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ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS in OUT-OF-SCHOOL & EXTENDED LEARNING TIME

A Guide to Best Practices for Program Providers

by



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Supporting English Language Learners in Out-of-School and Extended Learning Time Programs

INTRODUCTION

We have developed this guide to help you think about ways that your program can improve its services for children and families who are learning English. We hope that you will find helpful information, suggestions and research that you can use with your children and with other staff. Many experts contributed to the development of this guide: practitioners who work in out-of-school and extended learning time programs, parents, community leaders, and researchers. We are especially grateful to the participants in our four focus groups, who provided so many of the practical ideas and resources that you will find in the following pages.

We are especially grateful to the participants in our four focus groups, who provided so many of the practical ideas and resources that you will find in the following pages. They also advised us to keep this guide short – so we have included supplementary materials on our website:
www.bostonchildrensmuseum.org/ellafterschool.

Who is an English language learner (ELL)?

A child who does not speak English or whose native language is not English, and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English is the definition of an English language learner.

All ELL's are **bilingual** – they have two languages, at least to some degree. But not all bilinguals are English language learners, if they are proficient in both languages. Even after children become fluent and academically proficient in English, they remain bilingual learners.

The strategies in this guide apply to English language learners, to bilingual learners, and are sound educational practice for ALL children.

English Language Learners are very diverse

There is a great variety of language, educational, cultural, and class backgrounds among ELL students. For example:

Ernest is a student of Haitian background, who is 14 years old, and immigrated at age 8. He speaks English to his parents, siblings, and friends, and Haitian Creole with his grandmother. Although fluent in English conversation, Ernest is far behind classmates in reading and writing in English.

Mei, 5 years old, was born in Massachusetts to parents who speak only Cantonese. She has learned some English from television, but did not speak at all for the first two months of kindergarten. She attends a Chinese school on Sundays.

Pedro, a 9 year old from El Salvador, recently moved to the U.S., and is just learning English at school and with his peers. Pedro is sociable with his friends and can speak a few phrases in English. He is fluent in Spanish, but did not learn to read or write it because there was no school in his village.

A Developmental Framework for Supporting Bilingual Youth

BILINGUAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



THE MAIN IDEA: Like all children, ELL students need to develop their social, emotional, and academic skills to be successful; because of their bilingual backgrounds there are special ways to support them in each of these areas. These best practices also work for ALL STUDENTS.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. More Relationships + Friendships = Less Culture Shock.

To foster healthy social development, programs should promote:

- A positive and supportive environment where students feel known, accepted, and respected
- Friendships with peers from various cultural backgrounds
- Positive social interactions with other students, mentors, and other adults



EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

Positive Bilingual + Bicultural Identities = Positive, Motivated Students.

To promote healthy emotional development, programs should provide:

- Awareness of the differences between and commonalities among cultures
- Appreciation for diverse cultural backgrounds, languages, and customs, including one's own
- Respect for the vital roles of family and community in ELL students' education
- Support for forming a bicultural identity that integrates the best of both cultures – not "either/or"

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT. Support for Academic Language + Literacy Skills = School Success.

To support academic development, programs should have:

- Ongoing support for the development of first and second languages, including OST activities and resources that strengthen the first and second language skills
- Support for transition from the first language to English for school and afterschool
- Recognition of the difference between academic English and "playground" English; inclusion of curriculum and activities that intentionally develop academic English, including experiences that build background knowledge and vocabulary.

BEST PRACTICES

for SUPPORTING ELL STUDENTS DURING OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND EXTENDED LEARNING TIME

There are many approaches and best practices for working with English Language Learners. In the chart below, you will find concrete activities and ideas for each of the areas identified in the Bilingual Youth Development Framework on the previous page: social, emotional, and academic development.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Friendships & Relationships

Set clear expectations for respectful language (including consequences for disrespectful language). Teach proper terms for ethnic groups.

Include ice-breakers or other fun team-building activities on a regular basis.

Set up a mentoring program. For example: pair up older youth with younger children, or adult volunteers working with older kids. Include some opportunities for ELL's to get to know mentors from other cultures as well as from their own background.

Have students work in small groups, using cooperative learning techniques such as assigning roles. For example: illustrator, reader, reporter, writer, timer.

Include ELL learners in all activities with the rest of the students.

When you group students, remember to assign ELL's with others who can support their language needs. For example: if someone is just learning English, have an "interpreter" in the same group.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Bilingual & Bicultural Identity

Pronounce all children's names correctly. Encourage students to be proud of their names – not change them. For example: ask children to find out from home and share how they were named and what their names mean.

Expose students to each other's cultures through fun activities (music, dance, performance). For example: teach Latin zumba or Chinese martial arts.

Find out where all your students are from and what language(s) they speak.

Celebrate cultures that may NOT be represented by your students; expose them to many cultures. For example: bring foods to introduce them to different cultures – include dishes and foods they may not be familiar with.

Invite parents to present different cultures.

Do an activity on careers and future jobs - highlighting the importance of knowing two languages.

Where space allows, decorate or arrange activity space with culture and language posters, information, educational materials, students' pictures, artwork, and projects. Involve kids in helping to plan and decorate.

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT
Language & Literacy Skills

Keep bilingual dictionaries on hand, and teach students to use them.

Develop vocabulary and language at every opportunity – art activities, computer time, doing hands-on science. For example: create a digital scavenger hunt, where a student looks for items on a list using the web.

Speak clearly when introducing activities, and make sure that key vocabulary is understood by all.

Create a journal or self-reflection book that can serve as a self assessment and language development tool. For example: a student autobiography book; a binder of student work with a page to write their thoughts and ideas; an independent learning plan.

Have students develop a book, write a story, or create a blog in English and their home language.

Use visual projects such as magazine collage projects to expand on their language by practicing vocabulary, spelling and reading materials in English.

Focus on fun vocabulary games and activities, like using flash-cards, Pictionary, web resources, puppet shows, or writing a story/play that can be performed for parents.



WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

The activities and ideas on the previous page are grounded in the research on what immigrant students need in order to be successful in school and second language learning. Some highlights from this research are organized below according to the Bilingual Youth Development Framework.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Data show that immigrant youngsters who report having even one English-speaking friend acquire English skills more quickly and proficiently. (Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008) ¹

Supportive relationships with adults including teachers, mentors, and others can provide immigrant students with the necessary tools for academic success. Mentoring relationships can provide students with the much needed cultural and academic knowledge to adapt in their new learning environment. (Suarez Orozco, 2001) ²

How well and how fast children master a second language depends largely on social and motivational factors such as attitudes towards and attitudes of speakers of the "target language". (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) ³

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Afterschool teachers and staff must create a program/classroom environment where English language learners are accepted and their language(s) and culture(s) are respected (Menyuk & Brisk, 2005) ⁴

Students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds should be viewed as strengths and assets for educators to build on and incorporate in their pedagogy. (Nieto, 2000) ⁵

The ability of immigrant children to successfully manage both cultures is called "selective acculturation" and is associated with high school achievement. One benefit is it can contribute to maintaining parent-child relationships (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) ⁶

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

Although many second-language learners learn to speak and understand functional oral language within one or two years, it can take from five to seven years, or longer, to develop the fluency and skills necessary to be able to read and write effectively in academic settings (Collier 1995 ; Cummins, 1981) ⁷

Students' success on tests of academic English are the major predictor of school success. (Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008) ⁸

It is normal for many ELL students to experience a silent period before they are able to produce the new language. Newcomers need "comprehensible input" as they are learning a new language: ideally, in low anxiety situations, simple language that they can connect to "prior knowledge and language" (Krashen, 1981) ⁹

¹ Suarez-Orozco, C., Suarez—Orozco, M., & Todorova, I. (2008). Learning a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Society. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
² Suarez-Orozco, C., & Suarez-Orozco, M. (2001). Children of Immigration. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
³ Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). Attitudes and motivation in second language learning. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
⁴ Menyuk, P. & Brisk, M.E. (2005). Languague development and education: Children with varying language experiences. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan,.
⁵ Nieto, S. (2000). Affirming Diversity, third edition. New York: Longman.
⁶ Portes, A. & R.G. Rumbaut. (2001). Legacies: The Story of the Second Generation. Berkeley: University of California Press.
⁷ Collier, V. (1995). Acquiring a second language for school. Directions in Languague and Education 1(4), 1-10.
⁸ Cummings, J. (1981). Age on arrival and immigrant second language learning in Canada: A reassessment. Applied Linguistics, 2, 132-149.
⁹ Krashen, Stephen D. 1981. Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition. English Language Teaching series. London: Prentice-Hall International (UK) Ltd.

DO's & DON'Ts for working with English language learners and their families

DO

- Be creative and try a multi-sensory approach when communicating with newcomers who are first learning English . Use gestures, facial expressions, photos, maps, charts - or act it out, write it down or draw a picture.
- Rephrase with another word that means the same thing if you are not sure if a student or parent understands you.
- Monitor your language – speak clearly and slowly.
- Present instructions verbally and visually – and write legibly!
- Find out what your newcomers are good at and give them a chance to shine. Being new to the language, culture, and country can be overwhelming, and discouraging. Find ways to have English language learners share what they know, including their language.
- Build on what students know – when introducing a topic find out what students already know about it.
- Wherever possible, hire bilingual staff from students’ cultures; this is especially important for communication with the families.
- Invite bilingual parents to participate in the planning of big events and include parents in parent councils, providing interpreters if needed.
- Provide support for homework – many immigrant parents do not have the language skills, educational background, or time away from work to help with homework.
- Connect with the ESL teachers that work with your children during the school day.

DON'T

- Don't expect newcomers to produce language before they are ready; a "silent period" is a normal part of language learning. When they do begin to speak, remember to allow extra time.
- Don't assume that just because a student is fluent in conversation or "playground English" that he or she has also mastered academic English. It takes 5-7 years for most students to catch up to native English-speakers in school.
- Don't be tempted to correct every error. It's more important to model good English and encourage students to use their new language.
- Don't make "English only" rules. Instead, allow students to communicate in the languages they feel most comfortable.
- Don't rely on worksheets and "classroom like" activities. Instead, provide hands-on experiences that also foster rich language development
- Don't single students out by their language (for example keeping those that do not speak a lot of English all together). But don't isolate them from peers who speak their language either.
- Don't use slang, jargon or idioms without explaining their meaning.
- Don't assume that everyone knows what is expected and what the routines are – be explicit.

Suggested Websites and Other Resources

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT – RESOURCES TO SUPPORT POSITIVE BICULTURAL IDENTITY

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| Buddies for ELL Newcomers
www.everythingsl.net/in-services/buddies.php | Culturally Responsive Teaching
http://knowledgeloom.org/index.jsp |
| ELL Family Involvement
www.colorincolorado.org | Understanding Asian-American Children
http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/eecearchive/digests/1994/feng94.html |
| 40 Multicultural Activities for Out-of-School Time!
www.BOSTnet.org/ info@bostnet.org | |

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT – RESOURCES TO SUPPORT LANGUAGES AND LITERACY

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| Hands-on, language rich, multicultural curriculum and kits from Boston Children’s Museum
www.bostonchildrensmuseum.org/kidsafterschool
www.bostonchildrensmuseum.org/educators/teaching_kits.html | Website for Students to Create Electronic Comic Strips in Multiple Languages
www.makebeliefscomix.com |
| Literacy Development
www.colorincolorado.org | Resources and Tips for Teachers on Teaching ELLs
www.everythingsl.net/resources |
| Bilingual Books & CDs for preK-6 in 40 Languages
www.languagelizard.com | Adapting/Modifying Curriculum for ELLs
www.everythingsl.net/downloads/Modification%20form.pdf |

IN MASSACHUSETTS

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| Student Demographics: Languages Spoken by District and School in MA
www.doe.mass.edu/ell/statistics | EEC Quality Standards for Serving Diverse Languages/Cultures
http://www.mass.gov/Eeoe/docs/EEC/qris/qris_sacc.pdf |
| K-12 ELL Program Types in MA
www.doe.mass.edu/ell/statistics | Info on the Legal Rights of ELL Students to Waive English-Only School Program Assignments
www.doe.mass.edu/ell/waiver.pdf |
| Q & A on the Legal Rights of ELL Students under MA Law
www.doe.mass.edu/ell/chapter71A_faq.pdf | ESL Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for Massachusetts Students
www.doe.mass.edu/ell/benchmark.pdf |
| | MA Curriculum Frameworks for Subject Areas in K-12
www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html |

GENERAL

- Free Foreign Language Lessons
www.openculture.com/2006/10/foreign_languag.html