute a strong foundation for the language demands of academic work in Standard English.

Many Long Term English Language Learners develop habits of non-engagement, passivity, and invisibility in school.

- It is not surprising that students without command of the language of the classroom would be reluctant to participate. Over years, non-participation becomes a habit for LTELs, and some remain silent for much of the school day.
- LTELs have not been explicitly taught the study skills or behaviors associated with academic success and engagement. They are passed from grade to grade by educators who don't know how to engage them and who have varied expectations for their performance.

The majority of Long Term English Language Learners want to attend college despite significant gaps in academic preparation.

- LTELs struggle with both linguistic and academic challenges, amassing academic deficits in subject matter taught in a language they couldn't comprehend.
- Despite gaps in academic knowledge and poor academic performance, the vast majority of LTELs say they want to go to college. Typically, they are unaware their academic record and courses are not preparing them to reach that goal.

Some Long Term English Language Learners have become discouraged and tuned-out learners, ready to drop out of high school.

- Over time, some LTELs weary of not understanding their class work and doing poorly in school. Interviews with students indicate that this sense of malaise/disquiet begins around fifth grade. By high school, this group has disengaged.
- Having internalized a sense of failure, some LTELs no longer see themselves as belonging in school, leading to a drop-out rate estimated to be four times greater than the average.



HOW DOES AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER BECOME LONG TERM?

The quantity, quality, and consistency of programs and instruction English Language Learners receive can move them towards English proficiency and content mastery or relegate them to long term status.

By definition, English Language Learners enter school lacking the English proficiency needed to fully access the core curriculum. They have to learn English and at the same time master core content taught in a language they do not understand. The programs, support, curriculum, and instruction they receive can move them towards English proficiency and provide access to core content while they are learning English, or it can relegate them to struggling without support.

The strength of educator training and approach to language development—and the consistency and coherence of the program a student receives across grade levels—greatly impacts students' long term academic outcomes. The large number of Long Term English Language Learners in secondary schools is testimony to the fact that something has gone wrong along the way.

The creation of a Long Term English Language Learner is caused by several factors along the trajectory of a student's education:

Many Long Term English Language Learners received no language development program at some point in their schooling.

- In what is popularly termed the "sink or swim"[iv] approach, half to three-quarters of LTELs have spent one to three years in "no services" or mainstream placements; and approximately one out of eight LTELs may have spent their entire schooling in mainstream classes with no services.[v]
- The past decade has seen a significant increase in the number of ELLs placed into mainstream classes—the "program" that produces the worst outcomes over time (highest dropout rates, and lowest levels of English proficiency). Elementary school students in this setting are the lowest achievers in comparison to students in any specially designed English Language Learner program. [vi]

Long Term English Language Learners tend to have been enrolled in weak ELL program models.

- By middle school and high school, ELLs who have been in any form of specialized instruction are more likely to score at grade level and less likely to drop out of high school than those who were in mainstream settings.[vii] There are, however, differences in outcomes depending on the type of specialized instruction and program.
- Trends in English Language Learner program placement show a declining number are receiving primary language instruction, and the majority receives just English Language Development (ELD)/English as a Second Language (ESL) with no support for access to academic content. ELD/ESL

programs alone have been found to produce weak outcomes over time, and do not sufficiently address students' access to the academic curriculum while they are learning English.

- While English Language Learners in ELD/ESL programs may appear to be progressing adequately in English in the primary grades, as they continue on to upper elementary grades and secondary schools where language demands increase significantly, they fall further and further behind. Very few appear to receive more comprehensive programs that include both ELD/ESL and Specifically Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE).
- Only a very small percentage of ELLs are in programs that develop their home language along with English,[viii] yet the degree to which home language is developed correlates with positive outcomes in English literacy. In a decade in which there have been increasingly strong and convergent research conclusions about the important role primary language instruction plays in developing English literacy, the number of ELLs receiving primary language development or instruction has dwindled significantly.
- The programs in which LTELs most typically are served have been labeled "consistent subtractive schooling"[ix] because they are a significant contributing factor to the length of time it takes LTELs to acquire academic English and develop literacy skills.

Long Term English Language Learners have a history of inconsistent program instruction.

- Long Term English Language Learners have typically received inconsistent language development in their years of schooling in the United States, resulting in limited opportunities

for academic language development in both their home language and English—as well as the accumulation of academic deficits over time.

- Inconsistency may be due to transiency as children move from one school to another and one program to another, and/or it may be the result of individual and varying decisions among classroom educators about how to address the needs of ELLs.
- Few administrators and educators have had training or guidance in understanding what constitutes a strong English Language Learner program or the critical components of any particular model that impacts student success, so consistency in ELL programs across grade levels is rare.
- Coherence and consistency in program matters, as does strong, faithful implementation of research-based models. Each move in and out of a program results in gaps in language development and access to academic content.

Cyclical transnational schooling tends to disrupt the learning process for many English Language Learners.

- Most Long Term English Language Learners were born in the United States but may not have lived here continuously, resulting in a history of transnational schooling— moving back and forth between U.S. schools and foreign schools over the course of their education.
- Each transnational move results in knowledge gaps due to non-alignment of the curricula across national school systems. Because students are seldom in bilingual programs in either country, every move from the United States to another nation

results in cessation of English language development, and every move back to the United States results in cessation of home language development.

- These transnational moves tend to occur repeatedly, creating "a cycle of adjustment and readjustment,"[x] disruption in language and literacy development, and new placement and program decisions that add to inconsistency in ELL student support.

A narrowed school-wide curriculum—and only partial access to that curriculum—impedes the academic growth of ELL students.

- Many schools have reduced time for science, arts, and social studies to allow for increased time in English and math, resulting in content knowledge gaps and fewer opportunities for ELLs to develop the academic language required for success in those subjects.
- By definition, ELLs do not have sufficient mastery of English to understand and participate fully in an English-taught curriculum. During the years they are learning English, ELLs only partially comprehend whatever subject matter is being taught. ELLs' access is further limited when subjects are barely taught. As a result, LTELs arrive in middle school without foundational academic knowledge—contributing to the academic struggles so typical for LTELs.
- There are documented discrepancies in access and exposure to an enriched curriculum between schools in lower socio-economic communities and those in wealthier communities, between high-minority enrollment schools and schools

with fewer minority groups. Aside from the crucial issue of educational equity, the development of academic language for ELLs is impeded when language development is taught in the absence of a full curriculum.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN LONG TERM ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS ENTER SECONDARY SCHOOL?

Lack of designated secondary school programs and educator training leaves Long Term English Language Learners even further behind.

Few districts have designated programs or formal approaches designed for Long Term English Language Learners in secondary schools, leaving LTELs to sink or swim with inadequate support:

Long Term English Language Learners are inappropriately placed in mainstream classes or classes designed for newcomer ELL students.

- One common "program" for LTELs is placement in "mainstream" classes designed for English proficient students. Because most LTELs have reached a basic level of oral fluency in English that is sufficient for informal and social communication, their need for support in developing English proficiency is often not recognized. Their grasp of academic English conventions, discourse formats, language functions, grammar, and vocabulary are weak, which limits their comprehension and participation in class.
- Secondary school educators often do not know they have Long Term English Language Learners in their classes. Nothing about these classes (instruction, pacing, curriculum, and grouping) addresses the language development or access needs of LTELs, so the students struggle.

- When LTELs struggle academically, they often receive intervention or support classes designed for native English speakers that do not address their needs as English Language Learners.
- In some schools, LTELs may receive English Language Development classes, which tend to be designed for newcomer students, or they may be placed in classes all day with other English Language Learners. After years of such placement, the setting becomes an ESL ghetto.[xi] None of these approaches is adequate to meet LTELs' needs.

Secondary school educators are often unprepared to meet the needs of Long Term English Language Learners.

- Whether Long Term English Language Learners are placed in mainstream classes or in Specifically Designed Academic Instruction in English content classes, they are often taught by educators without the preparation, support, or strategies to address their attributes.
- Few secondary educators feel they have the tools, skills, or preparation to meet the needs of their English Language Learner students, and few have received professional development to do so.[xii] Even more problematic, LTEL students are disproportionately assigned to the least-prepared educators in the school. In many settings, veteran educators earn the right to "move up" to honors classes.
- Secondary educators often are not prepared to teach reading and writing skills and often do not have training in language development. Their focus has been on academic content. Many are challenged by how to teach grade-level or advanced

secondary school academic content to students without the English foundation or literacy skills needed to access that content. The situation is even more challenging when those students come with academic gaps accrued over years in U.S. schools.

Long Term English Language Learners are over-assigned and inadequately served in intervention and reading support classes.

- Long Term English Language Learners run the gamut from those several years below grade level with exceptionally weak academic language skills in both their home language and English, to those who are getting by adequately but still dealing with weak vocabulary and persistent errors in language.
- Secondary students who are several years below grade level are often assigned to intensive intervention or reading support classes that do not distinguish between English Language Learners and native English speakers. These classes primarily focus on reading, not sufficiently incorporating the targeted oral language development needed by Long Term English Language Learners.
- The National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth found that instructional strategies effective with native English speakers do not have as positive a learning impact on language minority students, and that "instruction in the key components of reading is necessary but not sufficient for teaching language minority students to read and write proficiently in English."

Long Term English Language Learners have limited access to electives and the full curriculum.

- The number of intervention and support classes in English and math limit access to electives and, in some schools, science and social studies. As a result, LTELs have difficulty earning sufficient graduation credits and fulfilling college preparatory courses.



WHAT WORKS? EMERGING PRACTICES FOR LONG TERM ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Emerging practices that simultaneously address language, literacy, and academic gaps show great promise for meeting the unique needs of Long Term English Language Learners.

In the past few years, as educators have begun looking at Long Term English Language Learner data, and as the full magnitude of the challenge has become clear, it has energized efforts to develop courses, instruction, and programs to re-engage and motivate LTELs and to address their language and academic gaps. Based upon LTEL research and site-specific inquiries into LTEL needs, new approaches have been piloted that show great promise and impact for meeting the needs of LTELs and preventing the creation of new LTELs.

Seven Basic Principles for Meeting the Needs of Long Term English Language Learners

Seven basic principles lie at the heart of successfully educating middle and high school Long Term English Language Learners:

1. **Urgency.** Focus urgently on accelerating LTEL progress towards attaining English proficiency and closing academic gaps.
2. **Distinct needs.** Recognize that the needs of LTELs are distinct and cannot adequately be addressed within a "struggling reader" paradigm or a generic "English Language Learner" approach, but require an explicit LTEL approach.
3. **Language, literacy, and academics.** Provide LTELs with language development, literacy development, and a program that addresses the academic gaps they have accrued.

4. **Home language.** Affirm the crucial role of home language in a student's life and learning, and provide home language development whenever possible.
5. **Three R's: rigor, relevance, and relationships.** Provide LTELs with rigorous and relevant curriculum and relationships with supportive adults (along with the supports to succeed).
6. **Integration.** End the ESL ghetto, cease the sink-or-swim approach, and provide maximum integration without sacrificing access to LTEL supports.
7. **Active engagement.** Invite, support, and insist that LTELs become active participants in their own education.

Eight Components of Successful School Programs

Placement in specific courses and the overall academic program a student receives powerfully shapes the likelihood of his or her academic success. The most effective secondary school programs for LTELs incorporate the previous seven basic principles and the following eight key components:

1. Specialized English Language Development course designed for LTELs (separate from other English Language Learners), emphasizing writing, academic vocabulary, active engagement, and oral language

   Provide LTELs with an Academic Language Development (ALD) course that focuses on powerful oral language development, explicit literacy development, instruction in the academic uses of English, high-quality writing, extensive reading of relevant texts, a focus on active student engagement and accountable participation, and an emphasis on academic language and complex vocabulary.

Concurrently enroll LTELs in a grade-level English class (taught by the same educator as the ALD course) where they are mixed heterogeneously with strong native English speakers. Structure the course around a set of consistent routines, and engage students in setting goals and developing study skills. These classes are based on English Language proficiency standards and are aligned with grade-level Language Arts standards to scaffold the language demands and language development needed for LTELs' success.

2. Clustered placement in heterogeneous and rigorous grade-level content classes (including honors and college-track), mixed with English proficient students and taught with differentiated instructional strategies

Place LTELs in rigorous, grade-level classes, with many English-fluent peers. Cluster LTELs with like LTELs among the English proficient students, but make certain LTELs comprise no more than one-third of the class.

Make sure educators in these classes have information about the language gaps and specific needs of the LTEL cluster. Provide educators with professional development in Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies to scaffold access to the content (SDAIE is an approach, not a class filled with English Language Learners). The success of LTELs in these classes is carefully monitored, with extra academic support triggered as needed (e.g., Saturday School, tutors, homework support, online tutorial support).

3. Explicit academic language and literacy development across the curriculum

Design all classes for explicit language development, with a focus on comprehension, vocabulary development, and advanced grammatical structures needed to comprehend and produce academic language. Focus on academic language as needed for studying the specific academic content of the class.

Design lessons around carefully structured language objectives for integrating subject matter content, focusing on content-related reading and writing skills and carefully planned activities that encourage students to actively use language, with an emphasis on meaning making and engaging with the academic content.

4. Primary language literacy development through native speakers classes (in an articulated sequence through Advanced Placement levels)

Wherever possible, enroll LTELs in a high-quality primary language development program. Developed for native speakers, these classes include explicit literacy instruction aligned to English literacy standards and are designed for skill transfer across languages. Native speakers classes also provide solid preparation and a pathway to Advanced Placement language and literature, and include cultural focus and empowering pedagogy.

Place LTELs of less-common languages (for whom an articulated series of native language development classes is not feasible) **into a language-based elective** (e.g., drama, journalism) or computer lab with software that focuses on native language development.

5. Systems for monitoring progress and triggering support and a master schedule designed for flexibility and movement as students progress

Use a master schedule to facilitate accelerated movement needed to overcome gaps and earn credits and adjust a student's placement to provide increased supports. For example, all ninth grade English and English Language Development classes can be scheduled at the same time. A formal monitoring system reviews mid-semester assessments and grades for each LTEL to determine whether placement needs to be adjusted and what kind of supports might be needed to improve student success.

6. School-wide focus on study skills, metacognition, and learning strategies

Develop and strengthen LTELs' study skills and learning strategies by implementing College Board and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) techniques in classes in which LTELs are enrolled. (AVID is a college readiness system for elementary through higher education designed to increase school-wide learning and performance.)

Provide supports (e.g., afterschool or Saturday sessions, tutoring) to help LTELs understand and complete homework assignments. Some schools offer a series of semester-long, after-school courses that provide project-based ELD support for LTELs and students at risk of becoming LTELs.

7. Data chats and testing accommodations

To build student responsibility for their education, provide students and their parents with information and counseling about how students are doing (English proficiency assessments, grade-level standards-based tests, grades,

credits) along with discussions about the implications of this data. Students need to know where they are along the continuum towards English proficiency and what they must do to meet the criteria for proficiency.

Handle English proficiency testing with the same seriousness as other testing (should be administered by classroom educators, calendared on the schedule, located in quiet rooms, etc.) Use allowable testing accommodations on standards tests—such as translated glossaries, flexible settings, and hearing directions in the home language for Long Term English Language Learners, as for other English Language Learners.

8. Affirming school climate and relevant texts

Build an inclusive and affirming school climate to engage LTELs in full school participation, healthy identity development, and positive intergroup relationships. Schools can enhance school climate by employing literature and curricular material that speaks to the histories and cultures of the students, diversifying extracurricular and club activities through intentional outreach, providing awards or multilingual designations on the diplomas of students for bi-literacy, and offering elective courses that focus on the histories and contributions of the diverse cultures represented among the student body.

End the social and structured isolation of English Language Learners through activities that build relationships across groups. Empowering pedagogy incorporates explicit leadership development components that help young people develop as responsible members, cultural brokers, and bridges of their communities.

The good news is that districts piloting these emerging approaches report positive outcomes: Long Term English Language Learners become "unstuck" and move rapidly towards English proficiency, more student engagement, fewer course failures, improved high school exit exam passage, increased high school graduation rates, and some increases in college enrollment rates.

Eight Characteristics of Effective Educators

When students with language requirements and academic gaps are placed in rigorous courses with high-level content, they need instruction designed and adapted to their needs. The most effective educators know how to help Long Term English Language Learners build academic language as well as content skills.

1. Effective educators know their students and identify their Long Term English Language Learners.

   Good instruction for LTELs starts with teachers and education support professionals having information. Ask for data on the class student roster that identifies English Language Learners by their English proficiency levels and also specifically identifies Long Term English Language Learners. Knowing whether LTELs are enrolled in your class, and having access to assessments that pinpoint the specific gaps in language development and academic skills students need to fill, will help you differentiate supports and plan instruction.

   Because LTELs often feel invisible and unnoticed in class, relationships matter. To the degree possible, make a personal connection and spend some time talking with each LTEL about his or her goals, school experiences, expectations, and the availability of support for success in your class.

2. Effective educators emphasize oral language and active engagement.

Oral language is the foundation for literacy. Although LTELs are orally fluent enough to sound like other students in social interactions, their academic literacy skills in English are not developed, and they need a different level of support for developing and actively using academic language. Too often, the experience of English Language Learners in U.S. classrooms is one of silence: they speak little, participate minimally, and are seldom called upon because they lack sufficient English skills.

In the most effective classrooms, student talk is more prevalent than educator talk, and active student collaboration abounds. But LTELs typically are not risk-takers in class. They need daily structured opportunities, invitation, and support to share responses, collaborate with peers, and present ideas. Teambuilding—an important tool—is particularly critical at the beginning of a semester.

To help LTELs participate, create a sense of community and a safe climate in your classroom. Be a language "coach," encouraging, asking questions, and elaborating as your students speak. Give students opportunities to pair-share, jot down notes, or just reflect quietly before sharing their ideas with the class or answering educators' questions aloud.

3. Effective educators provide explicit instructions and models.

LTELs often do not understand what they are expected to do in class. Help them by giving clear verbal instructions and information, bolstered by written directions and visuals. Effective strategies include providing models of finished projects, rubrics that clarify the elements of successful work,

and invitations to ask questions and get help. Model—show students step by step how to accomplish a task and provide concrete examples of finished products.

4. Effective educators focus on the development of academic reading and writing skills.

Reading and writing are gateways to academic learning and success, and LTELs struggle with both. They need support to develop these skills and to access the information in academic texts. Effective educators of all content areas work with students to read text closely—identifying the text genre and purpose of the reading, honing in on how the text is structured, and spending time on key vocabulary.

Engage students with interesting nonfiction, informational texts that present real-world issues relevant to their lives, as well as with primary sources and literature. LTELs typically are given watered-down or excerpt readings and do not have the experience of reading whole books or wonderful and expressive language. Pay attention to the quality of the texts assigned, and commit to exposing LTEL students to powerful language.

Have LTELs write about what they have read, prefacing the writing by talking through their thoughts. Writing assignments should cover a range of types of writing: summarizing, justification, argument, opinion, and research. Have students identify main ideas and details in their reading, and capture that information in Cornell notes and writing summaries.

5. Effective educators focus on key cognitive and language functions required for academic tasks and use graphic organizers to scaffold those functions.

Language and thought are deeply connected; they are reciprocal and develop together. Tools that help students think about the world and shape their ideas conceptually support the development of academic language. Without the language to express those concepts, it is difficult to engage in analytical thinking.

Effective educators hone in on key language functions (e.g., expressing an opinion, giving complex directions, summarizing, etc.), and develop language objectives that focus on teaching the vocabulary, forms, structures, and discourse patterns associated with these functions.

Effective educators also use graphic organizers to show how information is related, use non-linguistic representations and visuals to bolster comprehension and make ideas concrete, and structure hands-on learning experiences and projects.

6. Effective educators build background knowledge, scaffold key concepts, and teach vocabulary.

Educators need to understand the language demands of the content they are teaching. This includes careful analysis of the language-related demands of the texts and thoughtful reflection on the discipline-specific discourse patterns and vocabulary students need for the tasks assigned in class.

Lessons often need to include building background knowledge related to key concepts, keeping in mind that LTELs have gaps in academic background.

It makes a difference when educators take time to teach vocabulary and build meaning around those words—including giving students time to apply, discuss, and write about them. LTELs need explicit instruction in developing highly portable vocabulary they will encounter in multiple academic settings.

7. Effective educators make connections, build relevance, affirm language and culture, and maintain rigor.

The most effective classrooms for LTELs establish an environment that affirms language and culture, invites students to make connections between their life experiences and the academic content, incorporates relevant issues and material into the curriculum, and maintains high expectations and intellectual rigor.

Much of the research literature related to language minority youth cites the importance of "culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy" and "empowering pedagogy."[xiii] All students learn by making connections between what they already know and the new information they encounter. Pedagogy that encourages students to bring their experiences, culture, heritage, and language into the classroom maximizes learning by allowing students to build on the full foundation of their prior knowledge.

Empowering pedagogy is participatory by design, requiring educators to have high expectations and the ability to communicate those expectations. Educators need skills for building upon the familiar, scaffolding the unfamiliar through explicit activities, eliciting student participation, and responding to what students have to say. These skills require educators to adapt, shape, select from, and add to the curriculum/materials they are given, in response to their students' needs.

8. Effective educators check for understanding and monitor progress.

It is important to keep a sense of urgency and focus about the progress of LTEL students, using samples of LTEL student work to reflect on their academic content and language needs. As you monitor the progress of LTELs, consider issues of active participation and engagement, as well as academic work samples.

Check in regularly with LTELs about how they are doing and what they need: include student self-assessments and goal-setting in this process and encourage students to identify their challenges, own their success, and figure out ways to move forwards towards English proficiency and college readiness goals.

Elementary School Strategies and Programs that Prevent the Creation of Long Term English Language Learners

The trajectory of a Long Term English Language Learner begins in elementary school. Taking the necessary steps early enough can help prevent an entire new generation of long term ELL students. Successful elementary school programs offer high-quality language development programs and strategies that are consistent across grade levels.

- English Language Development/English as a Second Language. Dedicated, daily, and standards-based ELD/ESL programs address the specific needs of students at each fluency level and support instruction with quality materials that focus on all four language domains—with a major emphasis on building a strong oral language foundation; using language for interaction and meaning-making; and developing complex, precise, and academic language.

- Home language development. Programs that develop students' home language (oral and literacy) to threshold levels are a strong foundation for developing English literacy and academic success (at least through third grade, more powerfully through fifth grade, and optimally, ongoing throughout a students' education). Teaching students to read in their first language promotes higher levels of reading achievement in English and provides students the benefits of bilingualism.
- Use curriculum, instruction, and strategies. Use resources that promote transfer between English and the home language.
- Enriched oral language development. Emphasize oral language throughout the curriculum.
- Modified instructional strategies and supplemental materials provide access to academic content.
- Program coherence and consistency. Provide coherence and consistency of program across grades, including, wherever possible, articulation and alignment with preschool.
- High-quality literature. Provide students/LTELs with exposure to high-quality literature and complex and expressive language.

Common Core: Standards that Create New Urgency for Long Term ELLs

The Common Core Standards have set benchmarks defining college and career readiness in English Language Arts and Mathematics—articulating high expectations for students and driving a new era in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessments.

The standards are an opportunity to strengthen the schooling of English Language Learners, but without attention to the specific needs of ELLs, Common Core Standards could exacerbate the barriers and achievement gaps that have characterized the education of ELLs for too long—increasing the likelihood that English Language Learners will become Long Term.

The language and literacy demands of the Common Core are high and many English Language Learners are not achieving even the current bar of English proficiency needed for academic participation. As LTEL research has found, the focus on academic language is inadequate, the provision of ELD/ESL has been generally weak, and teaching and curriculum materials have been insufficient for moving English Language Learners to the levels of English needed for successful academic engagement.

Meeting the demands of the new standards will require an increase in support for English Language Learners. Ramping up instruction to raise English Language Learners to the bar of linguistic complexity called for in the Common Core standards will require a major intensification, strengthening, and focus on English Language Development and scaffolding strategies across the curriculum. Implementation of the Common Core will require both investments in materials that more appropriately provide the scaffold into academic rigorous text and changes in teaching practices so that students are provided support for engaging with more complex text.

Fortunately for educators who have Long Term English Language Learners in their classrooms, the Common Core Standards align with the instructional requirements of these students.

- **The Common Core standards position academic language development within the study of academic disciplines, and call for attention to literacy and language across the curriculum.**

  In addition to calling for an explicit focus on the vocabulary, oral language, and discourse patterns essential to academic participation, the new standards call on educators to develop an understanding of literacy and language as they apply across all curricular areas, and to utilize strategies to promote active student engagement with language in the classroom throughout the day.

- **The Common Core Standards call for collaboration and teamwork, as a key component of instruction, and recognize that students need to develop the skills for collaborative engagement in academic work.**

  The Common Core Standards view language as action: a vehicle for constructing meaning, negotiating meaning, expressing ideas, and accomplishing academic tasks. This understanding of the role of "language in action" necessitates more project-based and inquiry-based teaching and learning and the active use of language in the context of collaborative work.

- **The Common Core standards call for an increased focus on oral language, speaking, and listening.**

  The new standards call for developing speaking and listening skills for all students, presenting ideas orally, and working in groups to construct and negotiate meaning. Educators are called on to structure opportunities and then support students to actively engage in one-on-one, small group, and whole group discussions.

NEA members believe that Common Core State Standards represent a game changer for students and public education if we get implementation of the standards right. There is overwhelming consensus among educators across the country that the Common Core will ultimately be good for students and education. There are significant challenges associated with implementing Common Core, but the possibilities are far too great for us to throw up our hands and say, "this is just too hard."

As schools implement the standards, one imperative stands out: educators are key to ensuring English Language Learners have access to the Common Core Standards. To be successful, they need planning time, support, and meaningful, well-designed professional development that focuses on scaffolding strategies to ensure access, differentiating instruction for maximum participation, working with the linguistic demands of academic text to build understanding of how English works, and embedding language development across the curriculum.



HOW CAN POLICYMAKERS ADVOCATE FOR LONG TERM ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS?

Policymakers must require and ensure the implementation of high-quality programs, curriculum, educator training, and supports for English Language Learners and Long Term English Language Learners.

Educators can make an enormous difference in the lives of Long Term English Language Learners, as instructors and as advocates for building the comprehensive programs LTELs require. Schools can't fully address the needs of LTELs, however, without leadership and advocacy at the policy level.

The role of the district and state is to ensure high-quality implementation of research-based programs for English Language Learners. This requires addressing common challenges, such as inadequate data and student information systems, a shortage of educators prepared with the knowledge and skills to effectively teach LTELs, lack of appropriate curriculum and materials targeted for the LTEL population, contradictory mandates and counsel, general lack of knowledge about research on effective practices, and inadequate assessment and systems to know how ELLs are doing or to identify ELLs who are not adequately progressing.

Action Steps for Policymakers

To effectively serve the needs of LTEL students, policymakers must take action on a variety of fronts:

- **Provide clearly defined descriptions of effective research-based program models,** and disseminate research on effective English Language Learner practices.
- **Support professional development initiatives** (including coaching) for teachers, education support professionals, and administrators in the needs of English Language Learners, understanding and implementing research-based program models, and effective instructional strategies.
- **Invest in collaborative educator planning** to facilitate the development of coherent, articulated standards-based curriculum designed to address the needs of English Language Learners in the era of the Common Core.
- **Publish expectations of growth and achievement for English Language Learners** by length of time in program and by proficiency levels, and create data and monitoring systems that identify LTELs and that trigger supports for LTELs and students at risk of becoming LTELs.
- **Provide clear language policy across the system.**
- **Facilitate increased access to preschool programs designed for English Language Learners** and to high-quality early foundations for dual language development and school success.

In past decades, civil rights legislation and court action directing schools to take affirmative steps on behalf of English Language Learners were necessary because schools on their own were not adequately addressing the needs of these students.

Federal and state laws, compliance monitoring, and protected categorical funding have been critical to building and maintaining some measure of response to English Language Learners in the public schools.

This new era promises to focus more on state and local flexibility, putting accountability into the hands of educators and school boards—requiring all of us to take responsibility and be the voice of accountability for this population. Until that happens, Long Term English Language Learners will continue to be a presence in schools across this nation.

Urgent Call to Action

English Language Learners are the fastest growing student population in our nation's schools, yet significant numbers are being mis-served in school. What does that say about our nation's future?

Weak English Language Learner programs and practices that proliferate across the country are foreclosing life options for many students who struggle along, year to year, falling further and further behind. It's unacceptable that despite many years in U.S. schools and despite being close to graduation age, so many Long Term English Language Learners are still not English proficient and have incurred major academic deficits. For them, education has become a permanent dead-end.

The promising news is that this "permanent dead-end" is wholly reparable. By better understanding the characteristics and needs of the Long Term ELL population, schools can do a better job of supporting their learning. We have the power to create policies and programs and to mobilize at the federal, state, and district levels to address the needs of LTELs in secondary schools and to turn around the conditions in elementary grades that result in the creation of long term failure. It is time to stand together with English Language Learner communities and affirm, "Yes, our schools are for you, too."

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ENDNOTES

[i]Lau v. Nichols, 48FF.2d791, United States Court of Appeals, Ninth circuit, January 1973.

[ii]The term "Long Term English Language Learners" is used because it identifies the key issue of how long English Language Learners have remained in United States schools without having attained English proficiency. It is always worrisome to create labels for groups of students that may result in tracking and blaming. The responsibility, having created the label, is to ensure that action is taken to address and remedy the conditions.

[iii]In California, according to the Reparable Harm report (Olsen 2010) 59% of the total secondary school English Language Learner population fits this definition of "Long Term English Language Learners." The percentages vary across districts, however. Long Term English Language Learners comprise just 21% of one district's secondary school English Language Learner enrollment, for example. But in two-thirds of the districts, more than half of the secondary school English Language Learners are Long Term English Language Learners. In 10 of the 31 districts, more than three out of four secondary school English Language Learners are Long Term English Language Learners. Little national data is available on Long Term English Language Learners, so it is difficult to ascertain whether patterns in California are unique or similar to the experiences in other states. Varying sources, using somewhat different definitions, provide some comparative context. A 2005 report from The Urban Institute (Capps, Fix, 2005) estimates that nationwide 56% of English Language Learners at secondary level were born in the United States. A 2001 report from the Dallas public schools reports that 70% of their secondary school English Language Learners were born in the United States, and notes that the "overall academic performance of Long Term English Language Learners does not continue to improve. They reach a ceiling in their levels of academic English attainment over time." Research from New York City reports one out of three English Language Learners in grades 6–12 is a Long Term English Language Learner (Menken, Kleyn and Chae, 2010). And, a 2009 analysis from the Colorado Department of Education cites 23.6% of English Language Learners who have been in their schools for 6+ years. However, because definitions differ across all of these reports, these can only give a general ballpark picture for comparison.

[iv]Menken, K. & Kleyn, T. (2010)

[v]Olsen (2010) found three out of four California LTELs had gaps in ELL services, and Menken & Kleyn (2010) found half of their New York city sample had similar gaps.

[vi]K. Lindholm-Leary and F. Genesee.

[vii]Lindholm Leary, K. & Genesee, F. (2010); Thomas, W. & Collier, V., (2002).

[viii]In California, just 5% receive primary language instruction.

[ix]Menken, K. & Kleyn, T. (2010).

[x]Menken and Kleyn.

[xi]Valdes, G.

[xii]Maxwell-Jolly, Gandara and Mendes (2007) op cit.

[xiii]The PROMISE Initiative (2010); Meltzer, J. & Hamann, E. (2005); Olsen, L. & Romero, A. (2006); Cummins, J. (2000).

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