

INTRODUCTION

Because of the tremendous increase in the number of English learners in our schools over the past two decades, most California teachers now serve students who are learning English as a second language. Each teacher deserves support in how to teach English learners well.

Today, the vast majority of English learners are taught to read using the same instructional materials as their native English-speaking peers and are held to the same achievement expectations. English Learners are assessed on standardized tests and California Standards Tests in English regardless of their level of English proficiency or length of time in American schools. These new accountability measures add pressure to accelerate achievement in English.

Important questions remain as to how to provide appropriate accommodations for students not yet academically proficient in English. There are partial solutions to increasing success in subject-matter content taught in English. One is to incorporate sheltered instructional techniques. Another is the notion of frontloading language by pre-teaching lesson-specific vocabulary and language structures (Dutro & Moran, 2003).

While these accommodations are helpful, they do not address some pressing needs. In examining achievement data by subgroups, districts have discovered that while most English learners are gaining fluency in English (as measured by the CELDT), a disturbing number of English learners continue to do poorly in both oral and written tasks requiring academic language proficiency. And the gap persists in achievement between English learners and their native English-speaking peers.

This has led many to conclude that quality content instruction in English is not sufficient to ensure English learners gain academic proficiency. Without explicit instruction in English and how it works –vocabulary, word usage, grammatical features, syntactical structures – the most effective support for content learning will be found wanting. Achievement will be accelerated when students are proficient in English. And that requires systematic and explicit language instruction.

While there has been increased attention in credentialing and inservice programs to preparing teachers and administrators to address the instructional needs of culturally, linguistically, and academically diverse students, many teachers report a continuing need for detailed information about how to plan, teach and monitor progress in English Language Development. School and district administrators are faced with the need to create coherent systems for a program that is critical to student success, which as yet, has no framework for instruction.

This *Focused Approach to Systematic ELD Instruction Handbook* is an attempt to provide such a framework for teachers and administrators to use in designing effective English Language Development programs.