

Effective Literacy & English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades

1 Screen for reading problems and monitor progress.



1. Districts should establish procedures for--and provide training for--schools to screen English learners (ELs) for reading problems. The same measures and assessment approaches can be used with ELs and native English speakers.
2. Depending on resources, districts should consider collecting progress monitoring data more than 3 times a year for ELs at risk for reading problems. The severity of the problem should dictate how often progress is monitored--weekly or bi-weekly for students at high risk of reading problems.
3. Data from screening and progress monitoring assessments should be used to make decisions about the instructional support ELs need to learn to read.
4. Schools with performance benchmarks in reading in the early grades can use the same standards for ELs and for native English speakers to make adjustments in instruction when progress is insufficient. It is the opinion of the panel that schools should not consider below-grade-level performance in reading as "normal" or something that will resolve itself when oral language proficiency in English improves.
5. Provide training on how teachers are to use formative assessment data to guide instruction.

2 Provide focused, intensive small-group reading interventions for ELs determined to be at risk for reading problems.



1. Use an intervention program with students who enter the 1st grade with weak reading and prereading skills, or with older elementary students with reading problems.
2. Ensure that the program is implemented daily for at least 30 minutes in small, homogeneous groups of 3 to 6 students.
3. Provide training and ongoing support for the teachers and interventionists (reading coaches, Title I personnel, or para-educators) who provide the small-group instruction.
4. Training for teachers and other school personnel who provide the small-group interventions should also focus on how to deliver instruction effectively, independent of the particular program emphasized. It is important that this training include the use of the specific program materials the teachers will use during the school year. But the training should also explicitly emphasize that these instructional techniques can be used in other programs and across other subject areas.



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3 Provide extensive and varied vocabulary instruction.



1. Adopt an evidence-based approach to vocabulary instruction.
2. Develop districtwide lists of essential words for vocabulary instruction. These words should be drawn from the core reading program and from the textbooks used in key content areas, such as science and history.
3. Vocabulary instruction for ELs should also emphasize the acquisition of meanings of everyday words that native speakers know and that are necessarily part of the academic curriculum.

4 Develop academic English.



1. Adopt a plan that focuses on ways and means to help teachers understand that instruction to ELs must include time devoted to development of academic English. Daily academic English instruction should also be integrated into the core curriculum.
2. Teach academic English in the earliest grades.
3. Provide teachers with appropriate professional development to help them learn how to teach academic English.
4. Consider asking teachers to devote a specific block (or blocks) of time each day to building ELs' academic English.

5 Schedule regular peer-assisted learning opportunities.



1. Develop plans that encourage teachers to schedule about 90 minutes a week with activities in reading and language arts that entail students working in structured pair activities.
2. Also consider the use of partnering for English language development instruction.

This is an abbreviated digest of the Practice Guide cited below. It was created for instructional leaders and supervisors who are responsible for ensuring quality literacy programming but not responsible for implementing the evidence-based practices (EBP). The infographic is designed for awareness only. Access the Practice Guide for full understanding and implementation of the EBP.

Adapted from: Gersten, R., Baker, S.K., Shanahan, T., Linan-Thompson, S., Collins, P., & Scarcella, R. (2007). Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades: A Practice Guide (NCEE 2007-4011). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides>.



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