

A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York

DOUBLE **THE** WORK

**CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS TO ACQUIRING
LANGUAGE AND ACADEMIC LITERACY FOR
ADOLESCENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

By Deborah J. Short & Shannon Fitzsimmons



ALLIANCE FOR
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The Alliance for Excellent Education is a national policy and advocacy organization that works to help make every child a high school graduate—to prepare them for college, work, and to be contributing members of society. It focuses on the needs of the six million secondary school students (those in the lowest achievement quartile) who are most likely to leave school without a diploma or to graduate unprepared for a productive future.

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About the Center for Applied Linguistics

The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving communication through better understanding of language and culture. Established in 1959, CAL is headquartered in Washington, DC. CAL has earned a national and international reputation for its research and contributions to the fields of bilingual education, English as a second language, literacy, foreign language education, dialect studies, language policy, refugee orientation, and the education of linguistically and culturally diverse adults and children. CAL provides a comprehensive range of research-based language resources, testing tools, professional services, publications, and cultural orientation information. For more information, visit www.cal.org.

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Deborah J. Short

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the growing societal awareness of the need for interventions and programs to increase literacy levels of adolescents, education policymakers and school reformers have mostly overlooked the needs of the large and growing English language learner (ELL) population. Though recent reports have helped to focus attention on the adolescent literacy crisis, they offer very little guidance on how best to meet the varied and challenging literacy needs of adolescent ELLs.

In virtually every part of the country, middle and high schools are now seeing expanding enrollments of students whose primary language is not English. Rising numbers of immigrants, other demographic trends, and the demands of an increasingly global economy make it clear that the nation can no longer afford to ignore the pressing needs of the ELLs in its middle and high schools who are struggling with reading, writing, and oral discourse in a new language.

Although many strategies for supporting literacy in native English speakers are applicable to adolescent ELLs, there are significant differences in the way that successful literacy interventions for the latter group should be designed and implemented. These differences have serious implications for teachers, instructional leaders, curriculum designers, administrators, and policymakers at all levels of government. Moreover, because adolescent ELLs are a diverse group of learners in terms of their educational backgrounds, native language literacy, socioeconomic status, and more, some strategies will work for certain ELLs but not for others.

It should be understood that adolescent ELLs are second language learners who are still developing their proficiency in academic English. Moreover, they are learning English at the same time they are studying core content areas through English. **Thus, English language learners must perform *double the work* of native English speakers in the country's middle and high schools.** And, at the same time, they are being held to the same accountability standards as their native English-speaking peers.

To bring the issues and challenges confronting adolescent ELLs into clearer focus, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), working on behalf of Carnegie Corporation of New York, convened a panel of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners working in the field to offer their expertise (see list in Appendix A). The panel agreed to a focus on *academic literacy*, that which is most crucial for success in school, and defined the term in the following way:

- Includes reading, writing, and oral discourse for school
- Varies from subject to subject
- Requires knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media
- Is influenced by students' literacies in contexts outside of school
- Is influenced by students' personal, social, and cultural experiences

The panel identified six major challenges to improving the literacy of ELLs:

- Lack of common criteria for identifying ELLs and tracking their academic performance
- Lack of appropriate assessments
- Inadequate educator capacity for improving literacy in ELLs
- Lack of appropriate and flexible program options
- Inadequate use of research-based instructional practices
- Lack of a strong and coherent research agenda about adolescent ELL literacy

During the course of the project, CAL researchers reviewed the literature on adolescent ELL literacy and conducted site visits to three promising programs. In addition, a sub-study was commissioned from researchers at the Migration Policy Institute to collect and analyze valuable information on the demographic trends and academic achievement of ELLs.

At the conclusion of the process, the panel recommended an array of different strategies for surmounting the six challenges by making changes in day-to-day teaching practices, professional training, research, and educational policy. As a result, each “challenge” section in the body of this report is followed by an extensive “potential solutions” discussion. With the small but growing research base on the best practices for developing adolescent ELL literacy becoming more widely disseminated through increased dialogue among educators, researchers, and policymakers, the right strategies for helping these students attain their full potential are being determined. For example, policymakers should consider the following:

- Tightening the existing definition of Limited English Proficient (LEP) and former LEP students in Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to ensure that states use identical criteria to designate LEP students and to determine which students are to be considered Fluent English Proficient (FEP)
- Developing new and improved assessments of the adolescent ELLs' native language abilities, English language development, and content knowledge learning
- Setting a national teacher education policy to ensure all teacher candidates learn about second language and literacy acquisition, reading across the content areas, and sheltered instruction and ESL methods
- Adjusting school accountability measures under NCLB to avoid penalizing districts and schools that allow ELL students to take more than the traditional 4 years to complete high school successfully

- Encouraging the use of proven and promising instruction for ELLs in schools
- Funding and conducting more short- and long-term research on new and existing interventions and programs, and on the academic performance of these adolescent ELLs

Although the potential solutions in this report are not exhaustive, they are meant to provide a sound starting point for better addressing the needs of ELLs in the nation's schools. Moreover, by helping ELLs learn and perform more effectively in school, America's educational system and society as a whole will be strengthened and enriched.

INTRODUCTION: ADOLESCENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND THE LITERACY CHALLENGE

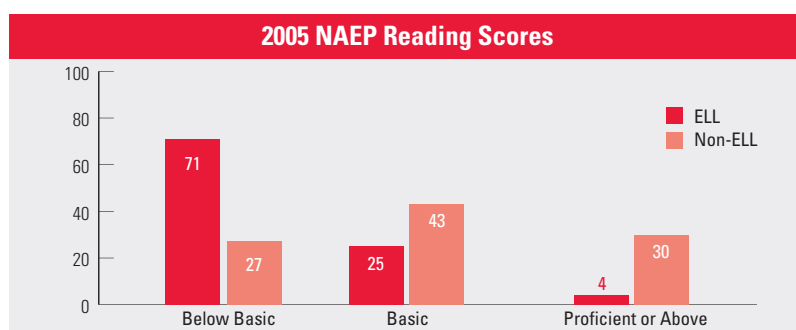
Nationally, over 6 million American students in grades 6 through 12 are at risk of failure because they read and comprehend below—often considerably below—the basic levels needed for success in high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Only 30% of all secondary students read proficiently. For students of color, the situation is even worse. Eighty-nine percent of Hispanic and 86% of African-American middle and high school students read below grade level (NCES, 2005). Almost 50% of students of color do not graduate from high school with a regular diploma in 4 years of instruction (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004).

While there are still a substantial number of unanswered questions about English language learners, there is an emerging picture of what can be done to improve the literacy of these students.

Michael Kamil
Adolescents and Literacy

These statistics are alarming enough, but the literacy crisis for English language learners (ELLs) is even more dramatic. For example, only 4% of eighth-grade ELLs and 20% of students classified as “formerly ELL” scored at the proficient or advanced levels on the reading portion of the 2005 National Assessment for Educational Progress (Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005)—the nation's only ongoing assessment of what students know and can do in various subject areas. This means that 96% of the eighth-grade limited English proficient (LEP) students scored below the basic level (Figure 1). In addition, ELLs graduate from high school at far lower rates than do their native English-speaking peers. Only 10% of young adults who speak English at home fail to complete high school; the percentage is three times higher (31%) for ELLs. If ELLs reported speaking English with difficulty on the 2000 U.S. Census, their likelihood of completing high school dropped to 18% (NCES, 2004).

Figure 1. Eighth-Grade NAEP Reading Scores for ELL and Non-ELL Students



Notes.
ELL = English language learner
NAEP = National Assessment of Educational Progress
Source: Perie, Grigg, & Donahue, 2005

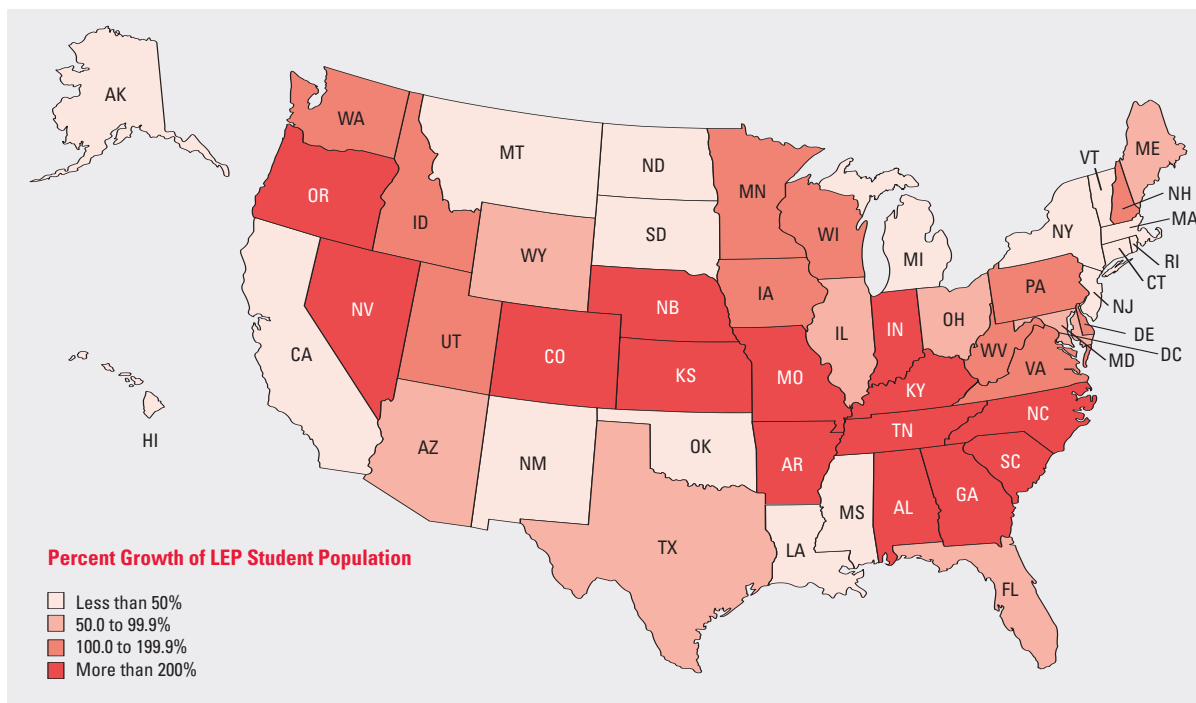
Literacy development is a particular problem for the ELLs who enter the educational system in later grades, especially in high school. Not only do these students have to master complex course content, usually with little context or understanding of the way that American schools are structured and operate, but they have fewer years to master the English language. In addition, they are enrolling at an age beyond which literacy instruction is usually provided to students, and some have below-grade-level literacy in their native language. Despite these circumstances, they are usually placed in classes with secondary teachers who are not trained to teach basic literacy skills to adolescents (Rueda & Garcia, 2001).

Adolescent ELLs with limited formal schooling and below-grade-level literacy are most at risk of educational failure. These students have weak literacy skills in their native language, lack English language skills and knowledge in specific subject areas, and often need additional time to become accustomed to school routines and expectations in the United States. They are entering the nation's schools with very weak academic skills at the same time that schools are emphasizing rigorous, standards-based curricula and high-stakes assessments for all students (Boyson & Short, 2003).

Newcomers are not the only students struggling. Some ELLs have grown up in the United States, but for various reasons (e.g., mobility, switching between different language programs), they have not developed the degree of academic literacy needed for success in middle and high school. Providing more of the same type of instruction they received in elementary school will not bring about necessary improvement.

It is important to recognize that this crisis is nationwide and changes in the geographic distribution of ELLs present new challenges to the countless districts that have not served these students in the past. Although five of the six top immigration states—California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois—accounted for over 60% of all LEP students in grades 6 through 12 in 2000, the states with the fastest growing LEP adolescent student populations are not the same. For example, North Carolina experienced a 500% growth between 1993 and 2003, and Colorado, Nevada, Nebraska, Oregon, Georgia, and Indiana each had more than 200% increases in that time period, as shown in Figure 2 (Batalova, Fix, & Murray, 2005).

Figure 2. LEP Student Population Growth from 1993 to 2003 by State



Note. LEP = limited English proficient

Source: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs; State Data

Although the absolute numbers of ELLs in states such as North Carolina, Colorado, Oregon, Nevada, and Indiana are small compared with those in more traditional immigration states, such as California, Texas, Florida, and Illinois, the growth has been quite rapid. Fast growth raises important concerns about whether states have resources (e.g., trained teachers, language support programs, curricula, and materials) and infrastructures to accommodate these students and the ability to ensure that the children have appropriate and effective academic and language instruction.

The need for effective instruction is particularly critical in light of current educational reform policies. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, for example, mandates high standards and regular testing of students in Title I schools and requires the schools to report results according to student population subgroups, of which the ELL category is one. Therefore the academic performance of English language learners is front and center in terms of school, district, and state accountability, and educators are seeking ways to improve ELL achievement.

Another reform practice gaining ground is the use of a high school exit exam as a criterion for a high school diploma. Twenty-two states require passing scores on such exit exams, and three more states are scheduled to implement this requirement by 2012 (CEP, 2006). However, the Center for Education Policy (2006) reports significant gaps between the pass rates of ELLs and overall pass rate. Because adolescent ELLs fare poorly on standard measures of academic performance such as these exams, schools are compelled to serve them better.

ACADEMIC LITERACY FOR ADOLESCENTS

Developing academic literacy is a complex endeavor that involves reading, writing, listening, and speaking for multiple school-related purposes using a variety of texts and demanding a variety of products. Recognizing this complexity, the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), on behalf of Carnegie Corporation of New York, convened a panel of distinguished researchers, policymakers, and practitioners (see Appendix A) to consider the adolescent ELL literacy crisis, review the lessons of research and practice, and develop recommendations. Additionally, CAL researchers conducted a review of the literature on adolescent ELL literacy and conducted site visits to three promising programs (see profiles in Appendix C).

The Adolescent English Language Learners Literacy Advisory Panel developed the following definition of academic literacy:

- Includes reading, writing, and oral discourse for school
- Varies from subject to subject
- Requires knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media
- Is influenced by students' literacies in contexts outside of school
- Is influenced by students' personal, social, and cultural experiences

By considering the differences between adolescent ELLs and native English-speaking struggling readers, an understanding of why the academic literacy crisis is more pronounced in the ELL population than among native English learners is gained. Although the identified characteristics in Figure 3 may not describe all native English-speaking students or all ELLs, they are generally applicable and provide a starting point for exploring the challenges faced by ELLs.

The chart in Figure 3 suggests that the same literacy interventions will not necessarily work for native English speakers and ELLs. For example, adolescent ELLs generally need much more time focused on developing vocabulary and background schema than native English speakers do. Although there is a growing research base for interventions with native English-speaking, struggling readers, solutions for adolescent ELLs have remained elusive because of the variation of language acquisition and literacy levels across this population.

Figure 3. Academic Literacy Development for Adolescents: Native English-Speaking Struggling Readers and ELLs

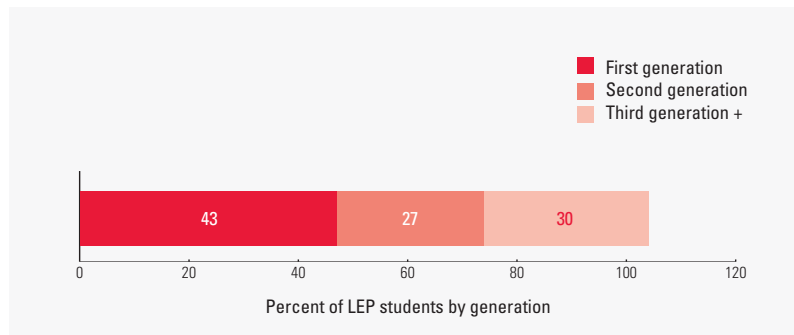
Indicator	Adolescent Native English-Speaking Struggling Readers	Adolescent English Language Learners
Position on the path to literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School career of intermittent failure • Unsuccessful in learning to read or in reading to learn • Usually labeled as slow readers or lower track students by secondary school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some make steady progress toward academic literacy; second language acquisition process limits how fast they move forward in learning to read, write, and speak in English • Others manifest the same type of struggle with reading and writing as do the native English speakers • Some have had no opportunity for literacy development yet (i.e., were never taught to read or write)
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tend to have weak intrinsic motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May have strong intrinsic and extrinsic motivation
Oral English proficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually have proficient command of the spoken language, at least of conversational English • Have a wide vocabulary range • Often know meaning of words sounded out by decoding • More likely to comprehend orally presented lesson previews, vocabulary definitions, task directions, and classroom assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many have weak or no oral English skills • Decoding a word is not sufficient to access its meaning • Providing an oral preview of a text or assignment may not unlock its meaning unless it is accompanied by sheltered instruction techniques • Oral language and literacy development can occur simultaneously
Background knowledge (For this indicator, second- and third-generation ELLs are more similar to native English speakers.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to understand many U.S. cultural and historical references • Have been exposed to and may recall material covered in prior courses • With teacher guidance, can tap into prior knowledge to aid comprehension or interpretation of new text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have some background knowledge, but it may be for other topics or hard to articulate in English • Need skilled teachers to make connections between content topics and ELLs' personal experiences and background knowledge • Often teachers must build the background; they can't just activate prior knowledge
Vocabulary terms with multiple meanings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More likely to recognize multiple meanings but may still need to be taught appropriate academic terminology • Often have conceptual knowledge of term or concept, if not the technical/academic label 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May know one meaning of a word (<i>power</i> means strength; <i>Cherokee</i> is a large car) but not other meanings, including the one needed for a particular subject (political power; Cherokee tribe) • May apply knowledge of cognates to understand new academic terms
Context in which literacy is developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not have any specialized courses or teachers trained in literacy development • Placed in lower tracks or relegated to remedial classes that specialize in "drill and kill" exercises, not meaningful, motivating activities • Computer-based products designed to aid literacy development are becoming more available • Literacy skills are not regularly assessed after eighth grade • English language arts standards in upper grades don't focus on learning to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most have specialized classes to teach them to speak, read, and write in English, usually with a qualified ESL teacher (although years of eligibility vary across the states) • Content of ESL courses is governed by state English language development standards • Tested annually under NCLB on English language development progress • May not have content teachers who understand linguistic needs; and do not know how to develop subject-specific vocabulary and literacy skills

Notes. ELL = English language learner; ESL = English as a second language; NCLB = No Child Left Behind

DIVERSITY AND ADOLESCENT ELL LITERACY

In order to develop the best programs for adolescent ELLs, their diverse backgrounds must be understood. They bring a wide variety of educational and cultural experiences to their U.S. classrooms, as well as considerable linguistic differences, and these characteristics have implications for instruction, assessment, and program design.

- Adolescent ELLs enter schools with differing levels of language proficiency, both in English and in their native languages. Some have literacy levels that are well below grade level in their native language. Others have strong native language and literacy skills. In general, they have strong oral language skills in their native language, but some may speak a mixture of English and their native language.
- Adolescent ELLs vary considerably in their knowledge of academic subject matter when they enter middle or high school. First-generation immigrants have had varying educational opportunities in their home or transit countries. Older students are sometimes placed in lower grades than are others of their age because of lack of academic credits or demonstrable proof of prior coursework (e.g., families unable to bring or send for transcripts, districts unable to translate transcripts that have been brought).
- Fifty-seven percent of adolescent ELLs were born in the United States, that is, they are second- or third-generation immigrants, as shown in Figure 4 (Batalova, Fix, & Murray, 2005). The large numbers of second- and third-generation LEP adolescents who continue to lack proficiency in English in secondary school suggest that many LEP children are not learning the language well even after many years in U.S. schools.
- Of the 43% of adolescent ELLs who are foreign-born, those who enter U.S. schools in the later grades are more challenged than their younger peers because of fewer resources at the secondary level and the shorter time that schools have to ensure that they learn English and master academic content areas (Capps et al., 2005).
- Although some adolescent ELLs live in middle- and upper-income families, immigrant youth are more likely to be poor than are non-immigrants. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, nationwide, 59% of the adolescent LEP students live in families with incomes 185% below the poverty line compared with 28% of adolescents speaking English only (Batalova, Fix, & Murray, 2005). Some immigrant adolescent ELLs are undocumented as well, a factor that impacts both socioeconomic status and, in some states, postsecondary educational options.
- Adolescent ELLs also differ in their expectations of the school experience, age of arrival in the United States, parents' educational levels and proficiency in English, family situation, and other personal experiences. Each of these factors has been shown to have an effect on literacy development.

Figure 4. Percent of Adolescent LEP Students by Generation

Note. LEP = limited English proficient
Source: Migration Policy Institute, 2006

These diverse factors indicate that adolescent ELLs are at different points on the path to academic literacy. At one end of the path are those who are well-educated and academically literate in their own language; at the other end are those who arrive in the United States with weak native literacy skills and limited formal schooling. This diversity of background can be illustrated by the following portraits of five students, all classified as ELLs.

- **Joaquin** was born in Mexico; he came to the Texas at the age of 4. He spoke Spanish at home. He was enrolled in a 2-year, early-exit transitional bilingual education program and his kindergarten and first-grade classes were taught primarily through Spanish. In second grade, he studied in an English-medium classroom. His family moved and for third grade, he was in a Spanish-medium classroom. His family moved again and he went to fourth and fifth grades in English classrooms. In sixth grade now, he speaks a mixture of Spanish and English, but isn't making academic progress.
- **Aziza** attended school in Somalia for 1 year when she was 8. After that, she stayed home to help with housework and care for her younger siblings. When she was 14, her family went to a refugee camp, where she learned some basic English in a class for children two mornings a week. At 16, she moved with her family to the United States and enrolled in high school in Minnesota. She has been there for 3 months and is struggling with her adjustment to school, English, and the different academic subjects.
- **Daniela** works with her parents on farms in California and Oregon. They often move to three or four different towns every year. Sometimes they pick lettuce and tomatoes near Salinas, CA sometimes grapes near Fresno, CA and sometimes peaches north of Sacramento, CA. In the fall, they move to Oregon and pick apples. Daniela likes it when they return to Salinas, the town where she and her mother were born, because she spends at least 4 months in school there and has gotten to know some of the teachers. Although she is 17 now, she doesn't read or write Spanish or English very well. She likes to listen to songs by Shakira and Enrique Iglesias, in both English and Spanish. She speaks mostly Spanish with her family and coworkers.
- **William** was born in Puerto Rico and went to elementary school there. His classes were in Spanish most of the day and he learned some English starting in third grade. When he was about to enter middle school, he and his father moved to Newark, NJ. He was enrolled in a bilingual education program and enjoyed his studies, but he traveled back and forth to the

island several times a year to see his mother and three siblings. Sometimes he missed school for 2 weeks at a time and he found that he was failing his social studies and science classes. When he entered high school, the rest of his family joined them and they all moved to Philadelphia, PA. Still in English as a second language (ESL) for 1 period a day, but in regular classes the rest of the time, William is improving his academic English. He wants to play on the soccer team so he needs to maintain a C average and he is studying hard.

- **Krystyna** left Poland when she was 12. She had been a good student at school and studied Russian as a foreign language. She entered seventh grade in New Jersey and was placed in a program with sheltered content courses and content-based ESL classes. After 2 years, she exited the ESL program. She was a top student in both her earth science and geometry classes by ninth grade (having studied algebra in Poland) and developed a website for the high school student council. In 10th grade, she took French as one of her elective courses.

As these portraits suggest, there is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution to the literacy challenges that confront adolescent ELLs. These students are experiencing different levels of success and motivation to learn academic literacy skills in English. Those with a strong foundation in their native language are making better progress than are those without it. Those with a consistent language program model and regular schooling have a better chance for success than do those who go to school intermittently or switch between bilingual and ESL programs. It is critical to consider where these students are on the path to academic English literacy in order to select the best services for them. The implication is that instruction and other interventions should take these factors into account but recognize that second language literacy development is a complex matter in which combinations of these factors play a role.

KEEPING ADOLESCENT LEARNING IN MIND

As possible interventions are considered, certain realities about adolescent learners must be kept clearly in mind. For instance, adolescents in general have both in- and out-of-school literacies. Their interests outside the classroom (e.g., music, hobbies, email, computer games, and internet use) may provide an entrée to in-school literacy with appropriate instruction. They are often attracted to technology and multimedia, so instructional practices that make use of these media can be beneficial. Also, adolescents increasingly assume adult responsibilities that require literacy. For instance, in immigrant households with parents who don't speak, read, or write in English, adolescent ELLs often take on responsibilities for household literacy activities such as reading bills, interacting with doctors, and so forth. Some of the older teens have part-time jobs and engage in work-related reading and writing as well.

Identity, engagement, and motivation are important factors in improving adolescent literacy for native and nonnative English-speaking teens alike. Adolescents tend to engage more with text that they have self-selected, and they will read material above their reading level if it is of interest. They usually view peer interaction and collaborative literacy positively. Perceptions of themselves as, for instance, good versus slow readers, influence their motivation. Personal goals are also strong motivators for developing academic literacy. Physical and cognitive development, such as brain growth, sleep patterns, and the ability to perform abstract reasoning, also affect all teens' acquisition and use of literacy skills.

IDENTIFYING THE MAJOR CHALLENGES TO IMPROVING LITERACY IN ADOLESCENT ELLS

As a result of the advisory panel meetings and the literature review, six major institutional challenges to the goal of improving adolescent ELL literacy nationwide were identified.

Six Major Challenges to Improving Adolescent ELL Literacy

1. Lack of common criteria for identifying ELLs and tracking their academic performance
2. Lack of appropriate assessments
3. Inadequate educator capacity for improving literacy in ELLs
4. Lack of appropriate and flexible program options
5. Inadequate use of research-based instructional practices
6. Lack of a strong and coherent research agenda about adolescent ELL literacy

In the following pages, each of the six major challenges is discussed and possible solutions are offered for consideration by schools, districts, colleges and universities, state departments of education, policy-makers, and the research community as they seek to promote effective changes in practice and policy. Some of these steps can be implemented at once; others will require a long-term approach.

Challenge 1: Lack of Common Criteria for Identifying ELLs and Tracking Their Academic Performance

The Challenge

What Constitutes an ELL?

At present, there is no uniform national definition of what constitutes an ELL, making it very difficult to determine precisely who these students are, how well they are doing academically, and what kinds of services they need. Furthermore, assessments used to identify and monitor these students fail to elicit much important information. The outcome is that it is virtually impossible to collect and analyze relevant, comparable data about these students at the national or even state level.

Competing Definitions

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2005), LEP students (the term used by the federal government for ELLs) are defined as students between the ages of 3 and 21 “enrolled in elementary or secondary education, often born outside the United States or speaking a language other than English in their homes, and not having sufficient mastery of English to meet state standards and excel in an English-language classroom.” However, individual states vary widely in their definitions. They may use the terms ELL or English learner to refer to this body of students. Some define these students as those who are eligible for language instruction services (e.g., ESL classes), whereas others define them as those who are actually receiving such services. Furthermore, states differ in how they determine whether students have exited from language instruction programs, becoming former LEPs or ELLs

(sometimes known as fluent English proficient, or FEP, students) (Batalova, Fix, & Murray, 2005). The impermanence of the designation and the inconsistencies between states make it exceedingly difficult to measure the relative success of schools and programs in helping students to develop academic literacy.

Flawed Measures for Identifying Adolescent ELLs

Three measures tend to be used most often to identify students as ELLs: (a) self-reported information on the U.S. Census, (b) surrogate indicators (e.g., parents' replies to questions about their children on district- or state-developed Home Language Surveys), and (c)

direct measures (e.g., language proficiency tests) (Wiley, 1994). Of the three, direct measures of language proficiency offer the most consistent and reliable way to assign ELL status to students; however, these tests vary from state to state (Wiley, 1994). In practice, school systems and researchers tend to rely heavily on surrogate indicators instead (school systems on the home language surveys, researchers on Census data). Thus, estimates of the size of the ELL student population tend to differ even within a given state or district.

The U.S. Census offers the only nationwide dataset with information on age, school enrollment, place of birth, parent and child English language proficiency, family incomes, and other key demographic factors. These data allow comparability across national- and state-level data and comparisons over time and across places. However, these advantages may be outweighed by the shortcomings of the data, which rely on just a single measure of self-reported English-speaking proficiency. The Census defines individuals as LEP if they report speaking a language other than English at home and speaking English “not at all,” “not well,” or “well” (see <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/policy/states/ellcensus90s.pdf>). Thus, the U.S. Census does not inquire about reading and writing ability, critical skills for academic literacy.

HOW STATES DETERMINE WHICH STUDENTS ARE “LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT” —A SAMPLING OF METHODS

California—The *California English Language Development Test* recognizes five proficiency levels and is used to identify limited English proficient (LEP) students, determine their English proficiency, and evaluate their progress in learning English. Students who score below “early advanced” or whose overall scores are at least early advanced but who have scored below intermediate in one or more skill areas are designated as LEP.

Colorado—By the 2005–06 school year, all districts must have adopted the *Colorado English Language Assessment* and must identify their students as non-English proficient (NEP), limited English proficient (LEP), or fluent English proficient (FEP) based on that assessment.

Illinois—All districts will have to begin using the *ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT)* beginning in Fall 2006 to identify their English language learner (ELL) population. Developed by the 15-state WIDA Consortium (see page 17), the W-APT focuses on academic language proficiency along with general social English, and will be used to assign students to one of five levels of proficiency.

North Carolina—The state uses the *IDEA Proficiency Test (IPT)* to both initially assess ELL students and to monitor their progress in learning English. The IPT has six proficiency levels. Students are designated as LEP if they can be defined as “any student whose native or home language is a language other than English who scores below Superior in at least one domain of the IPT.”

As a result, the Census undoubtedly underestimates the size of the population with language-related literacy needs. In fact, a recent Urban Institute study found a 12% disparity between state-reported estimates of ELL students and Census-based estimates (Capps et al., 2005).

Insufficient Information Elicited through Identification

Current identification measures do not often provide the requisite information for accurate student placement. As discussed, issues such as age of enrollment in U.S. schools, educational background, and mobility all affect literacy development, but are seldom elicited by home language surveys or language proficiency tests. Language proficiency tests have some limitations as well. Not only are they one-shot measures, but most districts do not include assessments in a student's home language. Yet, measures of native language oral and literacy proficiency are strong indicators of English literacy development (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006).

Difficulty Tracking ELLs' Progress

Most states and districts do not collect and analyze achievement data specifically for FEP students—those who have exited language support programs and have been redesignated. Yet the true measure of a program or system's success is how well students are doing in mainstream content classes. One state that does disaggregate the data on such students is New Jersey. FEPs are tracked at the state level for up to 2 years after they exit language support programs in terms of their performance on state achievement tests. Recent data show that FEPs exceeded the state Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmark on reading and mathematics tests of grades three and four and were closing the gap for grade eight reading and mathematics (State of New Jersey, Department of Education, Office of Title I, 2006).

Schools can make progress in helping students achieve at higher levels only if their interventions are appropriate and targeted to the individual needs of those students. Through proper identification, expectations become more realistic (for instance, a student who speaks no English when entering a U.S. school in 12th grade should not be expected to reach academic proficiency and graduate within only 1 year). Proper identification procedures can also reduce inappropriate placements such as into special education.

Potential Solutions

Obviously, more consistent and reliable methods of categorizing these students are needed. Common definitions of what constitutes both an ELL and a former ELL are necessary, as are better definitions of proficiency-level benchmarks within the ELL categorization (e.g., beginner, intermediate). Developing common definitions is both a long- and short-term undertaking.

In the short term, ELLs will benefit from clear standards in each state for defining LEP students (or ELLs) and FEP students. Those standards, for example, should explain which benchmarks on tests are

used to define the students. In the long term, there is a need for common definitions on the national level to allow cross-state comparisons to be made with confidence in the results. The World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium is an example of a group of states developing common definitions that could serve as a model for the nation. Fifteen states in this consortium use the same English language proficiency (ELP) standards, the same five levels of proficiency, and the same ELP assessments.

WIDA—A 15-STATE CONSORTIUM

The World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium is dedicated to the design and implementation of high standards and equitable educational opportunities for English language learners (ELLs).

To this end, WIDA has developed English language proficiency standards and an English language test (ACCESS for ELLs™) to measure annual gains in English language proficiency. The Consortium is also planning a system of alternate academic assessments for beginning ELLs (ONPAR™) whose English language level is too low to participate meaningfully in regular state assessments. These assessments could be used to help states determine Adequate Yearly Progress for this group of ELLs. In addition, WIDA has developed Spanish language arts standards.

Originally established through a federal grant, the WIDA Consortium consists of 15 partner states and jurisdictions: Alabama, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin. These states and the District of Columbia account for nearly 400,000 English learners in kindergarten through grade 12 in approximately 2,800 school districts.

Source: WIDA, 2006

The acknowledged diversity of ELLs requires schools to know exactly who English language learners are. Home language surveys are one important resource for schools. An ongoing effort is needed to revise and redesign home language surveys to provide more relevant information about the students, particularly regarding their native language skills, immigration generation, age of arrival in the U.S. school system, mobility history, and levels of educational attainment and achievement. Such information, coupled with direct assessments, will improve identification and placement of these students.

Policy changes to consider include

- Tightening the existing definition of LEP and former LEP students in Title III of NCLB to ensure that states use identical criteria to designate LEP students and to determine which students are to be considered FEP (i.e., students who have made the transition out of specialized ELL programs and into the regular course of study).
- Creating a voluntary compact (perhaps modeled on the graduation rates compact coordinated by the National Governors Association and launched in 2005) to establish common definitions.
- Establishing consistent data collection processes and disaggregated reporting across states by the following categories: grade level, LEP status, FEP status, interrupted schooling, gifted and talented, special education, and participation in Title I and Title III.

- Adding more information to home language surveys to learn more about students' native language skills, previous language programs, and family mobility.
- Monitoring the assignment of students to ELL, special education, and accelerated programs.

Challenge 2: Lack of Appropriate Assessments

The Challenge

Under NCLB, schools, districts, and states are required to demonstrate that ELLs are making progress not only in meeting academic standards but also in becoming fully proficient in English. Both types of progress depend on effective literacy instruction. However, assessing this progress is a very challenging task.

Standardized tests that aim to measure academic knowledge (e.g., math, science, literacy) are not sensitive to second language literacy development. What is perceived as lack of mastery of the content is often instead the normal pace of the second language acquisition process (Abedi & Lord, 2001; Echevarria & Graves, 2003; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). Tests are confounded by aspects of adolescent ELLs' diversity (e.g., native language literacy, family background, educational history, mobility patterns). In addition, tests often refer to cultural experiences or historical background to which many adolescent ELLs have not yet been exposed. The ambiguity of this situation means that the test is not measuring what it is intending to measure. Thus, the scores do not tell teachers or policymakers what they need to know about students' content knowledge and, in fact, may be misinterpreted.

The executive summary (August 2006) for the recent National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth report noted that adequate assessments are essential for gauging the individual strengths and weaknesses of language-minority students, making placement decisions, and tailoring instruction to meet student needs. Unfortunately, existing assessments are inadequate to the need in most respects. For example, most measures do not predict how well language-minority students will perform over time on reading or content-area assessments in English.

Without effective assessments, even experienced teachers can be hard pressed to disentangle students' difficulties in learning English from issues related to their educational background and native language literacy skills. Moreover, it is hard to distinguish normal English acquisition from academic delay and/or learning disabilities without culturally and linguistically sensitive assessments (Miramontes, 1987). It is, therefore, perhaps not surprising that a number of districts exhibit patterns of either overrepresentation or underrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs (Artiles, 1998; Artiles & Ortiz, 2002).

Potential Solutions

So that ELL students are on track to meet both sets of goals—academic content and English proficiency—and receive appropriate instruction and support, educators should assess them when they enter a program and then at regular intervals. Both diagnostic assessments prior to instruction to determine a student’s strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills, and formative assessments to provide ongoing information concerning the student’s progress should be used.

Diagnostic Assessments in Both Languages

All ELLs cannot be expected to require the same kind of reading and writing instruction, nor can they be haphazardly assigned to one program or another. Instead, the students’ specific educational needs should be determined through diagnostic assessments. Such assessments could measure the students’ native language reading and writing skills, knowledge of academic terms in English, strengths and weaknesses in components of reading in English, content knowledge for grade-level work, and so forth.

This type of information will help educators find out whether a student requires an intensive phonics program, explicit instruction in academic vocabulary or reading comprehension strategies, or some other kind of support. The aim of the resulting assessment plan should be to guide course placement and design an educational path to facilitate literacy development and progress through the educational system.

DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT IN NEW JERSEY’S ABBOTT DISTRICTS

In New Jersey’s Abbott districts (a legal designation for the poorest districts in the state that receive supplementary state education funds), all students in grades K through 8 are assessed in reading and math upon entry to a bilingual program. Spanish speakers are assessed in their native language for content knowledge. Most districts use the Spanish version of the TerraNova for this purpose.

Large-Scale Assessments in the Native Language

ELLs are required to take many high-stakes, large-scale, standardized assessments. For example, NCLB requires all schools to test the English language development (ELD) progress of ELLs annually. Title I schools must test the students in reading, math, and science (as of 2006–07) in grades three through eight and once in high school. Although the English learners’ scores do not need to be reported if the students have been in U.S. schools for less than 1 year, the scores of those who have been in school for a year or longer do need to be reported—even if their English language proficiency is still low as shown by the ELD assessment. In addition to NCLB tests, almost half the states have high school exit exams that ELLs must take, as well.

Because these assessments are in place to ascertain whether or not students have requisite content knowledge, ELLs should have the opportunity to take such assessments in their dominant language to demonstrate their full grasp of the subject matter. If the purpose of a given exam is to measure a student’s mastery of algebra, for instance, then it could be more informative if the student takes that

test in Spanish, Vietnamese, or another native language (if English is not the dominant language). The student would likely have a greater comprehension of the test questions and be able to respond more completely. Given that 70% of the adolescent ELL population is Spanish-speaking, Spanish language content assessments are very viable. An extra effort also should be made to create assessments for low-incidence languages such as Mandarin, Russian, Polish, Vietnamese, and Korean, particularly for immigrant students who have strong educational backgrounds in their native language.

Testing in the native language is permissible under NCLB provided the tests are aligned to the state content standards. Moreover, some states have encouraged content assessments in the native language for many years. For example, the New York State Regents exams are available in five languages, and for students who speak other languages, an interpreter is allowed to read the test to the students and translate the student response from the native language into English. It is important that native language tests be designed in that language, not translated from the final English version, in order to meet validity requirements (Solano-Flores, 2003). Also, if a student has taken the content course being tested in English, it might be advisable to give the test in English, as relevant vocabulary would be known in English.

Language Threshold Measure

Should assessments in the native language not be available, a threshold measure should be considered before requiring students to take content tests in their new language. Once ELLs reach a predetermined threshold, or benchmark score, on their ELD test, educators would know their English language ability had reached a level appropriate for meaningful participation in regular state assessments.

Testing Accommodations for ELLs

Another recommendation is that ELLs tested in English be offered specific accommodations that have been shown to have a significant positive effect on ELL scores (Abedi & Lord, 2001; Sireci et al., 2003). Such accommodations include additional or unlimited time on the test and simplified language in the test items (e.g., adjusting verb tense, sentence structure, vocabulary) to align the readability of those items at or below the students' level of English proficiency. One caution is that schools should not inadvertently disadvantage students by placing them in an unfamiliar test-taking situation, with unfamiliar accommodations, on the day of the high-stakes test. If accommodations are to be given, students should be familiar with them ahead of time.

Multiple Measures to Determine ELLs' Literacy Development

Because most assessments currently in use to measure literacy in adolescent ELLs (e.g., National Assessment of Educational Progress and state standardized tests) do not reveal information about development of specific literacy skills or content knowledge and place ELLs on the same scale with native English speakers, it is important to employ and examine the results from multiple assessments

when drawing conclusions about the development of English literacy within this population. Multiple measures might assess native language content knowledge and literacy skills, as well as English vocabulary and content knowledge. The formats might include portfolios and formative classroom assessments.

Data Systems that Supply ELL Information

In addition to ensuring that adolescent ELLs receive appropriate diagnostic and formative assessments, and that those students are given a fair chance to demonstrate content mastery on high-stakes tests, states should invest in data collection, record keeping, and reporting systems that will

permit them to make full use of the data those assessments generate. States should develop the capacity to determine whether a given ELL population is making progress in literacy or not, what funding or services a particular school might require, and if a program or course of study for adolescent ELLs needs improvement. States might invest in improved home language surveys, systems for data analysis and timely reporting, systems for tracking highly mobile populations, and better documentation of existing in-school practices. In those states that are experiencing surging enrollments of adolescent ELLs, many data tools and systems are lacking, so their development is highly desirable.

In order to help schools and districts build their capacity to perform such assessments, the following should be considered:

- Mandate the assessment of the literacy skills of incoming students in both English and their native languages.
- Increase funding for the Enhanced Assessment Grants program under Title VI of NCLB, with a portion of those funds dedicated to developing tools that appropriately assess the literacy skills of adolescent ELLs, such as native language content-area assessments.

ASSESSMENT AT J.E.B. STUART HIGH

J.E.B. Stuart High School in Fairfax County, Virginia, considers assessment a critical component of all students' educational plans, particularly in the area of literacy. All eighth graders who will attend Stuart are assessed with the Gates-MacGinitie reading exam, and new students are assessed in the first months of entering the school. English language learners (ELLs) take additional assessments during the year as well, to comply with No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Each year that they are in the English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) program, students are required by NCLB to take an English language assessment; at Stuart, it is the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP). Stuart has raised the score that ELLs must achieve to exit the ESOL program above what is required by the district (from a score of 60 to one of 65) because too many students who exited at the lower score did not make expected progress in mainstream classes.

Before exiting the ESOL program, students also must again take the Gates-MacGinitie test as an additional check of their literacy skills. If students score above 65 on the DRP but below 40% on the Gates, they will exit ESOL, but are required to take a literacy intervention class (with native English speakers who also score low on the Gates) the following year.

During the school year, student language and content progress is monitored quarterly. If a student is ready to move up an ESOL level, the ESL department head works with the guidance counselor to facilitate an appropriate schedule change which is put into place immediately.

For more information on Stuart's program, see Appendix C.

- Allow states to use a threshold English language proficiency test (that includes a reportable reading measure) before testing content areas in English for up to 3 years while adolescent ELLs are receiving language services, under NCLB's reauthorization.
- Implement consistent accommodations for ELLs during high-stakes testing.
- Use multiple measures to get the full picture of students' language skills and content knowledge.
- Invest in data management systems that record and analyze disaggregated data on adolescent ELLs' performance and report results in a timely manner to schools and teachers to inform instruction.
- Survey districts and schools to determine how adolescent ELLs' literacy needs are currently being assessed and to identify the specific strengths and weaknesses of those assessments with the aim of replicating promising approaches and tools.

Challenge 3: Inadequate Educator Capacity for Improving Literacy in ELLs

The Challenge

Many of the educators working in secondary schools have had little professional development for teaching literacy to adolescents; fewer still have had training to teach second language literacy to adolescent ELLs. This lack of adequate teacher development conflicts with the fact that the relationship between literacy proficiency and academic achievement grows stronger as grade levels rise—regardless of individual student characteristics (Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Kamil, 2003). Therefore, adolescent ELLs need skillful teachers so they can develop literacy skills for each content area *in* their second language as they simultaneously learn, comprehend, and apply content-area concepts *through* that second language (Garcia & Godina, 2004; Genesee et al., 2006).

As the number of adolescent ELLs grows in districts throughout the United States, it is increasingly apparent that middle and high school educators must learn the basic principles of effective second language literacy instruction and understand the second language acquisition process. All teachers and administrators do not require the same levels of training in working with ELLs, but schools of education and ongoing professional development opportunities must be calibrated not to current reality, but to the changing demographics of the coming years. Certainly, in schools and districts with moderate to large ELL enrollments, intensive professional development opportunities for teachers, coaches, and administrators are needed. Furthermore, all teachers must assume some responsibility for helping their students learn academic English within the context of their subject-area disciplines.

Potential Solutions

Building educator capacity to develop literacy skills in adolescent ELLs should happen schoolwide. Suggested topics for professional development for teacher, literacy coaches, and administrators are outlined below.

Teachers

Teachers need professional development to teach content effectively to students who are learning academic English at the same time they are trying to meet content standards. Although it should be a national goal for teacher education, only three states (Arizona, California, and Florida) have enacted policies to ensure teacher candidates have some preservice courses that will help them work successfully with ELLs (see sidebar for details). The following knowledge bases are recommended to be part of the teacher

development programs for all teachers (Crandall, 2000; Crawford, 2003; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004; Grant & Wong, 2003; Short & Echevarria, 2004; Wong, Fillmore, & Snow, 2002):

- First and second language acquisition theory—knowledge of how children learn their first language and how learning a second language differs, and which first language literacy skills transfer to the second language and how
- Subject-area content—a basic understanding of the subjects ELLs take in secondary schools for ESL teachers, a deep understanding for content-area teachers

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS?

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires that secondary school teachers be “highly qualified,” and states ensure that teachers of “core academic subjects”—English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography—meet stringent qualifications that include full understanding of the content area (generally demonstrated by holding a degree in the content-area specialty).

NCLB does not emphasize the need for high school teachers to be able to teach reading or writing, nor does it require that teachers have any training in working with adolescent English language learners (ELLs). Despite the growing numbers of these students, only three states have policies that require all teachers, at least in principle, to have an understanding of how to teach ELLs effectively.

- Arizona adopted a new certification policy in 2005 that requires every certified educator (e.g., administrators, teachers, psychologists) to complete 15 hours of sheltered English immersion training by August 2006, and an additional 45 hours by August 2009 to renew their certification.
- Florida requires that English as a Second Language (ESL), English, and language arts teachers take 300 in-service training hours or 15 semester hours of coursework on Methods of Teaching ESL, ESL Curriculum and Materials Development, Cross-cultural Communication and Understanding, Applied Linguistics, and Testing and Evaluation of ESOL. Teachers of other subjects also take coursework in most of these topics but for fewer hours.
- California has a two-part credentialing system that includes teacher preparation and induction, with a focus on program standards. Those standards call for programs to prepare teachers to instruct and assess ELLs, but no specific coursework for ELL preparation is articulated.

- ESL and sheltered instruction methodologies—knowledge of how to integrate language development activities and explanations with content-area instruction
- Content-area pedagogy—knowledge of specific methods for different content areas
- Content-area language and discourse—an understanding of how language is used in a specific subject area or discipline and of subject-specific text genres and structures
- Linguistic and cross-cultural contexts—an understanding of language policies, sociocultural factors that influence language use and classroom behavior, and similarities and differences between English and student native languages
- Curriculum development—knowledge of how to design content-based ESL and sheltered subject curricula that integrate language development with content topics
- Assessment—knowledge of how to minimize the English language demands of assessments to allow ELLs to demonstrate content knowledge and how to employ and interpret multiple measures of assessment to get a fuller picture of student knowledge and ability

Motivating teachers to change the way they have traditionally taught, and to include literacy instruction for ELLs into their lesson designs, is a slow process that takes a great deal of support. It is generally agreed that teachers need sustained professional development and job-embedded practice if they are to implement new interventions or substantially change their instructional approach (Gonzalez & Darling-Hammond, 1997; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Collaboration between content-area teachers and teachers of English as a second language can be helpful in this process (Grant & Wong, 2003), as can be activities that involve teachers in the community and allow them to develop a deeper understanding of their students' linguistic and cultural resources (Gonzalez et al., 1993).

Literacy Coaches

There is also an important role for literacy coaches who act as schoolwide resources. For coaches or literacy specialists, the issue of first language literacy development is generally well-covered in their pre-service or in-service training; less so is second language literacy. Therefore, in setting standards, the International Reading Association (IRA) has called for coaches to receive training in specific subject areas and on ESL issues in order to provide appropriate guidance to content teachers. The *Standards for Middle and High School Literacy Coaches* (IRA, 2006) also recommends that coaches

- Share a positive vision for students' learning with teachers, including understanding and educating teachers about the second language acquisition process.
- Encourage ESL teachers to serve as resources for content-area teachers and help them understand how ELLs learn language.
- Serve as the experts for their schools on research and practice for adolescent ELL language development, and share new findings with colleagues.

- Help teachers design instruction that helps improve ELLs' ability to read and understand content-area information, and identify teaching strategies that take into account ELLs' different proficiency levels while moving them toward grade-level literacy.

Administrators

Administrators also play a critical part in ensuring that teachers receive the support they need to improve content-area literacy instruction for adolescent ELLs (Duff, 2005). This support should include scheduling time and opportunities for ESL and content teachers to collaborate and compare teaching strategies, to review the progress of ELLs in the school, and to choose appropriate interventions and classroom resources (Crandall, Bernache, & Prager, 1998; Harklau, 1999). Administrators should fully understand the principles of second language acquisition, and be given training on job-related issues such as evaluation of literacy programs and classroom-based instruction for adolescent ELLs. As instructional leaders, they should look for and recognize effective instructional techniques for working with ELLs when they observe in classrooms, such as use of appropriate speech, with few idioms and clear enunciation; use of visuals and demonstrations; scaffolded instruction; targeted vocabulary development; connections to student experiences; student-to-student interaction; and use of supplementary materials.

HOOVER HIGH SCHOOL STAFF DEVELOPMENT

In the late 1990s, Hoover was ranked the lowest performing school in San Diego by California's accountability measures. In response, Hoover staff and partners designed and implemented staff development and student assessment practices to guide and increase academic literacy among their adolescent ELLs. Since 1999, Hoover High has followed a sustained, mandatory, and consistent professional development program—the Literacy Staff Development Plan—as a member of the San Diego State University/City Heights Education Collaborative Partnership. Today, the high school is exceeding its state growth benchmarks.

The Literacy Staff Development Plan focuses on teachers' use of seven key strategies for developing students' academic literacy: *anticipatory activities, shared reading or read-aloud activities, structured note-taking, graphic organizers, vocabulary instruction, writing to learn prompts, and reciprocal teaching* in addition to questioning techniques. The program includes (a) monthly mandatory meetings for teachers during planning blocks; (b) weekly course-alike meetings for teachers in each department to discuss and troubleshoot curricula and pacing guides, student progress, selection of course materials, instructional strategies, content standards, and assessment; (c) collegial coaching; (d) dissemination of information about state standardized tests; (e) department chair meetings on the professional development program; and (f) new and future teacher support including peer coaching, reflective journaling, and participation in collegial coaching training. As part of the partnership, professors of education at San Diego State University connect daily with Hoover's principal and faculty. The principal attends and participates in every monthly meeting for each planning block. Teacher observation forms used by administrators focus on the seven key strategies.

What is particularly striking about the Hoover site has been its long-term commitment to this educational intervention. Far too often schools chase the flavor of the month when it comes to professional development topics or instructional techniques. Teachers are exposed to new ways of organizing instruction but before they have a chance to learn the intervention well, let alone master it, the school moves on to the next "magic bullet." Hoover's resolve to stick with this approach and to deepen the teachers' knowledge of literacy instruction is commendable.

For more information on Hoover's program, see Appendix C.

Outlined below are a number of policy strategies for building educator capacity:

- Set national teacher education policy to ensure all teacher candidates learn about second language and literacy acquisition, reading across the content areas, and sheltered instruction and ESL methods. The policy might propose a continuum of teacher development from pre-service to induction and mentoring to ongoing development for new and experienced teachers.
- Update state teacher certification requirements so all credentialed teachers are capable of working effectively with ELLs.
- Require districts that serve ELLs to provide meaningful, ongoing, on-the-job training for administrators, coaches, and teachers within content area, literacy, and ESL instruction. At present, over 50% of the adolescent ELL population is located in just 10% of the secondary schools (Batalova, Fix, & Murray, 2005), so these districts should engage in more staff development.
- Provide teachers with release time and financial support to enable them to participate in professional development in ELL literacy instruction and/or to earn endorsements or advanced certification in that area.
- Offer similar incentives for ESL and bilingual educators to become more knowledgeable about adolescent literacy instruction, so they can effectively integrate teaching strategies in their lessons and collaborate with regular content-area teachers.
- Modify the highly qualified teacher definitions in the reauthorization of NCLB and in state criteria for demonstrating competency, so that content-area teachers in schools with high percentages of ELLs demonstrate competence in working with them.

Challenge 4: Lack of Appropriate and Flexible Program Options

The Challenge

One of the most significant challenges for programs that serve adolescent ELLs is helping them become proficient in English and meet high school graduation requirements in the time available. Implementing the best program to do so is a difficult proposition given the diversity among the learners in terms of their backgrounds and aspirations and the policies in place that conflict with what is known about the second language acquisition process.

It is a myth that adolescent ELLs can learn the academic English they need for schooling in 1 or 2 years of specialized instruction, unless they are the exceptional case, like Krystyna (described earlier in the Diversity and Adolescent ELL Literacy section), who was well educated, entered her U.S. school on grade level, and was learning English as her third language. Most ELLs require 4 to 7 years of instruction to reach the average academic performance of native English speakers (Collier, 1987) so time is of the essence for those who enter high school as beginners. The academic vocabulary challenge alone is overwhelming. Consider that high school students are expected to have a vocabulary of

approximately 50,000 words to be able to master the increasingly complex coursework of high school (Graves, 2006; Nagy & Anderson, 1984) and the average student learns 3,000 new words each year. In 4 years, then, the average beginning ELL might learn 12,000 to 15,000 words without targeted interventions, falling far short of the 50,000-word goal. When they have to perform double the work, learning academic English while learning content of multiple subjects, they are at a decided disadvantage in the country's schools.

Many secondary school programs are not designed around individual student needs, ELL research findings, or data on ELL performance. The United States' educational system continues to favor the traditional 4-year high school model for all, even though adolescent ELLs as well as some native English-speaking students might be more successful with a 5- or 6-year option (AFT, 2006; Callahan, 2005). The system allocates course credits based on seat time, and in some cases end-of-course test scores, rather than other means for demonstrating competence in a subject. Receiving a diploma in many states requires passing a standardized exit exam. And increasingly, high schools are designed to prepare all students for college, yet college is not the goal of all high schoolers. Instead of offering flexible pathways for students who might want to pursue a vocational education, for example, courses of study and tests focus on college preparation.

Furthermore, NCLB defines high school graduation rates in a particular way: Only students who receive a regular, standards-based diploma, on time with their class, are to be counted as high school graduates. States have challenged aspects of this federal definition—such as seeking to count students who receive GEDs or certificates of attendance, or those who take longer than 4 years to finish high school as graduates—but, to date, the states have not prevailed. Many adolescent ELLs enter ninth grade with no English skills and interrupted educational backgrounds and therefore need additional time to graduate; thus this NCLB accountability measure is a significant challenge to students and schools.

Potential Solutions

Adolescents are under far greater time pressures to become sufficiently fluent in English and develop the literacy skills necessary for success in content-area classes and assessments than are younger ELLs and native English speakers. Finding an appropriate program that will accelerate their English language development and let them make progress in content-area coursework is the ultimate goal. In light of the diversity of the adolescent ELL population, no single or rigid approach to literacy instruction is likely to work for every learner. Therefore programs have to be flexible, strategic in their use of time and resources, open to options for the language of instruction and for attaining course credit, and considerate of individual student goals.

As the nation seeks to implement programs for adolescent ELLs who are struggling with academic literacy, it should begin with certain goals in mind. The choice of language development program,

literacy intervention, and pathway to graduation should depend on the students' aspirations as well as educational policies. The ideal programs for adolescent ELLs will be age-appropriate, motivating, designed with realistic second language and literacy development expectations, and supported with adequate resources and staff. Special populations, such as newcomer students, may need a specialized program to accelerate their learning of English, their acculturation to U.S. schooling practices, and basic content information.

Language Development Program

Selecting a language development program is the first order of business. On the basis of the growing knowledge from research studies and program evaluations, a sheltered instruction or bilingual education program is recommended, coupled with content-based ESL classes. These program options will use the limited time more effectively. If necessary, these program models may be augmented with additional literacy interventions that have proven track records for second language learners. It is also worth noting that a district can implement more than one model in order to better meet the diverse needs of its student population and, in fact, many do. The most successful programs provide flexible pathways through the program and into the regular curriculum. The key is to make sure that the program articulates smoothly with the mainstream program to maximize its effectiveness and ease the students' transition when they exit the language support program.

Content-based ESL classes are taught by language educators whose main goal for students is English language development but who collaborate with different subject area departments to prepare the students for the mainstream classroom by integrating content topics. Teachers develop the students' English language proficiency by building background knowledge and vocabulary from subject areas that students are likely to study or from courses the students may have missed if they are new to the school system. They use special instructional strategies and carefully selected materials. Content-based instruction is often accomplished through thematic or interdisciplinary units, such as a rain forest ecology unit, and lessons could include objectives drawn from life sciences, history, or mathematics—as well as ESL. Throughout the course syllabus, different content areas and topics are usually covered, although in some instances, the class follows the entire curriculum of a particular subject.

Sheltered instruction is a term with two related meanings. It can refer to an instructional approach for content-area teachers to teach academic subjects using English as the language of instruction. The teachers highlight key language features and incorporate ESL techniques that make the content comprehensible to students while at the same time promoting their English language development. In the research-based Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Model, teachers include language objectives in every content lesson, develop background knowledge for the lesson's topic, focus on content-related vocabulary, promote oral interaction, and emphasize academic literacy practice (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). Sheltered instruction can also refer to the program model, in which ELLs generally have a schedule consisting of a set of sheltered courses (e.g., sheltered algebra, sheltered

U.S. history) in addition to content-based ESL classes. Each sheltered course should have a specially developed curriculum that identifies the language goals of the subject area as well as strategies and techniques to help students develop appropriate academic literacy skills while covering state standards of learning. Sheltered programs are often implemented when the ELL population includes multiple native languages.

If adolescent ELLs are literate in their native language and on grade level, a bilingual program might be the best option. While students are learning academic English, they can augment their content knowledge. Research has shown that academic literacy in the native language facilitates the development of academic literacy in English (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006). Transitional bilingual education (TBE) is one bilingual model that provides initial instruction in academic content in the ELLs' native languages, along with content-based ESL instruction. This model helps ELLs make progress in academic subjects at the same pace as native English speakers, and content knowledge gained through use of the native language will transfer to English too. Students typically spend 2 to 3 years in a TBE program, but the transition from instruction in the first language to

UNION CITY (NEW JERSEY) SCHOOL DISTRICT'S BILINGUAL PROGRAM DESIGN

Union City's program is based on research that native language literacy and content knowledge transfer to the second language and on practical experience that newly arrived high school students will not have much time to learn English and academic subjects taught through English in 4 years. So, Union City middle and high schools offer bilingual content classes to their mostly Spanish-speaking students while they learn English. In this way, the students can study grade-level courses and receive core credit necessary for graduation. Bilingual and multicultural understanding along with academic achievement are goals of the program.

The high school program offers more than 20 bilingual content courses, such as bilingual earth science, biology, physics, algebra, geometry, High School Proficiency Assessment math skills (preparation courses for the high school exit exam), U.S. history, world history, health, and driver's education. The middle schools also offer a bilingual program with self-contained ESL and content-area classes for bilingual students, and English as a second language (ESL) and sheltered classes for advanced bilingual students. For students with weak math skills, paired periods may be built into their schedule, one being the regular grade-level math and the other a math support class.

In addition, the district incorporates five levels of ESL for middle and high school students: ESL reading and writing for new entrants, beginner, intermediate, advanced, and ESL C (which prepares students for the transition to mainstream language arts classes). In New Jersey, English language learners (ELLs) can receive up to four core credits for language arts for ESL courses at high school because the state ESL language and literacy standards are aligned to the state language arts standards. This policy helps ELLs meet graduation requirements.

Secondary ELLs are designated as bilingual or advanced bilingual based on their initial assessment and subsequent yearly assessments. Bilingual students take grade-level bilingual content classes and have 2 periods of intensive ESL each day. Those at the beginning level of English proficiency also have 1 period of Spanish. For intermediate-level students, the ESL instruction is content-based. Advanced bilingual students continue to take ESL if needed as well as sheltered content or mainstream classes.

For more information on Union City's program, see Appendix C.

English should be gradual, phasing in subjects one at a time; students should interact socially with native English speakers from the start.

Dual language and two-way bilingual programs are the most successful programs for developing bilingual students who perform at grade level or above academically (Lindholm-Leary, 2006; Thomas & Collier, 2002). These programs educate ELLs using both English and their first language for academic instruction, promoting full proficiency in all aspects of the two languages, usually separating language by content subject taught. However, these program types are rarely implemented for adolescent students.

Nonetheless, if a district has a dual language or Two Way Immersion program at the elementary level, it is valuable to continue it in some capacity through middle school and beyond.

A final program model to consider is the newcomer program. Often implemented at the secondary level, a newcomer program is specifically designed to educate recent immigrant students—particularly those with no or very limited English language proficiency and limited formal education—in a special academic environment for a limited time. Common features among newcomer programs include (a) distinct, intensive courses to integrate students into American life and fill gaps in their educational backgrounds; (b) specialized instructional strategies to

INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY– LEAP: OFFERING FLEXIBLE OPTIONS FOR NEWCOMER ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The International Academy–LEAP, in the St. Paul (Minnesota) school district, was established in 1994 as a 4-year, ungraded high school program to serve a large number of older, limited English proficient immigrant and refugee students who entered school after age 15 (Dufresne & Hall, 1997). Many of these students failed to meet graduation requirements and dropped out or became too old to remain in school.

The International Academy–LEAP is available to older students (ages 16–26) who have been in the United States for 2 years or less and who are unlikely to graduate from a traditional high school. The majority of LEAP's students have been 18 to 20 years old. The program serves more than 200 students who usually come from 15 or more different countries and who speak 15 to 19 different languages.

The program aims to help the students acquire a high school diploma; prepare for vocational training, college, or work; and improve English language proficiency. It is an English as a second language (ESL) program with native language support that offers the courses necessary for a diploma. The curriculum provides different levels of ESL and sheltered content classes with bilingual tutoring and support in Somali, Hmong, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Lao, and Vietnamese. Teachers devote considerable instructional time to developing students' academic vocabulary skills and background knowledge in the content areas. The program also includes cultural orientation activities and prepares students for work by developing their computer and vocational skills and providing career exploration.

The International Academy–LEAP provides a flexible schedule. Mature, highly able students may earn more credits over a shorter period than they could in ordinary high schools because of independent study options, extended scheduling, and cooperative arrangements with adult programs, the St. Paul Technical College, and nearby community colleges. These students are usually college bound and need to accelerate their English proficiency. Many students remain at the school for their high school career and graduate, receiving their high school diploma when they pass the Minnesota basic standards test. Some of the younger students make a transition to a traditional high school and some older students may make a transition directly to a vocational program.

address literacy because many students become literate for the first time in these programs;
(c) a length of enrollment determined by individual students' needs, usually one to three semesters;
and (d) hand-picked staff who have ESL endorsements or long-term experience in working with adolescent ELLs (Boyson & Short, 2003).

Flexible Student Pathways

After a language development program model has been chosen, districts and schools must look for flexible pathways so students can progress through high school and graduate. One significant way for schools to provide flexibility is to allot extra instructional time by adopting an extended school year, year-round schooling, or a longer daily schedule (Crandall, Bernache, & Prager, 1998; Short, Boyson, & Coltrane, 2003). Adding time in any form is advisable from a second language acquisition perspective. However, merely increasing the hours in a school day or days in a year may not be an option for some students, particularly those who are employed after school or over the summer. Thus, another option is for schools to build additional time into the schedule by permitting ELLs to stay in high school for more than the usual 4 years (Garcia, 1999) or to design flexible school-day schedules that might include the availability of evening classes, weekend classes, and distance learning opportunities. Some schools are experimenting with paid internships for half of the school day.

The Union City (New Jersey) School District, for example, has recognized the importance of extending learning time for students who are struggling in school or who are recent arrivals. The district offers before- and after-school sessions at the high schools, and after-school programs at the elementary and middle schools. One middle school has a lunchtime intervention program for students with low test scores. There are Saturday programs for all grade levels and summer programs as well. For example, if ELLs have not passed the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA) in the spring of 11th grade, they participate in an intensive summer program to prepare them for the following fall administration. These summer classes are customized to their needs based on data derived from scores on the test. Specialized tutoring opportunities are available for students at the high school as well, such as HSPA and ESL tutoring every Tuesday and Thursday.

At J.E.B. Stuart High School in Virginia, the staff work with students to develop a variety of pathways to graduation, including 5- and 6-year individualized graduation plans. Usually these plans include summer sessions in addition to the usual school year, but not always. The school uses a block scheduling design that helps provide time for required coursework or extra literacy intervention classes. Stuart also offers an after-school tutoring program 3 days per week. It is mandatory for students who receive Ds and Fs (in a core subject or foreign language) to attend at least 1 day per week. Other students are welcome to attend any session and many ELLs take advantage of this opportunity.

Stuart also supports a program called The Academy. Designed for students who are unlikely to complete high school at Stuart, this 2-year program incorporates vocational education, allowing

students to choose among close to 20 different courses. Students spend half the day in regular school classes and half the day in Academy courses. Approximately 50% of the students in this program are ELLs, who must be at the intermediate level of proficiency or above. The staff encourage the older ELLs to enter the program, especially those who lack the prior education to realistically meet their high school graduation requirements. While they are learning skills for the world of work (e.g., as an electrician, carpenter, or hair stylist), they engage in authentic interactions and practice their English.

Academic Credits

As programs explore ways to help ELLs meet graduation requirements, they may want to consider ways that students attain core credits. New Jersey and other states award some language arts credits for certain levels of ESL instruction. In addition, some states and districts also permit immigrant students who enter at 10th grade or higher to demonstrate the content knowledge they gained from schooling in their home country by taking tests based on state content standards and receiving credit if they pass. (These tests are likely to be in English, however, so students would have to first reach a level of proficiency that allows them to understand the language of the test.) Moreover, a number of districts make significant efforts to translate transcripts that immigrant students bring with them (sometimes working through the embassies) in order to provide appropriate credit for equivalent coursework taken in the home country.

Exit Exams

In addition to turning their schools into more flexible organizations, states may want to reconsider the type of high school exit exam they require. For those that mandate a high school exit exam, only a handful offer alternative options to the paper-and-pencil test. Washington State has options available for students who do not pass one or more subjects on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) exit exam after two attempts. The state-approved measures include (a) a comparison of a student's grades in applicable courses with the grades of other students who took those courses and passed the WASL; (b) the examination of a collection of work samples (developed in class under teacher supervision) that shows a student has met state standards; or (c) a consideration of a student's score on the math portion of the PSAT, SAT, or ACT exams (for the math WASL only).

Nonetheless, in order for the extended-time and other flexible programming solutions to work, NCLB graduation accountability measures for high school graduation rates need to be reconsidered. Schools and districts are understandably hesitant to try new options if they will be negatively affected.

Policymakers could help to solve these problems by

- Requiring that program design decisions be based on appropriate and effective language development practices, as determined by rigorous surveys of student data.
- Adjusting or developing sheltered curriculum frameworks for high school content courses and establishing core credit for these courses.

- Allowing schools greater flexibility in the use of learning time and encouraging them to provide ELLs with extended or extra opportunities for literacy instruction beyond the classroom (and coordinate with any out-of-school tutoring or mentoring opportunities).
- Encouraging the development of plans for a 5-year high school path for beginning level ELLs who enter in ninth grade that include rigorous preparation for students with either college or vocational goals.
- Adjusting school accountability measures under NCLB to avoid penalizing districts and schools that allow ELL students to take more than the traditional 4 years to complete high school successfully.
- Securing appropriate funding for these endeavors.

Challenge 5: Limited Use of Research-Based Instructional Practices

The Challenge

There is not a large body of research on effective instruction for adolescent ELL literacy development, but it is possible to make a number of recommendations based on currently available evidence and promising practices. The instructional methods that secondary school teachers have typically used do *not* facilitate learning or literacy instruction for ELLs (Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000). Lectures and worksheets, for example, do not provide effective learning scaffolds for these students. Textbook features intended to aid student understanding may have the opposite result for students who do not know how to use bolded words, headings, sidebars, and graphs. Many ELLs with weak literacy skills have difficulty tracking the flow of information on cluttered text pages.

No matter what program design is selected or what educational plan is developed for an adolescent ELL, the instruction in the courses should account for the students' second language development needs as well as their content-knowledge requirements. As discussed under Challenge 3, many content-area teachers are not well prepared to integrate language instruction in their content lessons. They also lack sheltered curricula and materials that could supplement the regular textbook. Furthermore, although there are some research-based literacy interventions for native English-speaking struggling readers, few of them have been evaluated as to their efficacy for adolescent ELLs.

Finally, adolescent ELLs often employ literacy knowledge outside of school that is often not readily apparent in school practices nor indicated by school assessments. For instance, students use the internet, send emails and text messages, listen to music, and read magazines. Students also engage in sophisticated literacy skills such as paraphrasing, interpreting, and translating when asked to read English texts for family members (Moje et al., 2004; Orellana, 2004). These out-of-school literacy practices are therefore among the linguistic and cultural resources students bring to school, but so far little research has been done to examine the effects of these practices on literacy development and teachers have not received adequate support in finding ways to tap these resources in class.

Potential Solutions

The review of the research and of the model programs has found a number of instructional practices potentially effective for developing literacy in adolescent ELLs. Many of them are directly supported by the current theory of second literacy development and what is known about the relevant characteristics of these learners. This discussion highlights nine promising practices.

1. Integrate All Four Language Skills into Instruction from the Start

ELLs benefit from the integration of explicit instruction in reading, writing, listening, and speaking across the curriculum, regardless of student proficiency level (Genesee et al., 2006). Research strongly suggests that reading and writing are mutually reinforcing skill domains, and that this holds true for ELLs just as it does for native English speakers (August, 2002; Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006). Oral language development is also important because it facilitates English literacy development (August & Shanahan, 2006). To be academically literate, students must be able to engage in the oral discourse of the classroom as well as the reading and writing activities in the lessons. Therefore, teachers should integrate all four language skills in their lessons, and oral language practice should not be sacrificed for more time on reading and writing.

2. Teach the Components and Processes of Reading and Writing

For adolescent ELL students who do not read or write in any language, it is important to teach them the components of reading: beginning with phonemic awareness and phonics (the sounds of a language and how to put sounds together to form words) and adding vocabulary, text comprehension, and fluency (August & Shanahan, 2006). This instruction can occur in the native language or in English. If taught in the native language, knowledge and usage of these components will transfer to English. However, it is then useful to pay attention to differences between that language and English. For example, English has some phonemes (the smallest units of spoken language that have meaning) that do not exist in other languages, such as the phoneme “sh,” which does not occur in Spanish. So students may benefit from targeted work in those phonemes. Instruction in these components of reading must, however, be appropriate for teens. Materials for primary grades are not suitable.

After adolescent ELLs acquire the basic skills, they need to become active readers and writers who use reading and writing processes, such as previewing, making predictions, paraphrasing, and inferring (for reading) and brainstorming, drafting, editing, and publishing (for writing). Skilled readers and writers engage in these processes in academic settings and in “real life,” and researchers have found that adolescent ELL literacy is enhanced when teens are taught using a process-based approach (Garcia & Godina, 2004; Valdés, 1999; Villasenor, 2003). Using these processes, learners can examine a text, make conclusions about it, articulate and incorporate those conclusions, and then evaluate the effectiveness of the incorporation. The process creates awareness about the functions of language, and the reflection inherent in the process helps students practice the kinds of highly abstract thinking that is essential to succeeding in high school and beyond into college or the world of work.

3. Teach Reading Comprehension Strategies

Besides learning the basics of reading, ELLs need to receive explicit instruction about reading comprehension strategies (Bernhardt, 2005; Denti & Guerin, 2004; Garcia & Godina, 2004). If the students already apply these strategies when reading in their native language, then the strategies may transfer to English (August, 2002; Riches & Genesee, 2006). Some students, however, need explicit instruction in strategy use in order to make the transfer. For adolescent ELLs who lack reading strategies in their native language, second language strategies instruction can provide them with skills they can apply to all texts.

4. Focus on Vocabulary Development

To be academically literate, students need a strong and constantly growing vocabulary base. Knowledge of words, word parts, and word relationships is critical if students are to understand topics in a content area and develop strong reading comprehension and test-taking skills (Graves, 1986, 2006). Students can learn new words through a variety of methods. Visuals, graphic organizers, demonstrations, and other instructional aids and devices can help students better understand and remember words and their meanings. Also helpful are word attack techniques, such as identifying words in English that are similar and related to those in the student's native language (e.g., *tradition/tradición; university/universidad*) and developing clues to meaning of a word based on context clues and structural analysis (August, 2003; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). Teachers must teach multiple meanings of words and help students incorporate words into their expressive vocabularies. For ELLs, teachers may also need to distinguish between content-specific words (e.g., *hypotenuse, equilateral*), process words (e.g., *scan, draft, clarify*), and words related to English structure (e.g., prefix, *photo-*; suffix, *-ly*) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004; Graves, 2006).

5. Build and Activate Background Knowledge

Many adolescent ELLs lack background knowledge of the topics taught in middle and high school content classes or have gaps in information learned. Teachers must activate what prior knowledge exists and apply it to the lessons or explicitly build background schema. Students who have been in U.S. schools since the early grades generally have some of the background knowledge that is expected by teachers, textbooks, and curricula in the secondary grades if they understood the lessons, but students who are new to the United States may not. Although they often have a great deal of background knowledge, not all of it applies to the academic context of their courses.

This background knowledge—what students know from schooling, personal experience, or insights gained from study in another country or from oral history—is important because background schema is a major factor in reading comprehension (Bernhardt, 2005). Connecting instruction to what the learners know and then explicitly discussing how that knowledge applies to the topic at hand is a technique teachers should use with ELLs. For example, immigrant students may not have studied the U.S. Civil War, but they may have lived through a military conflict at home and that experience could

give them special insight into U.S. history. Other ways to build background involve introducing students to new academic topics through short video clips, demonstrations, or field experiences.

A number of researchers argue that when teachers make an effort to learn about students' existing "funds of knowledge," and when they encourage students to relate that knowledge to the subjects studied in class, students tend to become more engaged in the lesson and their reading comprehension improves (Gonzalez et al., 1993; Moje et al., 2004).

6. Teach Language through Content and Themes

In the majority of cases, both the language and the content taught in school are new to ELLs. Therefore, when language instruction is linked closely to real-life experiences, including the content or themes being taught in other classes, students have more success integrating the two (Garcia & Godina, 2004; Short, 1999). With teacher facilitation, students can access their content knowledge to bolster their academic language development and similarly use their language skills to gain more content knowledge.

Adolescents thrive in situations in which they recognize the relevance of what they are learning. By helping them understand how the acquisition of language and academic literacy skills will allow them to achieve at higher levels in other classes, they may become more motivated. In a learning environment that incorporates language development with content or themes, students can see for themselves the importance of literacy skills in understanding the way material is presented and how texts are organized. The literacy skills needed to "do" science, for example, can be made clear and explicitly taught while students are engaged in "doing" science for a real purpose (Moje et al., 2004). Thus, providing content- or theme-based instruction gives ELLs an important framework for assimilating new information and applying language skills learned across the curriculum (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Garcia & Godina, 2004; Schleppegrell, Achugar, & Orteíza, 2004; Short, 1999).

7. Use Native Language Strategically

One useful strategy for helping students understand difficult academic and content-specific concepts is to explain the ideas in their native language. In this way, students can develop a deep understanding of the concepts while they are still learning the English words and expressions that define or exemplify them. If students share the same language background, they may also be able to explain concepts

LITERACY STRATEGIES AT HOOVER HIGH SCHOOL

Four of the seven teaching strategies that comprise the Literacy Development Plan at Hoover High School in San Diego, California, are recommended by the research discussed above. *Anticipatory activities* build students' background knowledge, *structured notetaking* and use of *graphic organizers* teach students how to use reading strategies to improve comprehension, and explicit *vocabulary instruction* across the curriculum gives students access to academic literacy not available in the typical English as a second language class. The use of these strategies across the content areas gives students a common framework with which to learn on their own, no matter the context.

and terms to each other (Gumperz, Cook-Gumperz, & Szymanski, 1999). Other options for clarifying or explaining information in the native language include the use of bilingual dictionaries, glossaries, or websites. Several research studies have also found that secondary language minority students in bilingual programs (receiving instruction in their native language and in English) outperformed students in English-medium programs (receiving instruction only in English) on measures of English reading proficiency (Lindholm-Leary, 2006; August & Shanahan, 2006).

8. Pair Technology with Existing Interventions

Technology and second language literacy development generally relate in two ways—through the teaching of technology-based literacy skills and through technology supports for literacy development. The incorporation of technology into instruction for ELLs is seen as promising, as the practical relevance and often two-way nature of the work are thought to positively impact student motivation (Kim & Kamil, 2004). However, research on the effects of technology interventions on reading and writing development for adolescents conducted thus far is still inconclusive and the number of studies that have focused on ELLs is small.

One study found that technology use paired with other interventions, such as project-based instruction, heterogeneous student grouping, and interdisciplinary teacher teaming, related positively to adolescent ELL literacy development (Warschauer, Grant, Del Real, & Rosseau, 2004). Projects requiring students to undertake field work, prepare a product, and present the project and its findings to a real audience by means of multiple technologies (internet research; information exchange through email, chat rooms, and bulletin boards; and production of DVDs and CD-ROMs) led to improved standardized test scores. They also provide opportunities for background reading, editing, language building, and vocabulary development.

The use of audio books can also support students' literacy development, especially if students follow along with a written text; the recordings provide students with models for pronunciation and read-aloud fluency. For students whose spoken English is better than their reading skills, hearing the words read aloud can aid in vocabulary comprehension. In general, computer-based literacy instruction can promote reading and writing development for adolescent ELLs but that instruction should be highly scaffolded. Murray (2005) suggested that teachers choose or develop the websites they ask students to work with. Kim and Kamil (2004) recommended that instruction for ELLs include strategies for reading in a "multimedia environment."

9. Motivate ELLs through Choice

Most students tend to be more motivated and more successful in reading when they have meaningful opportunities to exercise choice, whether that means choice of text (deciding what to read), choice of task (what sort of reading or writing project to do with the text), or choice of partner (picking a partner with whom to do a project).

Adolescent ELLs will benefit from access to diverse texts that present a wide range of topics at a variety of reading levels. High-interest, low-difficulty texts play a significant role in a successful adolescent ELL literacy program and are critical to the fostering of reading skills of struggling readers and to engaging all students. Appropriate grade-level textbooks are important tools, but are more difficult for ELLs to read (Hornberger, 2003), so they must be supplemented by a selection of more accessible texts to reach multiple proficiency levels and connect to students' background experiences.

Policymakers could help improve ELL literacy instruction by

- Encouraging the use of proven and promising instruction for ELLs in schools, such as
 - integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills into instruction from the start;
 - teaching the components and processes of reading and writing;
 - teaching reading comprehension strategies;
 - focusing on vocabulary development;
 - building and activating background knowledge;
 - teaching language through content and themes;
 - using native language strategically;
 - pairing technology with existing interventions; and
 - motivating adolescent ELLs through choice.
- Requiring states, districts, and schools developing literacy plans to incorporate appropriate instruction for adolescent ELLs.
- Designating a state or district adolescent ELL literacy coordinator to ensure instruction rigorously supports adolescent ELLs through the use of proven and promising practices.
- Reviewing the state English language development standards for grades 6 to 12 to make sure they incorporate language learning strategy development and use of literacy processes.
- Amending the Improving Literacy through School Libraries program to allow and encourage schools to procure reading materials and classroom resources in English and students' native languages that are appropriate for use with adolescent ELLs to support the use of proven and promising instructional practices.
- Clarifying regulations to ensure that ELLs receiving Supplementary Educational Services are provided with services that incorporate proven and promising practices specific to adolescent ELLs.
- Requiring surveys of staff knowledge of research-based instructional practices for second language literacy for use in planning staff development.
- Promoting consideration of appropriate instruction for adolescent ELLs during the design phase of any high school redesign efforts.
- Securing appropriate funding for these endeavors through NCLB and other state and local sources.

Challenge 6: Lack of a Strong and Coherent Research Agenda for Adolescent ELL Literacy

The Challenge

Over the past several years, two national panels were formed to conduct reviews of research on areas of literacy relevant to adolescent ELLs. Of the 450 studies reviewed by the National Reading Panel, only 17 studies addressed instruction for ELLs, with even fewer focusing on secondary school students (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The National Literacy Panel reviewed 309 studies of language minority students aged 3 to 18 acquiring literacy in a societal language (including studies not conducted in U.S. schools and not for acquisition of English literacy) but less than 10% of the studies that focused on classroom instruction targeted students in grades 6 to 12. On the whole, the research for adolescent ELLs is spotty. The current knowledge base is much more extensive at the elementary level than it is at the middle and high school levels. Likewise, the research tells us far more about the teaching of native Spanish speakers than it does about the teaching of speakers from all other language backgrounds combined (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006).

Far too few programs serving large numbers of adolescent ELLs graduate these students with adequate levels of literacy achievement in English. Because of the paucity of research demonstrating outcomes for these students, programs wishing to make research-based reforms have little published or definitive work to guide them. Therefore, there is a need to conduct more research on and disseminate findings about promising practices that have been identified in schools and districts around the nation as having positive impact. Such evaluation studies could both strengthen the interventions and determine when and in what circumstances replication and scaling up are most likely to be successful.

Potential Solutions

Studies of New ELL Literacy Interventions

A mix of targeted qualitative and quantitative studies should be used to generate and test new literacy interventions for adolescent ELLs (research and development studies) and to explore the effectiveness of existing interventions for this group (rigorous evaluations). Such interventions could be instructional, curriculum-based, or programmatic. For example, it would be helpful to examine the ways in which native language literacy transfers to second language literacy for a particular age group, to find out whether adding a specialized academic literacy course to a high school ELL student's daily schedule yields a difference in performance, and to identify best strategies for literacy coaches working with the ELL population. In light of the diversity among ELLs, it is important to learn whether some interventions work better for students of certain language or educational backgrounds or at specific stages along the proficiency continuum. Further, it would be useful to know if certain interventions in combination are more effective than one intervention alone.

Studies on Out-of-School Literacy Practices

The field would also benefit from more research into the out-of-school literacy practices of adolescent ELLs. Such knowledge, if identified by research (particularly ethnographic and multiyear studies), might be used to better engage students in the classroom and bolster the literacy development of adolescent ELLs.

Studies of Adolescent ELLs' Achievement

There is an urgent need for more research on adolescent ELLs' current performance in school. Researchers can begin to mine forthcoming NCLB data for information about this group. Although the data will not be comparable across states until common definitions are used, longitudinal, within-state studies can be conducted. This type of research can help determine expected gains for different types of adolescent ELLs (e.g., newcomers who are several grade levels behind, students without literacy in their native language, second- and third-generation ESL students, immigrants with strong educational backgrounds, migrants, special education students).

Longitudinal Studies of ELL Literacy Development

In addition, the field would benefit from longitudinal studies of ELLs' literacy development, particularly studies that follow students after they reach FEP status. The true measure of a program for ELLs is not the results of an assessment while they are classified as LEP, because by definition they are not at a proficient level, but rather their results after they have reached the FEP level. If a program has been effective for them, FEP students will demonstrate proficiency on measures of English literacy and on content-area assessments (State of New Jersey, Department of Education, in press; New York City Department of Education, 2004). Such longitudinal studies would not only provide valuable insight on what school programs are doing well and where they fall short in teaching literacy to ELLs, but would help determine what can be expected in terms of gains in literacy skills and English proficiency over time for different kinds of ELLs in different types of programs.

Longitudinal, evaluative studies of different program models would also prove valuable to state and local districts in designing better programs for ELLs. For example, schools report that most students who enter ninth grade with the lowest proficiency levels in English and significant educational gaps do not have enough time to acquire English and obtain all the core content credits required for graduation in 4 years. Newcomer programs serve some of these students—that is, recent immigrants with low or no literacy skills (Boyson & Short, 2003). If newcomer programs can successfully accelerate the adolescent ELLs' language and content learning, then researchers need to evaluate how they do so and disseminate that information.

Research on ELL Graduation Rates

Researchers might also begin collecting and analyzing data on ELL high school graduation rates (using consistent data collection procedures across the states) and exit exam passing rates. When students drop out of school, they could be tracked to see if they seek employment or switch to adult education programs. Researchers could find out why they make a particular choice and use that information in a program review. High school graduation rates of ELLs in states with alternative exit exam options would be interesting to compare with those in states without such options.

Studies on Assessing ELL Literacy

Finally, to more accurately measure student progress on subject area tests, additional research on appropriate assessments (e.g., those written in simplified English or in the native language) and comparative studies of available assessment tools and the use of accommodations in high-stakes testing is needed. In light of NCLB accountability requirements, such research will provide practitioners and policymakers with critical information and confirmation about what is—or is not—working for ELLs.

Policymakers could help build the research base on ELL adolescent literacy by

- Funding short-term research and development on literacy interventions for adolescent ELLs targeting students from diverse language and educational backgrounds.
- Funding longitudinal studies on adolescent ELLs and former ELLs (FEPs) to evaluate promising programs and investigate the effects of teacher development pertaining to this student population.
- Funding research to identify and evaluate a set of model programs for secondary ELLs, such as newcomer programs and early college programs with an ELL focus, and disseminate information about their effective practices.
- Calling for an analysis of forthcoming NCLB data for information about adolescent ELLs that would target longitudinal, within-state studies. (But such studies should take care to distinguish between ELLs and former ELLs to avoid confusion.)
- Encouraging the collection and analysis of data on ELL high school graduation rates (using consistent data collection procedures across the states) and exit exam passing rates, and tracking which students drop out and which switch to adult education programs.

CONCLUSION

The nation's ultimate goal must be the education of all students, including those struggling with academic literacy in their adolescent years. Without highly developed literacy skills, adolescent students will find that pathways for success in school and in a profession are blocked. The consequences of dropping out of school are dire. More and more jobs (and the better paying ones) need employees with high levels of literacy, advanced technological knowledge, and problem-solving skills (Barton, 2000). Educated adults are less likely to be unemployed. They have better health care, participate more in civic life, and gain higher incomes. Therefore, appropriate educational opportunities for all of the nation's students must be ensured.

Adolescent ELLs are a diverse group of students whose needs, overall, have not been well served by the country's educational system. Yet with programs targeted to their language development needs, they can be successful in learning English and the content of their secondary school courses. For example, former ELLs in New York and California pass exit exams and graduate at a higher percentage than do all students as a whole (Center for Education Policy, 2005). Most adolescent ELLs are moving along the path to academic literacy, but some move more slowly than do others because of certain factors, such as their native language literacy skills and educational backgrounds.

As the research base on adolescent ELL literacy grows and as the best literacy practices become more widely disseminated through increased dialogue among educators, researchers, and policymakers, the right strategies for helping these students attain their full potential are being determined. The following responses would strengthen the efforts to date:

- Set common criteria for identifying these learners and tracking their performance.
- Develop new and improved assessments of their native language abilities, English language development, and content-knowledge learning.
- Build capacity among pre-service and current educators to instruct these learners effectively.
- Design appropriate and flexible secondary school programs that offer time and coursework that account for the second language development process.
- Use research-based instructional practices more widely and consistently.
- Fund and conduct more short- and long-term research on new and existing interventions and programs, and on the academic performance of these adolescent ELLs.

By helping ELLs learn and perform more effectively in the nation's schools, America's educational system and society as a whole will be strengthened and enriched.

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APPENDIX A: ADOLESCENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER LITERACY ADVISORY PANEL

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APPENDIX B: PROJECT METHODOLOGY

In April 2005, Carnegie Corporation of New York contracted with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) to examine the research and promising practices of adolescent English language learner (ELL) literacy. Because the number of kindergarten through 12th-grade students from non-English-speaking backgrounds has risen dramatically and represents the fastest growing subgroup of the student population, stakeholders determined that interventions that successfully address the adolescent literacy problem for ELLs needed to be identified and disseminated. Educators, program designers, and policy-makers have some limited research to draw from in this area, but need more focused attention on short-term and long-term recommendations for the problem.

Scope of Work

CAL conducted this work by: a) convening a panel of experts for advice and feedback; b) conducting a selected literature review; and c) visiting sites with successful track records of working with adolescent ELLs. In addition, CAL asked the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) to look specifically at the demographic trends and academic achievement of ELLs at a national and state level. The project goal was to produce a policy-oriented document that would address the following questions:

Context: Who are the adolescent ELLs and what does research tell us about their literacy development and academic achievement?

Success: What are some promising practices and policies at the district and program levels?

Action: What steps might be taken at the national, state, district, and school levels to address this issue?

To begin, a definition of academic literacy was set, with the following characteristics:

- Includes reading, writing, and oral discourse for school
- Varies from subject to subject
- Requires knowledge of multiple genres of text, purposes for text use, and text media
- Is influenced by students' literacies in contexts outside of school
- Is influenced by students' personal, social, and cultural experiences

Advisory Panel

The advisory panel included well-known researchers in the areas of literacy and ELLs; state, district, and school administrators with firsthand experience of promising programs; and policy advisors with significant knowledge of federal and state education legislation and its impact on this student group. A list of panelists is found in Appendix A.

The panel met in June 2005 to provide direction for the research and final document topics and suggest literature to review and promising programs to examine. The panel reconvened in September

2005 after the literature review had taken place and programs had been contacted in order to generate policy recommendations and to review and comment on a draft document. In March 2006, the panelists reviewed the full report. In addition, several conference calls took place with subgroups of the full panel during the first year.

Literature Review

The selective review of the available literature on adolescent ELLs was undertaken in the summer of 2005. CAL staff began with a search of several key databases: databases of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth, the ERIC Clearinghouse, PsycINFO, Linguistics & Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA), and Sociological abstracts. Combinations of search terms for the *students* and *programs* were used, such as adolescent, English as a second language, limited English proficient, non-English-speaking, bilingual, linguistic minorities, and immigrants; for *topics*, such as literacy, reading, writing; and for *educational settings*, such as grade 6, grade 7, grade 8, grade 9, grade 10, grade 11, and grade 12; high school; middle school; and junior high. Most of the documents were published in the past 15 years, although some earlier, seminal works were also examined. Peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, dissertations, and technical reports were also reviewed.

Articles were selected for review according to the following criteria: a) the student subjects were adolescents in grades 6 through 12 (grades 4 and 5 were accepted if students in higher grades were involved in the study as well), and b) the study provided outcomes related to literacy development. At the first advisory panel meeting, the advisors set categories for examining the literature: a) instructional practices; b) technology; c) program design; d) teacher, coach, and administrator professional development; e) intake, formative, and summative assessment; f) middle and high school transitions; g) fiscal issues; h) policy issues; i) community issues; j) second language literacy development, process, or theory; and k) student characteristics and diversity within adolescent ELL populations. The articles were abstracted and additional articles were located if they were pertinent and relevant to the identified literature. For some of the topics, particularly for middle and high school transitions and for fiscal issues, the available literature was thin.

Demographic and Achievement Data on Adolescent ELLs

As part of the background research, the Migration Policy Institute prepared an adolescent ELL demographic and achievement report in response to the following questions:

- Who are these adolescent ELLs and where are they from?
- What is the background (e.g., social, economic, linguistic) of their families?
- What are the education levels of their parents?
- How well do they do in school now and what is their progress over time?

- To what extent do these students meet state and national literacy standards (in English language and general content)?
- What can the schools do to improve the performance and literacy levels of such students?

MPI staff used several sources to respond to the questions. They examined the 2000 U.S. Census data to capture a national picture of the adolescent ELLs and their families, and then analyzed data from 2003 eighth-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading and Mathematics exams, the most recent data then available, to determine adolescent ELL achievement. Finally, they identified two traditional immigration states with large numbers of ELLs (California and Illinois) and two new destination states that have experienced rapid ELL student growth in the past decade (Colorado and North Carolina) to determine student achievement using results from state exams as reported on state websites and in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) data submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.

Site Visits to Promising Programs

Three sites of promising practices were suggested by the panelists and visited by project staff in fall 2005 and winter 2006: J.E.B. Stuart High School in Fairfax County, VA; Union City Public Schools in NJ; and Hoover High School in San Diego, CA. In determining sites, the following characteristics were sought: ELLs comprised 20% or more of the student population; the school or district had targeted interventions for adolescent ELL literacy development; staff development was job-embedded and sustained; and adolescent ELL student achievement was documented. Staff visited the sites for 2 or more days, observed in classrooms, interviewed central office and school-based staff, and collected documentation. Descriptions of these sites' promising practices for adolescent ELLs are detailed in Appendix C.

Challenges and Recommendations

The final task of the project staff and advisors was to identify the major challenges facing policymakers and educators of adolescent ELLs and then develop a series of strategies and possible policy solutions. These form the basis of this report.

APPENDIX C: HIGH SCHOOL AND DISTRICT PROFILES

The profiles presented here reflect three programs that have implemented research-based approaches and other promising practices. All three sites—two high schools and one school district—from different locations in the United States have a strong commitment to adolescent English language learner (ELL) literacy. The profiles below highlight their efforts and call attention to their strategies for facing the challenges discussed earlier in this policy document. The site visits took place during the 2005–06 school year.

J.E.B. Stuart High School Fairfax County, Virginia

Background

J.E.B. Stuart High School is a mid-size, urban high school in the metropolitan Washington, DC, area. The attendance area of the school includes primarily middle class and working class neighborhoods in Fairfax County. Many immigrants to the DC area have settled nearby. Approximately 1,450 students attended Stuart in the 2005–06 school year. Two-thirds of the students at Stuart are ELLs from more than 70 countries and 51% of them are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. Stuart meets requirements to be eligible for Title I funds, but Fairfax County Public Schools has decided not to provide any Title I monies to its high schools. Close to 400 students are enrolled in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program and more than 100 other students are still monitored as ELLs—students who have exited the ESOL program.¹ Stuart is culturally and ethnically diverse: 22% of the students are Asian/Pacific Islander, 10% are Black, 40% are Hispanic, 26% are White, and 2% are in the “Other” category. The mobility rate in the 2004–05 school year was 22%, although teachers reported the ELL student mobility rate was closer to 30%. Stuart is fully accredited and made Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) the past 2 years in all categories. In 2004–05, the attendance rate was 94% and the graduation rate was 74%.

The picture was different in 1997 when the principal, Mel Riddile, arrived at the school. The attendance rate was much lower than the county average (students missed more than 20 days per year on average) and reading scores on state tests were low as well. (In 1997–98, only 64% of students passed the state reading and literature test and only 73% passed the writing test.) The academic program focused more on meeting minimum competencies than high standards. The school staff decided to raise academic expectations and focus on literacy. All students were assessed with the Gates-MacGinitie reading test, which has been normed on ELLs and students of poverty. At that time, 76% of students were 1 year below grade level and 25% were more than 3 years below level.

¹ The district program is called English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), but the instruction is referred to as ESL (English as a second language).

Policy Decisions

A number of policy decisions have been enacted over the past 8 years that have supported all the students at Stuart, including the adolescent ELLs. Some of these policies were school-based and others developed by or with the district and state education agency's collaboration.

Literacy Intervention Program

Because student performance was so poor in 1997, the school decided to hire a literacy coach, who has been with the school since then. Her job is to work with all staff to enhance literacy across the curriculum, monitor the students, set curriculum for the literacy intervention class that has been offered each year, and analyze reading assessment data for incoming ninth graders. Many ninth graders take a required literacy class to prepare them for reading in the content areas. (ELLs have different classes depending on their proficiency levels as described below.) Additional intervention classes are offered in 10th and 11th grades for the students who are struggling with critical literacy needs, based on reading assessments and teacher recommendation. The school set up a literacy computer lab, with individualized reading development computer programs for literacy and ESL classes to use (especially the advanced students). The teachers report it provides good practice for the state language arts exams.

Attendance

The staff at Stuart recognized that if students were not in school, they were unlikely to be successful in their classes. As a result, the staff undertook several initiatives that improved the attendance rate. One is close monitoring of absentees. Students check-in each morning via an identification card scanning process. The teachers know by first period which students arrived at school on any given day. If the students are absent for one or more classes during the day, a call-out (from an automated phone system) goes home. In addition, letters are sent to parents every Friday if their child missed any class any day that week. A second initiative was the wake-up option within the automatized phone system. Students can request a wake-up call for each day or specific days, to their home or cell phone, so they can get to school on time. ESOL teachers reported that beginning-level ESOL students, new to the school system, usually have excellent attendance, but more advanced students who have been in school for several years have more absences and so benefited from the changes. By 2003, the average number of days missed was only 7 per year, a vast improvement over the number in 1997–98.

School Calendar

In order to support student success on state exams, Stuart received permission from the state to follow a modified school calendar. The modified school year starts 2 weeks earlier than most of the county schools, enabling the students to complete their coursework in the material they will be tested on before the state exams in May. This provides an instructional time benefit to all struggling students, including the adolescent ELLs.

Stuart students may also attend two separate summer sessions (held some years at Stuart, other years at another high school) where they can complete a year-long course each session. This summer program is particularly useful for ESOL students who need additional credits in core classes for graduation. Many of the ESL classes carry only elective credit. The core credit courses are usually offered in the second summer term, closest to the August administration of the end-of-course state tests. Other students attend the summer program to retake classes they failed or to advance in their coursework.

The modified calendar plus summer program allows Stuart students to obtain 5.5 years of instruction in 4 calendar years. This option is useful for ESOL students at lower levels of English proficiency who do not obtain many core credits while they are learning English and need the summer sessions to catch up if they wish to graduate with their peers or soon thereafter. The school also follows a block schedule, which offers some flexibility in course selection.

ASAP (After-School Academic Program)

Stuart offers an after-school tutoring program for 40 minutes, 3 days per week. It is mandatory for students who receive Ds and Fs (in a core subject or foreign language) on their interim reports or quarterly report cards to attend at least 1 day per week. Other students are welcome to attend any session and many ELLs take advantage of this opportunity.

The Academy

This 2-year program incorporates vocational education, allowing students to choose among almost 20 different courses. Students spend half the day in regular school classes and half the day in Academy courses. Approximately 50% of the students in this program are ESOL students, who must be at the intermediate level of proficiency or above. The ESOL staff encourages many students to enter the program and view it as an opportunity to add time to the school careers of these students. While they are learning skills for the world of work (e.g., as an electrician, carpenter, hair stylist), they engage in authentic interactions and practice their English.

Advanced Studies

Over time, the school added programs to promote advanced studies. The International Baccalaureate (IB) program started in 1994, but it was opened up to all students who expressed interest after 1997. The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program began in 2004–05. AVID is designed specifically for students “in the middle” who do average work but need additional support to succeed in advanced courses and apply for college.

ESOL Program Design

Stuart High School has created and implemented a sophisticated program for ESOL students that is designed to meet both their language proficiency and academic needs. The school offers five levels of ESL, including three A levels at the traditional “beginner proficiency level” because so many of the students enroll in Stuart with no or low literacy in their own language and gaps in their educational backgrounds. The five levels, in order of advancing proficiency, are designated A1, A2, A3, B1, and B2; and even within A1, there is a group of designated LA level students, those with the lowest literacy levels of all. Furthermore, students who have exited the ESOL program are designated B3 students for monitoring and tracking purposes. These students, who may still be acquiring proficiency in academic English, are counted as Limited English Proficient (LEP) for the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) accountability targets for 2 years after exit. The ESOL staff and the literacy coach monitor these students. If some continue to struggle with literacy in their coursework, they are placed into the literacy intervention class that is offered to native English speakers.

ESOL Program Courses

The ESOL program has a strong commitment to academic language and content development and has developed a series of courses for each proficiency level that includes language- and content-focused ESL classes. The ESL language courses focus on vocabulary development, early reading through academic reading skills, writing, grammar, and oral language development tied to school language demands. A1 students have three ESL language classes that help them learn basic vocabulary, study skills, and initial reading and writing skills. In addition, they have two one-semester classes, one for sheltered Life Science² and the other for sheltered geography, both taught by ESOL teachers. A2 and A3 students have two language-focused ESL classes, plus an ESL content reading class linked to history topics, and two one-semester classes as well in sheltered Life Science/Introduction to Biology and sheltered U.S. history, both taught by ESOL teachers. B1 students have one ESL language class focused on language arts standards-based curriculum and an ESL content reading class linked to history and science topics in the ESOL program. They also have sheltered World Studies I and sheltered biology classes taught by history and science teachers. B2 students have a double-block of ESL language and English 9 as part of their ESOL program. They are typically in mainstream classes for other core subjects by this level. In addition, all students (A1–B2) have a math class according to their ability level, taught by math teachers. The course offerings range from arithmetic and pre-algebra (offered as specially designed sheltered courses known as FAST Math³) through calculus.

In terms of academic literacy development, the ESOL program aims to develop students’ reading skills to a first- to second-grade level by the end of A1, a second- to third-grade level by the end of A2,

² The sheltered content courses taught by the ESOL staff are known as Concepts courses; this class is listed in a students’ schedule as Concepts Science.

³ Focus on Achieving Standards in Teaching (FAST) Math was developed by Fairfax County educators. At Stuart, the course is named Individualized Math. The students with the lowest levels of math skill may take 2 years of Individualized Math to cover typical mathematics topics from kindergarten to grade six.

third- to fourth-grade level by the end of A3, a fourth- to fifth-grade level by the end of B1, and approaching eighth- to ninth-grade level by the end of B2, in which the students study the regular ninth grade English curriculum and state standards. An introduction and/or review of phonemic awareness and phonics occurs throughout the A levels. Guided reading is utilized to develop the A-level students' comprehension skills. More independent reading occurs in B1 and B2. Vocabulary is an important component of all the language courses with specific attention to academic terms. Beginning at the A3 level, teachers use specific materials for word attack skills and SAT preparation. Vocabulary development is also an important part of the regular English language arts classes at Stuart.

ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL) LEVEL SCHEDULING

The following are typical course schedules for the ESOL students at the five levels of proficiency. The courses in bold are part of the ESOL department. The other courses are part of the specific subject department.

A1 student: 2 periods of ESL with same teacher, 1 period of ESL focusing on survival vocabulary and basic content vocabulary, 1 period of Concepts Science and Concepts Geography (1 semester each), 1 period of math (usually FAST Math elementary level for A1 students), 1 period of physical education (PE), and 1 elective

A2 student: 2 periods of ESL with same teacher, 1 period of ESL content reading related to U.S. history, 1 period of Concepts Life Science and Concepts U.S. History to the Civil War (1 semester each), 1 period of math, 1 period of PE, and 1 elective

A3 student: 2 periods of ESL with same teacher, 1 period of ESL content reading related to World history, 1 period of Concepts Biology and Concepts U.S. History from the Civil War to present (1 semester each), 1 period of math, 1 period of PE, and 1 elective

B1 student: 1 period of ESL focusing on English language arts, 1 period of ESL content reading related to World history and biology, 1 period of sheltered World Studies I, 1 period of sheltered biology, 1 period of math (usually algebra or higher), 1 period of PE or elective, and 1 elective

B2 student: Double-block (2 periods) of ESL and English 9 with the same teacher, World Studies II or U.S./Virginia history, chemistry or Active Physics, 1 period of math (usually geometry or higher), and 2 periods of electives

Cross-Department Collaboration

To accomplish this complex but thoughtful program of studies for English language learners, the ESOL department works closely with other departments in scheduling students and designing classes. In-house staff development is offered to the subject area teachers of sheltered courses and ESOL staff are asked for input into decisions about textbooks for sheltered content classes. Alignments are made where possible between the content reading ESL courses and the sheltered courses students take in the subject area departments. These content reading courses help build some of the background knowledge the students lack in the core subjects and develop their academic vocabulary and comprehension skills. The ESL curriculum has been aligned to the Virginia language arts curriculum as well, so students in the ESL courses are making progress in reaching those standards. The double English block offers B2 students a programmatic strategy for successfully meeting the high-level literacy demands of an English 9 class (e.g., extended literature selections, academic writing, and research).

One example of the cross-department collaboration and scheduling flexibility that Stuart staff have established is represented in the Algebra I course options. Because Algebra I is a gatekeeper course and required for high school graduation, the staff created several pathways for students to take and pass the course (including the end-of-course exam). These options are particularly important for the adolescent ELLs who arrived with limited formal education and weak math skills. One option is for students to take two semesters of FAST Math during their first year at Stuart and then take a double-block of algebra for both semesters of their second year. (Students use an elective period to accommodate this double-block.) Another option for students who may have slightly more math background and at least the A3 proficiency level is to take one semester of FAST Math in the first year and then take Algebra I, Part 1 the second semester. If the student is successful, s/he will take Algebra I, Part 2 (1 period) both semesters of the second year. If the student struggles with Algebra I, Part 1, a third option is to take a double-block of Algebra I both semesters the following year. Students who take FAST Math and algebra or Algebra I, Parts 1 and 2 can receive two core math credits if they pass the state algebra exam. The staff at Stuart are considering moving the FAST Math courses into the ESOL program in the 2006–07 school year.

The plan for student success in biology shows a similar collaboration. The program teaches biology through a 2-year design. In the first year, the A3 students have the Concepts Biology with an emphasis on vocabulary and reading taught by an ESOL teacher, for which they receive elective credit. In the second year, B1 students have a sheltered biology class taught by a science teacher, which covers many of the same topics but in more depth. The ELL students take the state biology exam at the end of that year and have a 90% pass rate. They receive a core science credit for the second course.

Class Size

Another strategic decision made at Stuart benefits the adolescent ELLs who are struggling with literacy development. Stuart allocates its fiscal resources carefully in order to maintain a class size lower than the district's recommendations. This allows the teachers to provide more individualized instruction and offers the teens more interaction time to practice their English. Teachers are also able to make closer connections to the students, many of whom are at risk for dropping out of school. Research has shown that these types of connections with teachers can encourage students to stay in school. The following shows the class size guidelines at Stuart:

- LA students in A1 level have a 12 student cap.
- A2 classes have 15–16 students.
- A3 classes have 15–18 students.
- B1 classes have 16–18 students.
- B2 classes have 18–20 students.

Of course, as more students enroll throughout the year, the class sizes may increase. In the first semester of 2005–06, the ESOL program had three sections of A1 and A2 students and two sections of A3, B1, and B2 students.

Credits for Graduation

It is very difficult for a beginning-level ELL student who enters a U.S. school for the first time in ninth grade to take all the core courses and learn enough academic English to pass all the required courses and exams for graduation in 4 school years. In fact, ESOL staff at Stuart have found that most students who enter at the A1 level do not remain until graduation, especially the older learners who come to Stuart at age 16 or higher. In a number of cases, it is not the desire of the students to obtain a high school diploma or pursue post-secondary education. Those students are more interested in developing their English and academic skills sufficiently for better job opportunities. In other cases, students are discouraged by the number of years they need to remain at Stuart to complete all the requirements. Research has proven that adolescents need 4 to 7 years of English instruction before they reach the average performance level of native English speakers, and adolescents who arrive without native language literacy skills need even longer. Therefore, the 4-year high school need not be the standard for this student population.

Nonetheless, the staff at Stuart work with the students to show them potential pathways to graduation, including 5- and 6-year high school plans. In either the 9th or 10th grade, students who desire a diploma meet with ESOL staff and counselors to develop their individualized plan. Usually these plans include summer sessions in addition to the regular school years. Virginia state law allows students to stay in high school until they are 22 years old.

The courses taught by ESOL staff generally carry elective credit. Those taught by subject area teachers carry core credit. The exceptions are the B2 language block and the FAST Math courses discussed below. The state of Virginia has approved some credit options for the ELLs in Fairfax County high schools that help them reach graduation requirements.

These flexible pathways for earning credits are important for adolescent ELLs who are doing double the work—learning English and content—because they first need to learn enough English in order to succeed in the core content classes, yet the ESOL classes do not carry core credit for graduation.

Credit for courses taken in native country. Students who have documentation (e.g., transcript) that they have taken a core class in their native country may sit the state exam without taking the course at Stuart; and if they pass, they receive the credit for that course. The Virginia tests are in English, however, so students need to reach a level of proficiency whereby they can understand the language of the test. Stuart staff screen the students with a pre-test made of released test items. If a student scores at or above the top cut-off level, they take the exam at the next administration (usually in January). If they score below the bottom cut-off level, they are advised not to take the test. For students who score in the mid-range of the two cut-offs, the staff analyzes the test results item by item to determine the students' areas of difficulty. If there is a likelihood of success with some remediation, Stuart offers special classes to help prepare the students for the test vocabulary and subject-specific discourse patterns.

English credit. If B2 level students who have a double language block exit the ESOL program the first time they are in this double block option and pass the English 9 state exam, they receive two English credits for the year. If they do not pass the first time, they do not receive any core credit that year. If they pass the following year or next administration of the test, they receive one English credit.

Algebra credit. Students who take FAST Math and then Algebra I, or Algebra I, Parts 1 and 2, and pass the state exam may receive two mathematics credits (essentially for pre-algebra and algebra).

Foreign Language credit. Stuart offers four levels of Spanish for Fluent Speakers (SFS). ESOL students at all levels can take a SFS class and receive a foreign language credit. Also, students who have proficiency in a language other than English can take an oral and written assessment in that language. If they pass, they receive two foreign language credits and do not have to take the course. This opportunity is available for 19 languages, including ones for which no course is offered.

Assessment

Assessment is an important component of the Stuart educational plan for all students, particularly in the area of literacy. All eighth graders who will attend Stuart are assessed with the Gates-MacGinitie reading exam and new students are assessed in the first months of their first year at Stuart. In Virginia, students must pass end-of-course exams in six key areas to graduate and receive credit for the course. English language learners sit through additional assessments as well to comply with NCLB. Stuart hired a test coordinator for the school in 2004–05, in large part to manage NCLB reporting requirements.

Intake and Placement

When secondary school students enroll in Fairfax County Public Schools, they or their parents complete a home language survey. If they indicate a language other than English is used at home, the students' language proficiency is assessed at an intake/registration center. There, bilingual staff examine

Stuart English for Speakers of Other Languages' Level Placement Chart			
Level	DRP Score	Writing Score	Oral Score
A1	-15 to 15	1, 2	1, 2
A2	16 to 29	2, 3	1, 2
A3	30 to 39	3, 4	3
B1	40 to 55	4	4
B2	55 to 65	4, 5	5
B3 (exited English language learners)	66+	5, 6	5, 6

the students' transcripts and administer oral and writing assessments (scored with a 6 point rubric), reading (Degrees of Reading Power [DRP] test), and math tests in English. If a student's dominant academic language is not English, writing and math assessments are also given in the other language to ascertain the student's academic literacy. The intake process helps determine appropriate placement for students in the programs.

Student Progress

Each year in the ESOL program, the ELLs also take an English language assessment as required under NCLB. At Stuart, they take DRP tests and their scores determine their level placement and promotion. Fairfax County sets 60 as the score for exiting the ESOL program, but Stuart raised the score to 65 in recent years because they found too many students who exited at the lower score did not make expected progress in the mainstream classes. Before the B2 students exit, they also take the Gates-MacGinitie test in the spring. This is an additional check on their literacy skills. Students who get above 65 on the DRP, and above 40% on the Gates, exit and are placed in the mainstream program. Students who get above 65 on the DRP, but below 40% on the Gates, exit ESOL but take a literacy intervention class (with native English speakers) the following year. If B2s do not reach a 65 score on the DRP, they do not exit. They repeat the B2 ESL language class and take English 10 but the classes are not scheduled as a double-block. Approximately one-third of the B2 students do not exit each year.

During the school year, student language and content progress is monitored by the quarter. If students are ready to move up an ESL level, the ESL department head develops a new schedule of classes appropriate to the new ESOL level and works with the guidance counselors to change schedules—they do not need to wait until the end of semester.

Challenges

Adolescent ELLs are making progress at J.E.B. Stuart and the staff has built flexible pathways to success into the programmatic options. There are some challenges still being addressed. One area of need is staff development on sheltered instruction techniques for all teachers. Although there have been occasional workshops, Stuart has not yet undertaken a sustained program of staff development, so many teachers who receive ELLs or former ELLs do not have a solid foundation of the best instructional practices for continuing to develop these students' academic language skills while teaching them the key concepts of their subjects.

Another challenge concerns the LA and A1 level students who enter ninth grade with low literacy skills in their first language and limited formal schooling. For these students, a traditional 4-year high school path is an unlikely scenario. These students are the most likely to drop out and need special attention to make the notion of following a 5- or 6-year high school career path appealing. It is possible that a partnership with the adult

HONORS

- Identified as one of the 10 best high schools in the nation serving underserved students as part of a study commissioned by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- Named an NASSP Breakthrough High School in 2003 and was named one of 30 model schools in the country by the International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE) in 2004.
- Received the International Baccalaureate (IB) North America Inspiration Award in 2004 for opening its IB program to all students.

basic education program in Fairfax or the local community college might be designed. It is also important to accept that for some of these students, especially the older learners over age 16, a high school diploma is not the goal. Therefore, a different type of program might be designed for them.

A related issue is the retention of 11th graders. NCLB penalizes high schools with large numbers of retained 11th graders; however, low-level ELLs may need the extra years. This is a federal policy issue that Stuart staff cannot resolve; nonetheless, it has an impact at Stuart and in schools across the country on whether students are subtly discouraged from staying in school or even enrolling in the first place.

Hoover High School San Diego, California

Background

The atmosphere at Hoover High School is sunny, which is not altogether unexpected given its setting in the balmy Southern California climate. But 7 years ago, the story was different. Hoover High School, located in one of the poorest sections of San Diego, CA, had safety problems due in large part to the presence of gangs. “Faculty went to the bathroom in pairs,” said Douglas Fisher of San Diego State University’s (SDSU) Department of Education, which has formed a university partnership with the school. “It was a scary place.” In this environment, academics suffered. In the late 1990s, Hoover was ranked the lowest performing school in the city by the state’s accountability measures. Today, the high school that serves a population of 71% English language learners or reclassified ELLs is peaceful, focused on school success, and exceeding its state growth benchmarks. The Hoover community has accomplished this through a sustained, mandatory, and consistent professional development program focusing on seven strategies for literacy development and a strong support system in place for the students. Hoover staff and partners designed and implemented the staff development and student assessment practices to guide and increase academic literacy among their adolescent ELLs.

The student body at Hoover High School is very diverse. In the 2003–2004 school year, 40.9% of the student body were categorized as ELLs, 85% of whom were Spanish-speaking. Just over 34% of the student body were former ELLs. Of the 2,160 students enrolled at Hoover, the ethnic breakdown was as follows: Hispanic, 65%; African-American, 14.5%; Indochinese, 13%; White, 4.8%; Asian, 1.1%; Filipino, 0.8%; Pacific Islander, 0.6%; and Native American, 0.2%. The attendance rate was 94.3%. Hoover is a Title I school with 99% of its students eligible for free and reduced lunch. One hundred six teachers (47.9% of whom hold Masters degrees) support these students.

Prior to the school reforms that began in the late 1990s, ELLs at Hoover had limited academic support and expectations for their success. ELLs were placed in “developmental” English classes that were not linked to the state English language arts content standards. These classes did little to prepare them for the rigorous academic work and the advanced literacy skills required for high school

graduation. Instruction was focused on decontextualized vocabulary activities and discrete point tasks and lacked the academic focus that would allow students to “read and write to learn.”

The revitalized program for ELLs at Hoover now consists of academic literacy-focused English as a Second Language (ESL) and sheltered content classes. Hoover operates on a quarter/block system so that each student takes four classes a quarter: sixteen classes a year. There are six levels of ESL classes offered at Hoover that can be completed over 3 years of attendance (ESL 1-2, 3-4, 5-6). Students progress through beginning ESL 1-2 reading, writing, and social studies courses, plus math, to advanced ESL 5-6 language arts, literature, and sheltered science and history courses. Four quarters of ESL social studies are offered along with the first four levels of language development (ESL Social Studies 1-4). Sheltered history and science are offered when students are in the last two levels of ESL (5-6). All of the classes are aligned to California’s English Language Arts and English Language Development standards. There are four classes offered for each level: one reading class, one writing class, one ESL class, and one literature class. Two classes for each of the three ESL levels are offered per quarter. Thus, students may take at least two of their four class periods each day in ESL programming. The course schedules are designed so that ELLs at the same level have at least two out of the four courses with the same students per day. This practice provides a support system for these students and helps teachers get to know and monitor the students better.

English as a Second Language (ESL) Schedule of Classes, 2005–2006			
Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
ESL Writing 1 ESL Reading 1 ESL Social Studies 1 Math	ESL Writing 2 ESL Reading 2 ESL Social Studies 2 Math	ESL 1 Literature 1 Physical Education (PE) Math	ESL 2 Literature 2 PE Math
ESL Writing 3 ESL Reading 3 ESL Social Studies 3 Math	ESL Writing 4 ESL Reading 4 ESL Social Studies 4 Math	ESL 3 Literature 3 PE Math	ESL 4 Literature 4 PE Math
ESL Writing 5 ESL Reading 5 Math PE/Elective	ESL Writing 6 ESL Reading 6 Math PE/Elective	ESL 5 Literature 5 Sheltered Science/ History PE/Elective	ESL 6 Literature 6 Sheltered Science/ History PE/Elective

University & Community Partnerships

Hoover High School is not an educational island unto itself, nor simply a cog in an educational machine. Its academic turnaround did not happen in a vacuum. Since 1999, the school has been implementing its Literacy Staff Development Plan as a member of SDSU/City Heights Education Collaborative Partnership. A major aspect of this partnership is that professors of education at San Diego State University (Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and others) work closely with Hoover’s principal, Douglas Williams, and faculty on a daily basis to oversee and advise on all aspects of professional

development, instruction and assessment, student support, policy decisions, parent communications, and guidance. Hoover hosts a complete teacher induction program. The university places student teachers at Hoover, and Mr. Fisher, Ms. Frey, and others teach credentialing classes to them on site. Mr. Fisher serves on the school’s professional development committee—along with several teachers and one full time staff developer—and even teaches one class to Hoover students for one quarter each year.

Mr. Fisher has written proposals for and administered hundreds of thousands of dollars of private and public grants for the school since 1999. Such grants include those that fund SDSU staff time at Hoover, book purchases for Sustained Silent Reading time, after-school tutoring and extracurricular activities, student trips, and an on-site parent center that offers classes in parenting, life skills, adult basic education, and ESL. This partnership between the university and Hoover brings both financial and professional support to Hoover’s day-to-day functioning. It has also allowed the school to operate somewhat independently of other schools in the district—at this point following its own improvement plan in the midst of districtwide reforms.

Professional Development

Hoover prides itself on the fact that school professional development and classroom instruction are driven by student assessment data. Before the school undertook serious reform, assessment data showed that many ELL and non-ELL students alike lacked basic reading and writing skills and were not making the necessary academic progress to succeed in and graduate from high school. A change in the school administration and teaching staff led to a renewed vision for Hoover that consists of “an ever-growing repertoire for teaching and assessing diverse learners; a passion for engaging all students in the learning process; and the use of data to make and assess instructional decisions.” Along with changes in school policies and structures, the Literacy Staff Development Plan was designed and implemented to combat the discouraging assessment data and low graduation rates.

The Literacy Staff Development Plan is grounded in seven key strategies for academic literacy. Teachers across the curriculum use *anticipatory guides*, such as K-W-L (know, want to know, learn) charts to help students record their own background knowledge, questions, and learning related to a given instructional topic. For the second strategy, students are read to for approximately 5 minutes during a class period. If they are doing *shared reading*, the students follow along with a copy of the text; if it is a *read-aloud*, they just listen. Teachers also work with students to build *structured notetaking*

SEVEN LITERACY STRATEGIES

Anticipatory Guides
 Read-Alouds and Shared Readings
 Notetaking and Note Making
 Graphic Organizers
 Vocabulary Instruction
 Writing to Learn
 Reciprocal Teaching
 Source: Fisher & Frey, 2004

skills (usually through the form of Cornell notes [Pauk, 2000]) into their lessons so that students identify main ideas and key vocabulary, as well as summarize their learning. *Graphic organizers* help students to see relationships among ideas in the text. Teachers use them before, during, or after reading to help students organize new information. Explicit *vocabulary instruction* across the curriculum includes attention to general, specific, and technical academic vocabulary. The *writing to learn* strategy teaches students to reflect on their learning through writing, often using open-ended prompts such as “What three things do you remember?” or “Which historical figure from this unit is most like you and why?” Through *reciprocal teaching*, students work in small groups to discuss reading for comprehension. They predict, clarify, question, and summarize (Palinscar & Brown, 1984) in order to monitor their progress and check their understanding of the text. Finally, as the program has developed, teachers have incorporated the strategy of *questioning* into their repertoire. Teachers learn a variety of techniques to ask quality questions that tap higher order thinking among the students, scaffold the instruction, and provoke students to elaborate their ideas. They also teach students to ask thoughtful questions.

Cornell Notes (sample)	
Subject: <i>Biology</i>	Date: <i>Jan 11, 2006</i>
Main Ideas	Details
•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • •
Summary:	

The same seven literacy strategies have been the focus of the professional development program since 1999—making it a spiraling curriculum. They are covered in a new way, one-by-one over the course of each school year. Because many newly hired teachers do their credential work at Hoover, they already have familiarity with the techniques before the school year begins.

Initially, many teachers were resistant to the strategies, believing that they were another educational fad that would fade away. Many of the teachers believed that the strategies were not working. Looking back now, these same teachers realize that when they first began implementing the strategies, a key piece of the puzzle was missing: personal reflection and collegial collaboration. One teacher explained that his initial disillusionment with the strategies was not helped by the fact that he was not thinking critically and reflecting on *why* the strategies weren’t working. He did not enlist the help of a teaching colleague to think collaboratively about the problem. Now, personal reflection and collegial collaboration are essential parts of all teachers’ professional development and pride.

Nothing is accidental about Hoover’s professional development program. Hoover’s block scheduling gives staff the opportunity to attend monthly meetings and weekly course–like meetings during school hours. The hub of the program is Room 408—a spacious, bright room that is dedicated to professional development. In Room 408, the staff development committee plans the schoolwide program. The program includes the following components:

- 1) **Monthly meetings for teachers.** Since 1999, these meetings have occurred during planning blocks that have focused on deepening teachers’ understanding of the seven literacy strategies, as well as other best practices. The meetings are mandatory and attended by the principal. They include presentations, discussion, demonstration lessons, reflective journaling, and coaching corners. Coaching corners are small group activities during the meetings that focus on a particular strategy, best practice, or activity that teachers want to share with colleagues. Teachers sign up both to lead and to participate in the groups. After the teacher-coach presents the strategy, each participant discusses how it can be implemented in his/her class and then practices on the spot. When a participant is ready to implement the strategy in class, the teacher-coach observes and then meets with the participant to debrief and strategize for future lessons. Teachers take pride in initiating their participation in presenting and attending these sessions.
- 2) **Weekly course–like meetings.** Teachers in each department meet weekly to discuss and troubleshoot course curricula and pacing guides, student progress, selection of course materials, instructional strategies, content standards, and assessment. These meetings also provide time throughout the year to develop and later score common course assessments that are clearly aligned with California’s content standards. After scoring the common assessments, the teacher team conducts item analyses of the results to determine where students are struggling with particular concepts and skills and how teachers can address these problems by adjusting their instructional techniques and foci.
- 3) **Collegial coaching.** Approximately 70% of Hoover staff volunteer to be partnered with another colleague to participate in collegial coaching. These pairs work together for a year to conduct three cycles of pre–conferences, observation, and reflection. The observations focus on some aspect of instruction for literacy development. The coaching program is facilitated by the professional development committee.
- 4) **State test preparation.** This component consists mainly of disseminating information about standardized testing, infused test readiness techniques, school test results, and test administration procedures to the school staff. As a complement to this component, every student meets with either the school principal, vice principal, or head librarian prior to the spring state testing cycle to talk about test performance and academic goals based on their previous standardized test scores.
- 5) **Department chair support.** Department chairs meet jointly at the start of the year for a full day of training on the professional development program. They attend monthly planning sessions as well as leadership trainings so that they may facilitate department meetings and consensus scoring.
- 6) **New and future teacher support.** New teachers receive peer coaching, engage in reflective journaling, participate in a book club focusing on classroom management, and receive

collegial coaching training. Outside of their credentialing classes at Hoover, future teachers have a staff mentor, attend an orientation, and participate in all professional development opportunities. Teacher turnover has decreased from approximately 50% in the late 1990s to an incredible 8% during the 2004–2005 school year; almost all new teachers hired at Hoover come from the on-site teacher induction program, through which they have received much of the same professional development that full-time staff participate in. The pre-hiring interview at Hoover asks potential teachers to agree to commit to the values and mission of the school, which includes the rigorous literacy and professional development programs.

The staff development curriculum—from the monthly teacher development meetings to the coaching corners—is planned at least 1 year in advance. All staff are required to participate in most components of the program and attendance is enforced. This helps to deliver the message to Hoover staff that the professional development work is integrated throughout the school year and is purposeful. Principal Williams, who has overseen the program since its inception, attends and participates in every monthly meeting for every planning block. Teacher observation forms used by administrators focus on the strategies presented in the professional development programs.

The program maintains the feel of a bottom-up, teacher-supported effort, but the administration also supports it in a number of important ways. A non-staff psychologist was hired to train department chairs, full-time teachers, student teachers, course-alike team leaders, and other school staff in effective communication and interpersonal skills in order to improve peer coaching and professional development experiences. These trainings have led to more collaboration and effective communication among teachers and administration. Each teacher becomes his or her own “literacy coach,” as he or she becomes more aware of the personal and professional strengths among school staff and can seek help from the appropriate colleague.

Because of block scheduling, teachers have enough time during the day to prepare for class work, reflect on their instruction, collaborate with colleagues, handle administrative paperwork, and meet with students individually. Block scheduling also gives teachers a smaller student load (three classes instead of four or more), which allows them to better get to know their students’ strengths and needs.

All of this development and instruction has had an impact on teacher morale and commitment to the school. The extremely low turnover rate at Hoover is due to its newly earned reputation as a model school. In the not-too-distant past, no teachers ever bid to work at the school; there is now a waiting list of teachers requesting assignment to Hoover. The consistent administrative dedication to the seven strategies at the outset was, in part, a response to initial faculty resistance to the program. But “success feels good,” according to Principal Williams, and now the teachers, by and large, buy into the program because it is working. They enjoy and avail themselves of opportunities to present what is working in their classrooms during the coaching corners at the monthly meetings. They appreciate the constancy of the professional development, refer to the environment as a “teaching hospital,” and note that although they work harder to meet their students’ needs and their own professional development

needs, they work smarter. Despite the progress and senses of accomplishment, however, the weight of being a “failing” school in terms of absolute scores on state exams is heavy.

Instruction

Hoover uses the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) assessment, along with information about prior schooling, grade level, and age to determine student placement upon enrollment. Effects of the professional development program are evident across instructional contexts. In addition to posters featuring the seven literacy strategies in every classroom, both teachers and students speak fluently about the strategies and other aspects of schoolwide programs, such as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). SSR is a schoolwide, daily program at Hoover that requires everyone on campus to read for approximately 20 minutes between Periods 2 and 3. This includes staff, students, administrators, visitors, and even external contractors. Over 2 years, teachers were allocated \$1,300 each to purchase SSR books and magazines for their class libraries. The teacher-run SSR committee works with administrators, students, and staff to monitor implementation and results of the daily SSR program, choose texts, and support teachers. Hoover staff use the “Eight Factors of SSR Success” (Pilgreen, 2000) and data gathered from classroom observations and the Gates-MacGinitie test to direct their program. The students who serve on the SSR committee choose one book each semester that the entire school will read (fiction in the fall, nonfiction in the spring), create public service announcements about the importance of reading, and earn a varsity letter in reading.

The effects of the literacy strategies and SSR program on instruction are seen throughout the school. In one ESL Reading 6 class, after just 20 minutes of SSR, a student easily described how he chose his book for pleasure reading. “First, I decide if I want to read it from the cover. You know, fiction, nonfiction. Then, I read the back. Then, I open up to the middle to see if it will be OK.” In the same class, a student described how learning to write reading comprehension questions was useful: “You learn what a question is asking you...higher level or lower level. You can use it to write questions about reading in other classes...to study.” This student understood how *writing* questions helped her to *comprehend* reading more deeply. In a sheltered physics class, the teacher uses a reading comprehension and questioning technique called *ReQuest*: “Students read a passage from the physics textbook, which can be quite challenging, with a partner. Each student practices writing questions about the text, then poses the questions about the text to her partner. Our literacy strategies training demonstrates that successful readers constantly ask questions when they are reading, and they know where to go back in the text when they don’t understand something. *ReQuest* encourages students to self-assess their reading comprehension.” Students proudly showed their foldables—three-dimensional *graphic organizers*—of notes in a cooking class. In a sheltered geometry class, students were *writing to learn* vocabulary by creating their own geometry textbooks, including glossaries. Throughout the school, students refer to information they have recorded in class: “It’s in our Cornell notes,” they say to refer each other to previously practiced material.

The school has also adopted a “Words of the Week” program to focus on academic vocabulary and serve as another test readiness tool. Five words that are related in some way (e.g., they share a root, prefix, or suffix) are highlighted each week at Hoover. They are taught in language arts classes the first day of each week, and all teachers are expected to integrate them into their classes. Incentives for learning the words include small prizes for passing pop quizzes that administrators might pose to students in the halls. Community members get involved, too, as the words are posted on the marquee (usually reserved for sports events in many schools) outside the school for passersby to note.

Literacy Development in Action

The following vignettes illustrate the literacy development strategies in classrooms with adolescent ELLs.

ESL 1-2 Reading Vignette

The ESL 1-2 Reading class is many students’ first exposure to academic vocabulary, reading, and literacy. Most of the 20 students in this small class are ninth-grade-aged, new to the United States, and require considerable guidance and scaffolding from their teacher, Mr. Rudolph. On the walls of the classroom, there are simple posters featuring vocabulary related to fiction (e.g., character, setting, plot) and “big” and “small” genres of fiction. The day’s class agenda is written on the board and details the lesson activities and numeric links to specific California English Language Academy (ELA) standards. Students finish up the vocabulary and reading lesson and begin the daily cloze activity that focuses on the most common sight words in the English language. Today’s words are *might*, *close*, *something*, *seem*, and *next* and the students have to correctly complete five sentences with them. When the students finish their cloze activity and it has been corrected, they choose two nonfiction trade books from the classroom collection to read. Students record the titles in their reading logs, report the titles in a brief one-on-one conversation with Mr. Rudolph, and state which book they preferred and why.

Each student keeps a “Personal Stories” notebook that scaffolds their reading and writing processes. In the beginning of the year, students start by copying simple sentences with personal information into their notebooks from the board. Each sentence is followed by columns stating “Right/Wrong” or “Correct/Incorrect.” They circle the appropriate response according to their own personal situation.

As their literacy skills progress, students are gradually guided to writing paragraphs about themselves, using the model sentences as a basis.

I am a boy.	Correct	Incorrect
I am a girl.	Correct	Incorrect
I live near the school.	Correct	Incorrect
I live far from the school.	Correct	Incorrect

ESL 5-6 Reading Vignette

In a focused reading lesson for advanced ESL students, Ms. Sevenbergen helps to build students' fluency by modeling one literacy strategy: *reading aloud*. The class has been reading and responding to the short story, *What My Father Wore*, which recounts the memories and feelings that a Mexican immigrant to the United States has about his father. This story is featured in a popular book titled, *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul on Tough Stuff* (Canfield, Hansen & Kirberger, 2001), and shares some topical similarities to another story that these students are reading in the ESL 5-6 Writing class they attend together. During the read-aloud, which follows previous individual and shared readings of the story, both teacher and students contribute to *vocabulary development* by stopping to paraphrase or define difficult words, such as "prestigious." After the read-aloud, the class pauses to have a quick discussion on corporal punishment, which is mentioned in the story.

The class then continues with a reading and writing activity that guides them through two of the schoolwide literacy strategies: *questioning* and *writing to learn*. These students' peers in the other section of ESL 5-6 Reading have written 14 reading comprehension questions for their response. Ms. Sevenbergen's students use their knowledge of low-level and high-level question-answer relationships to accomplish the responding task. They use handy, laminated notecards with four types of questions and related examples to identify the types of questions their peers have posed and where they can find the answers to the questions. They also must justify how they identified a particular question as a low- or high-level question. The teacher extensively models this reading, thinking, and writing process on an overhead, then asks students to work on their own or in pairs to complete the activity.

Lower-level questions	<p>"Right there" questions: The answer is 100% in the text. The answer is usually easy to find. The answer usually comes from one sentence of the text.</p>
	<p>"Think and search" questions: The answer is in the text. The answer usually comes from different parts of the text. It may be in a different sentence, a different paragraph, or even a different page. You have to put together information you find in order to answer the question.</p>
Higher-level questions	<p>"Author and me" questions: The answer comes from thinking about what you already know, thinking about what the author said, and thinking about how those two go together.</p>
	<p>"On my own" questions: Everyone who reads the text may have a different answer. Your answer comes from the opinion you have formed after reading the text; it is your own judgment. The answer is <u>not</u> in the text.</p>

The SSR period directly follows this ESL 5-6 Reading class. A different group of students files in and immediately picks up their chosen reading material for the day. This initial rush of activity and subsequent settling down is reflected throughout every classroom and public area of the school for the next 20 minutes. Students are observed intently reading teen magazines, novels, comic books, graphic novels, short stories, newspapers, and internet publications on classroom computers. For many of the students, this is the only time in their entire day where they will have the opportunity to read self-selected material in a quiet and supportive environment.

Sheltered Biology

Students walk into Mr. Bonine's sheltered biology class and start off with a vocabulary activity. Although it is a designated sheltered class, many of the 32 students are not in the language support program—but they get the benefits of extra attention towards language and literacy development. Mr. Bonine passes out “Ecology Vocab Tic-Tac-Toe”—a game card with one vocabulary word boldfaced in each of the nine squares that comprise the familiar playing surface. Next to the chart is a text box featuring nine numbered definitions. The front and back of the sheet are identical and the students proceed to play the game—strategically matching definitions to words—two times. When the activity is completed, students file the sheet away in their notebooks.

Next, Mr. Bonine takes 3 minutes to remind students of requirements for a group research project on biomes, when it is due, and where they can find resources they will need. “And come to the back if you'd like to check out a laptop,” he concludes. Students then begin—moving into their groups, taking books off of shelves, lining up to borrow laptops, or gathering materials to create a poster.

The project directions are concisely listed as steps 1 to 12 on the front of one sheet of paper. Each group chooses to research a biome that interests them. Students use resources available (laptops with wireless connections, textbooks, supplementary texts) to answer eight questions, draw a food chain, and draw a trophic pyramid in their science notebooks. Once the students have recorded this information individually, they create a joint poster that they will present to the class. The posters are to include not only the information researched for individual accountability, but also a food web that synthesizes the group members' individual webs. As students work, Mr. Bonine circulates to check on progress and answer questions.

This lesson features a number of instructional strategies for literacy development. It began with student choice, in terms of group members, research topic, and medium of text (while many students preferred to work with the laptops, others preferred the textbooks). The lesson allowed students to work with technology—helping students to develop their computer-related literacy skills. The laptop use and choice options seemed to promote motivation as more than 90% of the students were highly engaged in the lesson. Also, throughout the project, Mr. Bonine incorporated ways for students to read and write vocabulary in context. In a sense, the food chains and food webs that students were creating

were graphic organizers—ways of showing visually how the information they were reading is related. Finally, and perhaps most important, students spent the majority of the period reading and negotiating the meaning of text in relation to content standards with other students.

Assessment

Although these qualitative observations reveal promising practices, the faculty, administration, and partners at Hoover are more deliberate about how they measure the effects of their training and instruction. Student assessment is an important part of the work at the school. As mentioned before, departments write common course assessments based on state content standards and subsequently conduct item analyses of student results to understand how instruction should be adjusted. This cycle occurs at least twice a year. Thus, the annual staff development meeting at the beginning of each school year that is devoted to an analysis of state standardized test results from the previous year rarely contains surprises for the staff.

Although the school is still far behind the state and district averages in percentage of students passing the standards-based English Language Arts test, it has exceeded its growth targets consistently and has demonstrated the most growth (+136 points on the state Academic Performance Index of Growth [API]) of all San Diego City High Schools since 1999 (Fisher, 2006). The API is California's accountability measure. It includes information such as graduation rate and scores from the state standardized tests. In addition, the Gates-MacGinitie test of vocabulary and comprehension is given two times per year to all students. Reported results for this test include an increase of the schoolwide average from a 5.9-grade reading level in 1999 to an 8.2 level in 2002 (Fisher, Frey, & Williams, 2002).

Recognizing the need for multiple measures to assess the content knowledge of students who are still learning English and building their academic skills, Hoover requires senior portfolios as another form of student assessment. The portfolios consist of student-chosen course projects that highlight the students' careers at Hoover. Teachers explicitly remind students to store their best work throughout their time at Hoover and students participate in a portfolio seminar course in the semester prior to the senior exhibition in order to compile and present their best possible work. Students present the portfolios to community members and faculty in a formal event during the spring of their senior year. The portfolios are evaluated at the event and participation in the showcase is a graduation requirement. Seniors preparing for this important event take pride in the presentation of their cumulative work and look forward to sharing their academic accomplishments with faculty and community members.

Student Support

Hoover has established strong systems of communication about students among teachers, other faculty, administration, parents, and community members. All teachers are asked to take 10 students "under

their wing” and mentor, monitor, and follow up with them as they progress through the school year. For many ELLs, this mentorship is vital to their acclimation to school and life in the United States. Teachers are strongly encouraged to communicate with parents as much as possible, to the point of scheduling random “check-in” phone calls to discuss students’ successes. The home/school connection is also in effect when students are struggling in school: those with three Fs on a quarterly report card have a mandatory meeting with the principal and their parents, and must sign a contract promising to improve. Hoover is working with the elementary and middle school feeder schools to improve communication and better prepare students and parents for the expectations of high school academic life.

English language learners value the knowledge that Hoover teachers have about the students’ backgrounds and needs and appreciate the teachers’ belief in students’ abilities and potential. These students relate to the stories about the immigration experience that many teachers use in their classes. Students learn from teachers and then use independently various academic tools, such as Cornell notes, graphic organizers, and reciprocal teaching. In classes that use rubrics to assess learning, students practice peer coaching and scoring using the class rubric on their draft submissions of projects. They rely on the many opportunities for individual conferencing with teachers, peer tutors, and administrators that take place during and after school. The grant-funded Synergy after-school program pays teachers and community members to stay until 6:00 p.m. and give students tutoring and practice in a variety of academic topics, arts and music, and sports.

Hoover is exploring the development and implementation of small learning communities, which create cohorts of students who take three or more courses together and thus share the same teachers. The first phase of this development is a ninth-grade cohort of students taking Foundations of Democracy (a sheltered class with both mainstream and ESL students), Physics (Hoover’s required ninth-grade science class), and English. This design will slowly spread to include additional classes, eventually resulting in a model whereby groups of teachers all have the same students. Hoover staff believe that this level of collaboration is essential for creating the types of learning environments in which teachers support each other and students do not slip through the cracks.

The presence and partnership of faculty members from the San Diego State University (SDSU) cannot be underestimated. SDSU faculty contribute to the annual professional development plan, demonstrate model lessons, teach high school courses, observe teachers, find funding, and disseminate information to the field about the successes of the school’s instructional practices and professional development structures. Students observe the clear proximity and relationship between their high school and SDSU and are continually reminded of what their culminating goals are, whether high school graduation or even university education. Field trips to local universities, guest speakers, mentoring from university faculty, and a special admissions program with SDSU help students set and meet academic and career goals that many of their peers in neighboring schools would never dream of.

Challenges

As students, faculty, and administrators at Hoover continue to work for success, they face some challenges. Many of the interventions reported here depend in some part on funding from outside sources. Such funding is usually not guaranteed over the long term, so the pursuit of this significant funding will remain a challenge. In addition, although Hoover's growth scores are positive, the absolute scores on the state standardized tests fall short of district averages, resulting in a stigma that Hoover community members will continue to fight.

In addition, faculty must struggle with challenges that most urban, impoverished school districts face. Student mobility is an issue, as is trying to meet the needs of students who do not know what their futures will be. Faculty members try to help students avoid teenage pregnancy, stay healthy, and take responsibility for themselves by getting to know the students well, personalizing their classes, and incorporating what they know about their students' backgrounds into their lessons.

What is particularly striking about the Hoover site has been its long-term commitment to this educational intervention. Far too often schools chase the flavor of the month or year when it comes to professional development topics or instructional techniques. Teachers are exposed to new ways of organizing instruction but before they have a chance to learn the intervention well, let alone master it, the school moves on to the next "magic bullet." Hoover's resolve to stick with this approach and to deepen the teachers' knowledge of literacy instruction is exceptional. All in all, students, faculty, and administrators at Hoover have reason to be proud of the work they are doing and their ability to demonstrate success across the student body in a variety of ways.

Union City School District Union City, New Jersey

Context

Union City school district is located across the Hudson River from New York City. Much of the area is on a bluff with views of the Manhattan skyline. The area is a traditional immigration site with a large, working class population. Most of the residents are Spanish-speaking immigrants from the Caribbean and Central America. U.S. Census data reported about 70,000 residents living in the 1.4 square miles of Union City in 2000. School officials estimate the number is now closer to 100,000.

In the 2004–05 school year, this urban district served more than 12,000 students in prekindergarten through 12th-grade programs. Approximately 92% of the students were Latino and 75% of them did not speak English at home. Forty-two percent of them were English language learners and about 40% were enrolled in the district's transitional bilingual/ESL program. Fifteen percent of the students were new immigrants. Close to 90% of the ELLs were native Spanish speakers. Other native languages included Gujarati, Russian, Arabic, Italian, and Mandarin.

Union City is an area of high poverty. More than 90% of all the district's students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch in 2004–05. Statewide, the average was 25%. This is significant because, as discussed below, New Jersey provides additional funding to low-income districts. It was also a federal Title I district. Besides serving large numbers of students of poverty and limited English proficiency, the district also had significant student mobility with rates of movement in or out of the schools close to 20%.

This profile focuses on the Union City school district, which has made a commitment to academic literacy development for all its students. As a district profile, the impact of state and local policy decisions is very informative. The district perspective offers a view of vertical articulation as well, with an examination of a prekindergarten through 12th-grade plan to move students up through the grades with eased transitions and monitoring of low achievers across school levels.

State Policies

New Jersey has an array of fiscal and educational policies that affect the programming in Union City schools. Besides local property tax and state per-pupil monies, one major revenue source for Union City is the funding that is allocated as a result of the *Abbott v. Burke* court decision. This decision requires the state to reallocate educational funds according to the poverty levels of the districts and student performance in the schools. Union City is one of the poorest districts in the state and thus receives more state Abbott funds than many other districts. New Jersey, like other states, also has categorical aid money for districts serving ELLs. New Jersey provided approximately \$1,150 per ELL pupil in 2005 without stipulating a particular educational program model.

The flexibility that New Jersey allows for educational programming plays an important role when serving ELLs. School districts in New Jersey have the option of offering a bilingual program, an ESL program, or both for these students. Many New Jersey districts offer bilingual elementary school programs and some extend the bilingual program into middle school. Few, however, have a bilingual program at the high school level. Union City is one of these few. Its transitional bilingual/ESL program is available to students through grade 12. The bilingual program option allows adolescent ELLs to receive core credits for high school bilingual courses that apply to graduation requirements. Moreover, in New Jersey, students may receive up to four core language arts literacy credits for ESL courses. This policy was put in place because the state ESL standards are aligned to the state language arts literacy standards.

The state Department of Education in New Jersey encourages districts to assess students' English and native language literacy levels and content knowledge when they enroll in school. In 2006, New Jersey began using the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) test (WIDA, 2004) for measuring English language development. This test focuses on both social and academic English skills and is used by 14 other states as

well. The placement test for ACCESS for ELLs can help districts determine student facility with the language of mathematics, science, and social studies, for example. For adolescent ELLs, this information should prove particularly beneficial given the more sophisticated language demands of their content classes than those in the primary grades. In Abbott districts, Spanish-speaking ELLs are assessed in reading and math in Spanish for enrollment and placement in the bilingual program in grades kindergarten through eighth grade. One commonly used assessment for this process is the Spanish Terra Nova. New Jersey also requires districts to give a home language survey to all new entrants.

Another state policy concerns second language learning. The world language requirement obliges districts to provide 90 minutes per week of world language instruction to students. It can be used to offer literacy development in native language for non-native English-speaking students. Native language literacy classes are most often taught in Spanish, but across the state, classes in Arabic, Polish, and other languages also occur.

New Jersey has a high school graduation policy that allows ELLs to remain in school for 6 years. Students may stay in school until they are 21, or for special populations, until they are 23. This policy is very helpful for new adolescent entrants with no or low English proficiency who need additional time to meet all high school requirements and acquire academic English. (Unfortunately, however, NCLB accountability measures criticize schools that have students who take longer than 4 years to graduate.)

New Jersey has a high school exit exam all students should pass before graduation, known as the HSPA (High School Proficiency Assessment). It assesses reading and mathematics, and students take it in the spring of their 11th-grade year. If they fail one or both subjects, they may take the failed portion(s) again the following fall. The State Department of New Jersey has recognized, however, that some students are less able to demonstrate their knowledge on a standardized assessment such as the HSPA. Therefore, New Jersey has had an alternate assessment option, the Special Review Assessment, that some students may participate in after failing the HSPA twice.

Local District Policies

Over the past 15 years, the Union City school district has strengthened its educational program for all students, including ELLs. In 1989, the district was under a state mandate to reform its educational services within 5 years due to repeated poor performance on state assessments. Drawing from best practices and state flexibility, a reform committee composed of 11 teachers and three administrators set forth a plan to promote academic literacy for all students. Two beliefs were articulated: “Every student is college-bound” and “No student is unteachable.” This plan involved five key areas of reform—professional development, curriculum, technology, leadership, and community. From 1990 to 1995, the plan was implemented incrementally, first in grades kindergarten through three, then grades four through six, middle school, and finally high school. These reform efforts paid off and by the late 1990s Union City was one of the top-performing urban districts in New Jersey.

Professional development for teachers and administrators focused on literacy training and effective instructional and assessment strategies for linguistically and culturally diverse students. The district paid for the teaching staff to obtain ESL or bilingual certification and by the end of this intensive reform period, 100% of the teachers had done so or were in the process of completing such certification. With grants from Bell Atlantic and the National Science Foundation, the district integrated technology in the classrooms with teacher training, curriculum development, and new equipment. Each classroom was wired. In 1997, the district implemented the Road to College program to promote student aspiration for college, provide awareness of the college application process, visit college campuses, and prepare students for career choices. Many of the students in Union City schools came from households where parents had not gone to college.

The district has maintained many of the reforms set in place in the early 1990s and has added additional practices to serve the student population. Many of the current local policies have a positive impact on the adolescent ELLs. These include policies in the following areas:

- Educational programs for adolescent ELLs
- Extended time for learning and student supports
- Transitions
- Teacher certification
- Professional development
- Targeted funding
- Data analysis

Educational Programs for Adolescent ELLs

Union City's philosophy is based on research that first language literacy and content knowledge transfer to second language literacy and content knowledge, and on practical experience that newly-arrived high school students will not have much time to learn English and the academic subjects taught through English in 4 years. So, Union City middle and high schools offer bilingual content classes to the students while they are learning English. In this way, the students do not lose time and can study the courses and receive core credit necessary for graduation. Biliteracy and multicultural understanding are goals of the program along with academic achievement.

Union City has an articulated program of services for ELLs. Student achievement data (discussed later) reveal that investments in the early grades are paying off when students reach middle and high school. However, as is the case everywhere, beginning level ESL students can enter school at any grade, so not all of the ELLs in Union City have had schooling in the district's elementary or middle schools.

In the elementary program, students are designated as bilingual or advanced bilingual students based on their enrollment assessment and subsequent yearly assessments. Bilingual students have

self-contained, grade-level bilingual classes. Advanced bilingual students are in the regular grade-level classes but co-teaching occurs during the 3-period communications block that all kindergarten through eighth-grade schools incorporate to develop literacy. An ESL or bilingual certified teacher joins the classroom teacher to support the students. (Union City also has a kindergarten through eighth-grade dual-language program in one of its schools.)

The secondary program offers five levels of ESL for middle and high school students: ESL reading and writing for new entrants, beginners, intermediate, advanced, and ESL C, which prepares students for the transition to mainstream language arts classes. As noted, in New Jersey, the ESL courses at high school can receive up to four core credits for language arts because the state ESL language and literacy standards are aligned to the state language arts standards. Over 20 bilingual content courses are in the program of studies at the high school, such as bilingual earth science, biology, chemistry, and physics; bilingual algebra, geometry, and HSPA math skills 1, 2, and 3; U.S. History 1 and 2 and world history, and bilingual health and driver's education. The middle schools also offer the bilingual program with self-contained ESL and content-area classes for bilingual students and ESL and sheltered classes for advanced bilingual students. For some students with weak math skills, paired periods may be built into their schedules, one being the regular grade-level math and the other, a math support class.

As with the younger learners, secondary ELLs are designated as bilingual or advanced bilingual students based on their initial assessment upon enrollment and subsequent yearly assessments. Bilingual students take the bilingual content classes appropriate to their grade level and have 2 periods of intensive ESL each day. Those at the beginning level of English proficiency also have 1 period of Spanish. For intermediate level students, the ESL instruction is content-based. Advanced bilingual students continue to take ESL if needed and take sheltered content or mainstream classes.

Several specialized programs are also offered to adolescent ELLs who are at risk of educational failure. The Alternative Education program for older, at-risk ELLs is a unique program at José Martí Middle School, for example. Students who are older than the average eighth grader may be enrolled in this accelerated academic program, which has a seventh- through eighth-grade focus. Most are able to go on to high school after 1 year. As part of this program, students have work study within the building. For 1 period, they work with mentors (non-teachers) doing tasks such as helping in the library or main office. Most of the students in this program have moved up from the elementary schools in the district and enrolled in summer school beforehand. Once a week, these students meet with a social worker, and once a month their parents do too.

A Port-of-Entry (POE) program is available for new entrants who have gaps in their schooling, low literacy in their native language and in English, and are overage (16- or 17-year-old ninth graders). In the 2005–06 school year, there were 40 to 45 students in the ninth grade POE. The half-day program is designed for ninth graders and classes take place at the Career Academy, an off-site satellite

of Emerson High School. Students take 2 periods of intensive ESL, 1 period of bilingual mathematics (algebra), and 1 period of career exploration. These older learners are motivated by the career classes, which include fashion design, computer repair, retail sales, hospitality, criminal justice, and computer networking. When they return to Emerson High for the afternoon session, they take a bilingual world history class, Spanish for native speakers, and physical education. Students are assessed every 6 to 8 weeks to ensure they are meeting curricular objectives. Class size is kept under 20 students. Most students remain in POE for 1 year.

Newly enrolled 10th graders who score low on the basic skills placement tests (English language, native-language literacy, mathematics as tested in native language) are placed in a New Entrant ESL class (a double period each day) with the same ESL curriculum as the ninth-grade POE students. However, these 10th graders have the content-area bilingual classes with support given during their lunch or free periods or in the after-school extended day program.

Extended Time for Learning and Other Student Supports

Each school in Union City has a school improvement coordinator and a Support Services Task Force. It is their job to monitor the students' academic and social development in the schools, examine student performance data, recommend options such as tutoring or special test preparation classes to students at risk of failure, and work with guidance counselors on course scheduling.

Union City has recognized the importance of extending time for learning for students who are struggling with literacy or, in the case of recent ELL arrivals, need more time to learn English and the content subjects. It accomplishes this extra time in a variety of ways. There are before- and after-school sessions at the high schools, after-school programs at the elementary and middle schools, Saturday programs for all grade levels, and summer programs. The following describe a sample of the programs that adolescent ELLs can participate in.

- The district received a 5-year 21st-Century Community Learning Centers grant for upper elementary and middle school Saturday programs that target mathematics and language arts. Several elementary schools and José Martí Middle School participate in this. José Martí also has extended day reading and writing classes for the students and the school has established a lunchtime intervention program as well. Students with low test scores and teacher recommendations attend the program twice a week to focus on reading and writing. For eighth graders, the focus is on GEPA preparation (the New Jersey standardized Grade Eight Performance Assessment in mathematics, language arts, and science) and the course is taught by the school improvement coordinator.
- Specialized tutoring opportunities are available for students at the high school. For example, each day a resource room is open for tutoring and students may stop in during free periods. In addition, students are recommended for tutoring according to the data from assessments that are given every 6 weeks. After school, there are HSPA and ESL tutoring every Tuesday and Thursday. The high school also offers extended day programs before school begins. These programs focus on mathematics and language arts.

- If bilingual students have not passed the HSPA in the spring of 11th grade, they participate in an intensive summer program to prepare them for the following fall administration. These summer classes are customized to their needs based on data derived from scores on the HSPA. Until the students pass the HSPA or go through the SRA process, they are retained as 11th graders.

Transitions

The Union City school system has put structures in place to help students make transitions out of the bilingual program, across school levels, and beyond secondary school. The following are some examples of these practices.

- At the elementary level for grades two through five, struggling readers have a targeted intervention known as Essentials of Literacy in which they work on phonics, fluency, comprehension, guided reading, and vocabulary. Students are pulled from their regular classrooms each day (except during reading) but at varied times, so they do not consistently miss the same subject. Support teachers also work with the curricula in the classrooms with struggling students in small groups or one-on-one.
- The district makes a concerted effort to manage the transition of eighth graders into high school. For bilingual and monolingual students with low GEPA scores, counselors schedule paired classes of key subjects. For example, a student may have an English language arts class and an English for Today class or algebra and math skills. These support classes help students develop the skills for the paired core class.
- When students make the transition out of the ninth-grade POE program, they are monitored by the ESL department in Emerson High School as well as the school improvement coordinator. There is a support service task force that considers options for students who are struggling. Support teachers are available to help out in classrooms and students are encouraged to attend extended day programs for tutoring.
- Transitions to careers after high school take place in several programs as well. There is a Career to Business program at the high schools in which advanced bilingual students may participate. This offers on-the-job training. Cingular Wireless is one company involved. It trains students in the summer and they work for the company after school during the year. The Career Academy also promotes postsecondary skills. Students in the full program (not the POE students who take only one course) complete a course of study in a particular career and have access to postsecondary training through agreements that the Union City Board of Education has established with certain businesses.
- The Road to College program is one support for students interested in schooling beyond high school. Another program is the New Jersey Institute of Technology Early College program. This is an intensive summer program to prepare Union City students for mathematics, science, technology, and engineering careers. Union City pays for scholarships and provides transportation. Advanced bilingual students are eligible to participate and do so.

Teacher Certification

Almost all of the teachers in Union City schools are highly qualified according to state definitions in accordance with NCLB regulations. In 2004–05, only 1% of teachers were on emergency or conditional certificates in the district; none were at Emerson High, which has the highest percentage of high school ELLs. All bilingual content-area instructors are dual certified in their content area and in bilingual education. Union City’s policy is for all high school math, science, and language arts teachers to obtain ESL or bilingual certification within 3 years of employment. Certification requirements for kindergarten through eighth-grade teachers depend on the need at the school and the teaching assignment. The district pays 100% of the costs for the certification coursework at New Jersey City University or 80% of the costs for a masters degree. The district is concerned, however, with retaining teachers after they have received certification so the students benefit from the district’s investment.

Professional Development

Professional development continues to be an important tool for promoting academic literacy in Union City schools. In New Jersey, all teachers must participate in at least 100 hours of professional development (through their school district and/or on their own with approved programs) to maintain their teaching license. Union City encourages staff development that focuses on literacy and has held specific sessions on literacy for ELLs. ESL and POE teachers have 5 half-days of professional development each year. The topic for each year’s series is determined the summer prior to the start of the year. Recent topics included content-area instruction, learning strategies, and assessment. Additionally, the district runs “Super Saturday” professional development institutes for the teachers.

Professional development takes place at the school level as well. Schools design collaborative planning periods for the teachers by grade level at the elementary schools or by content area in middle and high schools. In-class coaching takes place occasionally to help content teachers work successfully with bilingual and special education students. Moreover, Union City has a Professor in Residence from nearby New Jersey City University. This ESL/bilingual education professor comes to the district twice per week and does model teaching in classrooms and plans lessons with teachers. The school improvement coordinator also mentors new staff and provides some model teaching in their classes, and new teachers can observe master teachers on an informal basis.

Targeted Fiscal Resources

Much of the innovative programming and creation of student support systems have been made possible through strategic use of funding. The district uses its Abbott funds across the prekindergarten through 12th-grade spectrum for extra staff, materials, and technology. The district combines some of their federal Title I and Title III funds to maintain the transitional bilingual/ESL program. Union City has also been successful in obtaining additional grants from federal, state, and private philanthropic

sources. They have Reading First monies in the elementary schools, a 21st Century Learning Centers grant for upper elementary and middle school Saturday programs that target mathematics and language arts, and a Family Friendly extended-day program. The district had a Title VII dual-language grant for 5 years; and after it ended, the Board of Education continued to support the program. The district currently has a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation grant to implement small learning communities in the middle and high schools.

The district also uses some of its funds to control class size in order to promote better learning environments. Class size is lower for the ESL classes. In the ninth-grade POE class, the average is 15 students per class. In ESL classes, the range is 15 to 20 students. Content-area classes for bilingual students have 25 to 30 students. In the kindergarten through eighth-grade self-contained bilingual and sheltered classes, the range is 15 to 22 students.

The district has hired a parent liaison and social workers for each school. These staff members help parents understand school policies and access social services in the community.

Data Analysis and Tracking

Since the major reform effort that began in 1989, Union City has collected, analyzed, and tracked student data in order to make informed decisions about programs, resources, and staffing. The reform efforts have led to student achievement over time.

From the 1998–99 school year until 2002–03, the number of fourth graders who met state standards on the New Jersey state language arts literacy test rose from 45% to 86%. Ninety percent of the district's eighth graders reached the proficient or advanced proficient level on the state language art literacy test in 2002–03. Progress was being sustained as students moved from elementary school into middle school. However, as is occurring elsewhere in the country, less success has occurred in high school. Eleventh graders did not perform as well as the younger students. For example, less than half of them scored at or above the proficient level on the 2002–03 HSPA mathematics exam.

The district's website reports more progress in 2004. "Students met or exceeded virtually every state requirement, fourth graders placing in top three urban districts for state, eighth graders exceeding all statewide averages, and 11th graders increasing test scores by 20 percentage points over previous year."

When compared to similar districts in New Jersey, Union City adolescent ELLs are performing better. The following data from José Martí Middle School and Emerson High School show the percentage of students at or above the proficient level on the GEPA or HSPA in four categories: the schoolwide percentage, the school's LEP student percentage, the state LEP percentage, and the average percentage of LEP students in districts with similar socioeconomic status.

José Martí Grade Eight Performance Assessment Results for 2004–05				
	School	Limited English Proficient (LEP)	State LEP	DFG*LEP
Language Arts Literacy	63%	28%	20%	11%
Mathematics	61%	28%	24%	14%
Science	71%	46%	27%	18%

* DFG is the measure of poverty used in New Jersey. The percentage in this column refers to districts with similar levels of poverty.

Although the LEP students in José Martí did not perform as well as the student body overall in the three GEPA subjects, they did perform better than LEP students across the state and much better than LEP students in districts at matching levels of poverty.

The story was similar at Emerson High School.

Emerson High School Proficiency Assessment Results for 2004–05				
	School	Limited English Proficient (LEP)	State LEP	DFG*LEP
Language Arts Literacy	68%	33%	23%	16%
Mathematics	54%	27%	35%	25%

* As noted earlier, DFG is the measure of poverty used in New Jersey. The percentage in this column refers to districts with similar levels of poverty.

Emerson High had 68% of its total student population reach proficient or advanced status on the HSPA language arts literacy assessment in 2004–05; but only 33% of the LEP students did so. For mathematics, the results were 54% and 27%, respectively. However, Emerson's results in both HSPA subjects were better than the statewide LEP average and the average among LEP students in districts with similar socioeconomic status.

In terms of attendance, Union City schools are doing well. The statewide average attendance rate in 2004–05 was 94% and this included the rural, suburban, and urban schools. The average attendance rate for the district was 95% in 2004–05; for José Martí, it was 96%; and for Emerson High, 94%. District staff reported that bilingual students tend to have better overall attendance records at the high schools than the monolingual students.

To help make more informed decisions and track student progress, Union City makes sure that the POE students as well as the bilingual and ESL students are specifically identified in the district's accountability system so their progress after exiting the programs can be monitored. Teachers have access to online data about the students. In this way all teachers are aware of the students' backgrounds, LEP/ESL/bilingual status, participation in special programs (e.g., POE), and grades and attendance records.

The district reports that on average ELLs who enter the transitional bilingual/ESL program in early elementary grades exit the program in 3 to 4 years. Students who enter at fourth grade or later need about 5 years to exit. Multiple measures are used to determine whether the students are ready to exit: scores on the English language development test, scores on the Terra Nova or New Jersey standardized tests, teacher recommendation, and whether or not students are reading on grade level. Students are monitored for 2 years after they have exited the program.

The POE students are the most challenging group. As is the case in many schools and districts around the United States, newly arrived ninth graders with interrupted schooling backgrounds, weak literacy skills in the native language and English, and limited content-area knowledge have a very high risk of dropping out. Four years is not long enough for most students to learn academic literacy in English and pass the content courses and high school exit exam. New Jersey's policy that supports ELLs staying in high school for up to 6 years is one promising practice, but not all of the students want to stay that long. Union City staff reported that for the past 2 years 46% to 49% of its POE students graduated from high school in Union City in 4 years. (This number does not include students who may have left the district and enrolled in another high school.) Some of the POE students remain for a fifth high school year in Union City but the number is small. The graduation rate for all of Emerson High school students is lower than the state average: 80% compared to 91%.

Conclusion

This profile opens a window on the promising efforts of Union City schools to serve adolescent ELLs and promote their academic literacy development. The district has seen some significant growth in overall student performance and continues to improve services for ELLs. Two schools with high numbers of ELLs have been honored in recent years. José Martí Middle School was a Governor's School of Excellence awardee and Hudson Elementary School was a Title I Distinguished Scholar's School.

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