Secondary School Courses Designed to Address The Language Needs and Academic Gaps of Long Term English Learners

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CaliforniansTogether
Championing the Success of English Learners

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1 INTRODUCTION

The majority of English Learners in California's secondary grades (6–12) are Long Term English Learners — in U.S. schools for more than six years. These students are stuck in progressing towards the English proficiency that they need for academic success, and are struggling academically due to a lack of skills and accrued gaps in exposure to academic content. In the past several years, awareness and a sense of urgency about addressing the needs of this struggling group of students has been growing. The release in 2010 of *Reparable Harm*, a policy and research report, as well as trainings and conferences statewide called attention to Long Term English Learners' unique needs and spawned an effort in middle and high schools to create supports, pathways, and courses to meet those needs.

Because most Long Term English Learners have reached a basic level of oral fluency in English that is sufficient for informal and social communication, many people do not recognize that these students still need support for learning English. Yet the grasp of academic English conventions, discourse formats, language functions, grammar and vocabulary are weak — and both comprehension and participation are limited. Furthermore, because they have been in our schools for many years, most of these students have moved beyond the instructional and curriculum sequence designed for newcomer English Learners. The Long Term English Learners are placed instead into mainstream regular classrooms, without supports either to continue developing English or accessing grade-level academic content that requires English proficiency to comprehend. After years of struggling in school, unable to adequately comprehend curricula taught in a language they have not yet mastered, the students face academic gaps. The accumulated impact of many years of these patterns is typically students who are non-participants, silent, passive, skilled at remaining under the radar, and not being called upon. Discouraged learners who have lost confidence that they can succeed in school, they neither ask questions nor ask for help. Because their needs are not recognized, they become simply "failing students" and end up with a schedule of intervention and support classes designed for native English-speaking struggling readers.

As educators throughout the state have looked at their English Learner data, the full magnitude of the challenge has become clear, energizing an effort to develop programs to re-engage and motivate Long Term English Learners and address their language and academic gaps. *Reparable Harm* proposed recommendations regarding Long Term English Learners: adopt a standard definition for them, develop mechanisms to monitor students at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners, place them in clusters within rigorous mainstream academic classes with teachers who have skills in differentiation to meet their needs, and create one specific dedicated class designed explicitly for them to address the language gaps that impede academic success. This dedicated Long Term English Learner course is language development and academic language support. It is not meant as

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an intervention class. Implementing responses to these students and the notion of specific courses to meet their needs are new endeavors for the field of English Learner education.

However, the response to the call for action was immediate. At least 38 districts are known by this author to have created the recommended dedicated course for Long Term English Learners to address the language and academic gaps that impede their success in school. The districts have sought to more intentionally address the students' needs within English language development (ELD) classes, core English-language arts, or new English support classes. Some of these classes are called "Academic Language Development" to make clear the focus on the language needed for engagement in academic work. In most cases, the curriculum, approach, and new courses have been "home grown" – designed and piloted by teachers and district working groups, drawing upon their best understanding of students needs and the available core and supplementary materials.

Those educators who took on the task of designing and piloting these courses have done so with limited guidance and no established curriculum. They have a deep commitment to their students. They have worked extraordinarily hard, demonstrating creativity and a will to succeed –without mandates, resources, or external support during a time of harrowing budget crises. The educators have faced challenges and learned important lessons as they have forged the new territory. Because there is an increasing groundswell of interest in addressing the challenge of Long Term English Learners, it is important to learn from the work being piloted throughout the state.

In June of 2012, Californians Together and the California Comprehensive Assistance Center at WestEd convened a group of these educators. From throughout the state, 38 administrators and teachers representing 24 school districts participated in the "Culling the Knowledge: Courses for Long Term English Learners" forum. The purpose was to articulate the collective emerging knowledge base about how to design and implement effective courses that meet Long Term English Learners' needs, and to use the lessons learned as guidance for the field. This report shares those lessons.

(Endnotes)

[1] Olsen, Laurie. *Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of Educational Opportunity for California's Long Term English Learners*. A Californians Together Research and Policy Publication. Californians Together: Long Beach. 2010

2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE COURSES

The journey began, in all cases, with examining data about Long Term English Learners. Simply identifying the number of these students in a school and district created a sense of urgency. Looking deeper at the data revealed the specific needs and academic/linguistic deficits that had to be addressed. In some cases, a district or site administrator determined a class was needed and then assigned a teacher to teach the class — leaving it largely to the teacher to determine the content and curriculum. But in most cases, the process involved establishing a district committee or working group to develop a plan and design appropriate classes accordingly. However, where and how the courses fit into the overall schedule and curriculum scheme differ. For some, the "bucket" is an English Language Development (ELD) class redefined for this group, or an English support class that now is specifically designated for Long Term English Learners. In some cases, a new course description is written and approved – an "Academic Language" course. For still others, an existing course title/code is used that fits as the basic structure for the reworked content. Thus, while the content across the piloted courses is quite similar, what students get "credit" for and teacher specifications differ.

Four short case studies illustrate the different approaches:

TRACY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Several years ago, a Tracy Unified School District administrator responded to a research request from Californians Together for data on the number of Long Term English Learners in the district. When the resultant *Reparable Harm* report was released, representatives from the district ELD Steering Committee (middle school and high school teachers and the Director of Accountability and Continuous Improvement) attended a workshop on the report and reviewed their own data. Looking at the data was revealing. This was the first time the district had looked at English learner data in terms of the number of years students had been in their schools, and they discovered that 54 percent of their English Learners in grades 6- 12 were Long Term English Learners. The numbers were surprising, and, the report's findings resonated deeply.

Determined to do something for its students, the team visited Modesto City Schools, which was featured in the report. Then the committee worked to design and pilot its own programmatic response to the issue. The Academic Language and Support program, called "ALAS," started with a pilot at two K-8 schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The ALAS program's purpose is "to address the needs of our Long Term English Learners students and create English proficient students who are prepared for academic success." A major linchpin of the pilot is a course —*not* a reading intervention course, but rather a support class meant to frontload for the core English classes and support other academic classes. The objectives are: providing instruction to develop academic English that supports students in all academic subjects; providing instruction to help students develop study skills; supporting English Learners for success in mainstream English class (Holt curriculum); and developing connections with students, parents, and families.

Designed for grades 9 and 10 in high school, and the middle school grades, Long Term English Learners are placed in a regular English class and the additional ALAS class as an elective. The ALAS class is, when possible, taught by the same teacher the students have for their regular core English class. One of the early findings from the Tracy ALAS effort is that staffing the class in this way strengthens the ability to tailor teaching to the students' struggles within their regular English class. This staffing has, however, also proved to be a challenge with regards to the master schedule. Here, district commitment to the pilot effort was essential, working with counselors to understand the purpose of the course and why the staffing approach is so important. Once teachers were selected for the classes, they were immersed in the summer before implementation in professional development related to key components of the class. For the writing emphasis, they received professional development in the Write Institute genre-specific units on persuasive, summary and response to literature. AVID strategies of note taking and critical reading strategies were included.

The initial course was viewed as a work in progress. Though the developers knew from the beginning that academic language needed to be a key focus, they were not sure what materials to use. They reviewed three programs and selected Scholastic's *English 3D*. The district investment in professional development was deep. Three days in summer prior to implementation (which also included clarity on the purpose and objectives of the courses and approaches to collaborative planning), and six days during the school year. District willingness to purchase materials was also crucial. Now, entering the second year with promising results, the district plans to expand ALAS to its other two high schools, and it will continue its investment in professional development, collaboration, and sharing.

ARROYO VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL, SAN BERNARDINO

Arroyo Valley High School in San Bernardino took a school wide approach to addressing the underperforming subgroup of English Learners. More than a quarter of the school's almost entirely Hispanic population were English Learners — and those were almost all Long Term English Learners. To address the needs through a course made less sense than approaching the needs throughout the curriculum. The school already had functioning Professional Learning Communities for grade-level teacher teams, but after failing to meet achievement and improvement targets for English Learners, the school decided to focus the Professional Learning Communities specifically on Long Term English Learners. The goal was for all teachers to become language and literacy teachers in and through their subject areas.

Professional development became essential to prepare teachers to play these roles, and each department took on a specific focus area of language development. Social science/social studies focused on reading and writing compound/complex sentences. The Math department focused on the language of sequencing. Science emphasized compare and contrast. Physical Education incorporated journal writing on healthy and non-healthy habits. Art became the venue for evaluative and descriptive writing. After-school tutoring, Spanish for Native Speakers through Advanced Placement levels, and role-model programs were also part of the overall plan.

All English and ELD classes incorporated silent and sustained reading, recognizing that reading enhances spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and writing skills, and that making students into readers gives them a lifelong gift. The choice of novels was deemed particularly essential to engage and inspire students to read through high-interest, relevant reading material. A collection of books and a reading list were provided, but students were invited to choose books that interested them, and they were expected to read an hour every night of the school year, including weekends and holidays. They were required to bring to class daily journals reflecting on what they read. In the journals, students predicted what would happen next, made personal connections to the reading, recorded questions, evaluated the book, and were invited to visualize what they read. Students signed reading contracts agreeing to these requirements and maintained a log of hours and books they read. The use of journal writing and responses to literature became the heart of the English/ELD classes. Across the school day, Long Term English Learners received language and academic literacy development. And, through their English and ELD classes, students who were never readers became readers.

ANAHEIM UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

When Anaheim Union High School District initially looked at its Long Term English Learner data, it found that consistently this group was at the bottom of the D and F grade lists in core classes and

scored significantly lower on quarterly district benchmarks. For the district administrators who delved deeper into the issue, it was clear that the intensive reading support classes were not meeting the students' needs and that English Learners were not receiving sufficient support in their academic classes. In addition to investing in multi-year professional development for all content teachers in incorporating language objectives across the curriculum, they determined that they needed a more intentional focus for Long Term English Learners within the ELD IV class in the senior high schools and the creation of an English Learner Mainstream Language Support class for junior high schools. These classes address the need to develop strong writing and speaking skills in academic language. The students targeted were seventh through twelfth grade English Learners who were in U.S. schools at least six years, exiting the existing ELD program at an Intermediate CELDT level (or below) for more than a year, and two years at mid-basic or below on California Standards Tests. Over 1200 students met these criteria; however, due to master scheduling and staffing constraints, only a few hundred students were targeted and enrolled in these courses. The pilot of the new courses placed students concurrently in a regular grade-level English class. Four middle schools and six high schools piloted the courses, serving 341 students in fall 2011.

Twelve teachers, working with the district's English Learner Curriculum Specialist, began their planning by focusing on key standards in English-language arts and reviewing the students' CELDT data. The middle school course focused on the academic language and skills involved in a different literature/writing genre each quarter: narrative, response to literature, persuasive writing, and research. The high school ELD IV class similarly focused on academic language and skills involved in literature/writing genres: biographical narrative, non-fiction expository writing and PowerPoint presentation, non-fiction persuasive writing, and drama and poetry creative writing. For materials, the planning group looked to the core Holt program that the district had already purchased, and Hampton-Brown's *Edge* (ELD) curriculum for high school. The new Scholastic English 3D curriculum was piloted the last two months at two middle schools and two high schools. The dedication of a full-time English Learner Curriculum Specialist to provide support to the pilot schools was crucial. She trained all teachers on the curriculum and assessments, personally visited each classroom, and then used those observations to develop the agenda for collaboration meetings with teachers. The observations became a way to monitor whether the teacher had clear language objectives, and whether students were actively talking and engaged. She also ensured that teachers had the materials needed to support the instructional approach. Throughout the year, the Curriculum Specialist facilitated Professional Learning Community meetings, bringing together the pilot course teachers to share experiences, look at student data, and problem solve.

One of the early challenges that the teachers identified was that students were resistant to being in the class. As a result, the teachers added a component to explain to students why they were in the class, the trajectory towards English proficiency, where they were stuck on CELDT, and how the lack of specific English skills was holding them back from academic success. One-on-one conferencing with students became part of the course. Initially, misplacement of students was a problem. Counselors, administrators, and teachers did not adequately understand what the course was for and how it differed from the other support courses in which English learners were traditionally placed. So the district instituted a spiral review of the placement criteria and monitored who was placed in the class. The district is already seeing improved results on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), higher passage rates for Long Term English Learners on the California High School Equivalence Exam, and a

level of student engagement teachers had not seen before.

VENTURA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Ventura Unified School District (VUSD) embarked on an extensive effort to restructure its services to increase the number of Long Term English Learners who become reclassified as Fluent English Proficient. Although this effort is taking place at all grade spans, the starting place has been the high school-level focus on the 79 percent of English Learners who were Long Term English Learners. The district also serves over 900 Reclassified Fluent English Proficient students at the secondary level. Reviewing the data, talking with teachers, and conducting surveys and focus groups with the Long Term English Learners helped the district redesign the program. Among aspects of the action plan, the approach includes a focused series of ELD classes designed to move students quickly from one level to the next; English courses for Long Term English Learners that meet college entrance requirements; careful placement based on multiple criteria (including CELDT level and history of progress, reading fluency, CST, grades, benchmark assessments, and number of years an English Learner has been in U.S. schools); progress monitoring assessments that provide students feedback at regular intervals; a team approach to professional development; annual motivational conversations ("pep talks") with Long Term English Learners; and innovative Spanish courses that prepare students for bilingual careers.

The Level IV ELD class for Long Term English Learners meets the California State University/ University of California requirements for one year of English and is the transition into regular English classes. VUSD adopted Hampton Brown's *Edge* program as the standards-based ELD curriculum, and incorporates the WRITE Institute's genre-focused units. In the schools where the numbers are sufficient and the student needs warrant it, Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) English courses are a placement option. These courses are planned around both the grade-level English standards and incorporate a focus on key ELD standards needed for the Long Term English Learners. Having an articulated and coherent pathway, with clear criteria and mechanisms to move students along in an accelerated way has been essential to the VUSD program's success.

Equally essential to effective implementation has been the investment in professional development. English, math, social science and science teachers; administrators; and counselors together engage in a series of meetings focusing on reading research and learning best instructional practices. Student "fish bowls" bring student voice to these meetings. Participating teachers receive a document camera and training to enhance their EL instruction. Student achievement results show a very positive impact from these efforts. Reclassification rates at the pilot schools have increased dramatically (from 14% to 20.9% at one pilot high school) and greatly exceed the district average, and the number of English Learners attaining proficiency on the English Language Arts portion of the California Standards Test (CST) has also increased (from 8.7% to 25% at one pilot high school, and from 11.3% to 17.5% at another).

3 THE LONG TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS—SPECIFIC COURSE DESCRIPTION

While the Long Term English Learner courses being piloted throughout the state differ in many ways, they share some basic components. When teachers and district administrators involved in designing the classes came together in Oakland on June 22, they engaged in a series of dialogues and protocols to share their work and lessons learned. A first task was to describe the elements of the dedicated Long Term English Learners courses. They identified a set of essential inter-related components that comprise the instructional pedagogy and language development curriculum addressing Long Term English Learners needs.

Essential Components

A FOCUS ON ORAL LANGUAGE:

Oral language is the foundation for literacy. A course designed for Long Term English Learners must be a classroom in which students are talking. If they are not using the language, if they are not engaged in talking about what they are learning, they are not actually learning it. Structured oral language practice, instructional conversations, and multiple opportunities for speaking are a means of practicing academic language actively participating in authentic academic discussion, and processing the language prior to writing. The building of oracy lays the foundation for writing. Teachers employ various approaches to cooperative grouping to maximize opportunities for oral language. Public speaking is a skill that is cultivated. Typically, Long Term English Learners have little opportunity to talk in other classes, and so teachers of these Long Term English Learners courses utilize improvisation, theater arts, sentence frames, thinking maps, games, debates, and specific procedures to maximize oral communication. They may use laminated cards for sentence starters, or equity cards for calling on students. Teachers learn to limit "yes" and "no" questions, and they work on higher level prompts and high- quality questioning that elicit complex language from students. To make all of this work, teachers need to build a supportive classroom culture in which students feel safe to talk.

A FOCUS ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:

An effective Long Term English Learners classroom needs to address the entrenched non-participation and non-engagement that frequently characterize Long Term English Learners. Fundamentally, students are expected and supported to actively engage in these classes. Teachers use multiple strategies to elicit and support students' engagement in academic discourse and activity, and to build responsibility and accountability. Expectations are explicit. Students take ownership of their own academic learning and what it means to take responsibility in an academic setting. They are accountable for academic responses (e.g., the strategy of "ticket out the door"), and the teacher institutes routines that build student engagement and provide regular opportunities for public speaking, active listening and academic dialogue. There is a lot of student-to-student interaction. The curriculum is designed and selected to include high-interest and complex material that draws students into the interaction.

A FOCUS ON ACADEMIC LANGUAGE:

Long Term English Learners need to learn the language of academics. Without it they neither comprehend the texts, nor are they able to participate in academic discourse and writing. Long Term English Learners classes, therefore, have a major emphasis on providing

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the language structures and forms needed for apprenticeship into academic discourse and academic participation (e.g., complete sentences, sentence frames, genre-specific language, language functions, explicitly teaching how to agree/disagree/ask for clarification, using academic verbs, academic register, correct syntax and distinct text structures). Grammar is important, as students become aware of the structures of English and how the language works in academic registers. Teachers utilize direct instruction, helping students to learn to write more compound and complex sentences and complex text, and to approach and break down difficult reading. Teachers do mini-lessons on grammar within writing units and analyze grammar in readings. Complex, precise, specific academic vocabulary is taught, including highly ranked words, and high utility words. But the vocabulary teaching goes beyond memorizing words and definitions; it builds background knowledge and spends time to ensure students understand the vocabulary. This instruction requires making connections to other academic classes.

A FOCUS ON EXPOSITORY TEXT (READING AND WRITING):

Engagement with academic learning requires the skills of reading and writing expository academic text. Long Term English Learners typically struggle with this — lacking vocabulary to comprehend the information and struggling with the discourse patterns of academic presentation. They need to learn how academic text is structured. Long Term English Learners classes teach students reading strategies to make their way through different kinds of informational texts; the classes demystify academic writing's structures and conventions. This support is essential for all of the students' academic classes. They also learn how to approach expository writing, including persuasive academic writing, research/informational writing, summarizing, and argumentation. A focus on expository text is also a focus on conceptualizing and framing ideas. The Long Term English Learners class covers the specific language of academic genres. Many use the WRITE genre-based units. Many design their classes with the expectation that students will be writing every day. Some classes focus on reading the work of wonderful writers and then use the masters as models, analyzing their writing and engaging students in mimicking the masters' writing. This strategy is particularly important for English Learners who do not yet have a depth of language to generate their own style of writing. Rubrics are typically used so expectations are explicit about what constitutes strong writing and what is needed to get a "5." While informational and expository texts are a central focus in Long Term English Learners classes, most cover a variety of genres, including biographical narrative, responses to literature, persuasive writing, research, non-fiction, PowerPoint presentation, drama, poetry and creative writing. High school courses are particularly

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focused on narrative genres in addition to expository. Students develop reading fluency when reading material they like, and often those texts are fiction and may be beyond their independent reading level. Thus, while the focus on expository text is essential, it is not sufficient.

CONSISTENT ROUTINES:

English Learners benefit from consistent academic routines. They face the challenge of grappling with rigorous academic content, trying to master new skills and simultaneously wrestling to learn through a language they haven't yet mastered. English Learners easily feel anxious and unsure in classrooms where there is little consistency in how things are approached and inadequate instructions for how to proceed with activities. Consistency in a set of routine instructional approaches enables them to lower their "affective filter" and to participate more fully in class.

GOAL SETTING:

Surveys and focus groups with Long Term English Learners in schools throughout California have identified that they often have high hopes and dreams of going to college, but typically lack confidence about their academic abilities and have little information about the degree to which they are "on track" to reach their dreams. Because they function well socially in English, they consider themselves English fluent, so they do not understand being placed in an English Learner class. Few have the information or knowledge of the academic system that would help them plan and pursue academic goals or the dream of attending college. For all of these reasons, the Long Term English Learners class needs to include a component of academic and language goal setting. Students need the information to understand why they are considered English Learners, what it means to be an English Learner, the levels of English needed for academic engagement and success, where they are along the spectrum of progress towards English proficiency, the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) test's role, reclassification requirements, and their own personal progress. Goal setting involves explaining to students why they are in the class, and it also involves a process of getting to know students, learning about their background, and dialoguing with them about their future and what they want. This process helps students clarify their own thinking, and helps them commit to a path. It also creates a sense of community. For each student, teachers identify goals and timelines with benchmarks to help the student track and measure success at meeting goals throughout the year. This process takes time, and teachers have discovered it easily can take two to three weeks to develop goals and reflect with and interview students to get to know them and their needs. This is also an ongoing process, revisited regularly throughout the school year. This time is ***not*** wasted time; it is an essential part of a Long Term English Learners class.

EMPOWERING PEDAGOGY:

Students learn through making connections between what they know; what they have experienced; and how they understand the world and the new experiences, perspectives, and information they encounter. Many Long Term English Learners feel disconnected from school. To ignite (or reignite) an excitement

about learning and a sense of connection to their own education, teachers need to structure the classroom climate, process, pedagogy, and curriculum in ways that help students make connections. The teachers also need to support students to bring their experiences, culture, heritage, and language into the classroom. The choice of reading material and selection of authors and literature are particularly powerful elements of this approach — enabling students to see, read about, and hear people like themselves in literature. Teachers need skills for how to elicit students' prior experiences, build upon them, scaffold the unfamiliar, and respond to what students bring to class — to literally give students voice. This approach means providing low threat/high challenge contexts, as well as many opportunities and encouragement for active processing, deep and critical thinking, and reflection. Marginalized students need teaching that provides opportunities to bring their lives into the classroom and to examine issues of social justice that have daily impact on their families and communities. Empowering pedagogy maximizes learning, engages students personally in literacy, and connects students powerfully to their own learning and education.

RIGOR:

Long Term English Learners face both linguistic and academic challenges to engaging with grade-level standards, and by secondary school, they have few remaining years to recoup gaps that have accrued over time. It is a pervasive temptation of intervention classes to slow down or water down content, yet what Long Term English Learners need most is an accelerated, rigorous approach that overcomes gaps. Teachers of Long Term English Learners courses warn against over-scaffolding, and they hold themselves to the expectation of rigor. Students, who for years have been allowed to sit back and barely engage, have to be encouraged. Teachers must insist that the students do the heavy lifting of critical thinking, learning new skills, and pushing through their comfort zone — with support, encouragement, and the solid belief that they can do the work. Teachers pose high-quality questions that require students to evaluate, make connections, and think outside the box. Curriculum planning, therefore, focuses on rigor and critical thinking. For example, the Sweetwater Union High School district uses a rhetorical focus in instruction, pushing students to examine and question authors' purposes and context. Other districts use a Socratic Seminar approach. Many use graphic organizers and thinking maps as ways to discipline and guide more conceptual thinking, speaking and writing.

COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIPS:

Long Term English Learners have typically become non-participants in school, in part because they have lacked the language to understand instruction, feel uncomfortable about not adequately comprehending and being afraid of making mistakes and being ridiculed. They do not easily drop their guard and frequently resist a teacher's enthusiastic efforts to get students to participate. Teachers of Long Term English Learners classes find

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that it is important to build relationships with their students and also to create a climate in the classroom that fosters safe, trusting relationships among students. In part, a safe and trusting classroom is created through the act of inviting sharing, creating activities in which students can talk about their experiences and what they know, working with students to understand how they are doing and what steps they can take to reach their goals, and frontloading the material they need to comprehend for their other academic classes. Students see that the class and this teacher are ***on their side.*** Regular check-ins, explicit strategies to build confidence, strategies that create positive rapport in the classrooms, rewards and recognition for success, classroom norms that foster kindness and respect, and mechanisms for student voice and input all help.

STUDY SKILLS:

Long Term English Learners typically have not had explicit instruction in metacognitive skills development and therefore exhibit gaps in study skills and effective study habits. They do not read outside the classroom, struggle with assignments but do not understand how to problem-solve when they face academic challenges, do not complete homework, and seldom ask for help. Building students study skills such as note-taking, organizing materials, time management, doing independent research, keeping notebooks, etc. is one of the components in many Long Term English Learners classes — skills that will carry over into other academic classes. And a focus on the metacognitive processes that can be used to wrestle with unknown words, unfamiliar concepts, the challenges of approaching writing, etc. is needed.

> "Keep expectations high. Students want to succeed and are capable of rigorous material. Be aware that your classroom might be the most structured and influential part of their day, and that you are probably one of the few adults that have high expectations and a PLAN for getting them to rigorous academic work. In some cases you may be one of the few adults that hold them to that academic and behavioral standard."

Materials/Curriculum

A major challenge for most schools and districts in designing and implementing the courses for Long Term English Learners has been assembling an appropriate and comprehensive curriculum. Almost unanimously, educators involved in piloting the classes have drawn from existing and already purchased/adopted materials, sought additional supplementary materials, forged combinations of curriculum from all of the above, and relied on teacher-developed materials to meet the students' specific needs. The teachers' basic understanding of Long Term English Learners needs and their focus on the components described in the previous section have guided their choices. Their experiences in selecting materials that are shared here is not meant as a critique or an endorsement of any particular programs, but rather as an illustration of the resources drawn upon, concerns, needs, and processes that are being pursued in the field.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- **Materials should be relevant.** Teachers should seek high-interest materials, create units around issues of relevance to students, and pay attention to age and grade-level appropriateness (e.g., some materials written for grades 7–12 are not adequately relevant to grades 10–12). Students are reluctant to read unless they see the real-life applications.
- **It is important to incorporate whole books.** Typically, Long Term English Learners have been given excerpts or simplified material, without the opportunity to read whole books and complex, elegant language.
- **Curriculum should explicitly provide opportunities** for active engagement, with a focus on oral and written language development.
- **The course should touch on all of the essential components** and have materials that address these components (e.g., academic language and vocabulary development, multiple genres of text, all four domains of language, high-interest/relevant material, accountability responses, active engagement, grammar and language structures, and forms).
- **Materials should align and connect to core** English and other academic courses.

CURRICULAR RESOURCES:

Districts and individual teachers have drawn upon and cited the influence of several curricular resources, professional development initiatives, lesson design models and instructional approaches that have shaped the Long Term English Learner course curriculum.

English 3D: Discuss, Describe Debate (Scholastic), written by Dr. Kate Kinsella, is a grades 6–9 curriculum designed to help Long Term English Learners master the language of school, including academic vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading and writing vital to success in school. The curriculum is designed to do the following: teach high-leverage academic language (including vocabulary, syntax and grammar); improve speaking and listening skills

through daily opportunities for class discussion, peer collaboration, and formal speeches; develop academic writing skills in summarizing, justification, argument, and research; engage students with interesting brief nonfiction, informational texts that present issues relevant to young teens' lives; and make regular connections between coursework and the demands of college and the workplace. Some people use this curriculum in its entirety; others use the basic routines and a subset of the units, interspersing them with other curriculum. The professional development accompanying the curriculum is crucial. Because it is the only currently available curriculum written specifically for Long Term English Learners, some districts are using it in senior high school grades —— with adaptations such as longer readings, a focus on narrative reading and writing genres, combining with components related to building community, goal setting, etc.

WRITE (Writing Reform Institute for Teaching Excellence) is a San Diego County Office of Education project. It is a national Academic Excellence model of sustained professional development and genre-based writing units to teach academic writing for elementary and secondary grades. The materials are differentiated by English proficiency level and grade level to directly teach appropriate academic writing for English Learners and other struggling students. The lessons are interactive, focusing on academic language and oral language in addition to writing. The WRITE units are used as one component of a dedicated Long Term English Learner class — usually to enhance the focus on writing expository and narrative text.

AVID English Learner College Readiness (ELCR): Focusing on the middle school years as a crucial time to interrupt the academic patterns that turn many English Learners into Long Term English Learners, AVID has expanded its highly successful college preparatory approach to create a new program —— a "pathway" into the regular AVID, explicitly designed for middle school students at risk of becoming Long Term English Learners. The ELCR is a "pre AVID" middle school ELD program for intermediate English Learners to accelerate academic language acquisition and entrance to ninth grade AVID and college preparatory course work in high school. ELCR is designed to fulfill AVID's mission of preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society. The key components are: professional learning focusing on powerful English Learner support strategies across the content areas; the AVID Excel Summer Bridge courses focusing on transition to middle school and eighth grade with intensive previews of course content plus academic vocabulary building, writing applications, oral-language development, study skills and time management, and leadership building; the AVID Excel seventh and eighth grade courses, which are year-long, accelerated electives developing academic reading, vocabulary, writing, oral language, research skills, self-advocacy, and study skills; the AVID Excel Leadership Bridge to High School summer course to ease the transition into high school; a Family Connections component to help families understand how they can support their child in developing the skills, attitudes, and habits that will prepare them for high school and college; and a commitment to supporting biliteracy through Heritage Language Courses as a pathway into Advanced Placement.

The Academic Vocabulary Toolkit Book 1 and 2 (National Geographic Learning) is a supplemental grade 6 — 8 curriculum written by Dr. Kate Kinsella and designed to be used as one component of an ELD or English Language Arts class. The curriculum focuses upon high-yield words students must readily comprehend and utilize across the subject areas. Each book contains 100 words culled from Coxhead's Academic Word List, Common Core State Standards, exam directions, and the discourse demands of informational text analysis, synthesis, citation and argumentation. Students learn more than pronunciation and

> "Socio-culturally, these students need a great deal more time to build trust and community in order to take risks in the classroom. They WANT to participate, but academic behavior isn't "cool," and it isn't "comfortable" for them. It takes time and effort to build a sense of community, but by the end of the year, my students are indeed taking risks, actively participating, supporting each other, and stretching themselves."

meaning. Through a carefully-scaffolded 3-4 day instructional sequence, students deepen their word knowledge by analyzing and applying the toolkit words in multiple accessible contexts. Students are introduced to the most common word partners, words or phrases that frequently accompany the focus word in academic communication. They are guided in correctly applying the target word in engaging yet structured and increasingly complex speaking and writing tasks. The lessons are intended to equip academic language learners with the communicative confidence and competence to meet the discourse demands of secondary and higher education. The Teacher's Guide includes flexible planning and pacing guides, clear instructional routines, explicit grammar lessons targeting high-frequency errors, reproducible templates, Common Core aligned assessments, and an instructional DVD with every lesson phase modeled.

Districts and individual teachers have also cited the influence of several other professional development, lesson design, and instructional approaches that have significantly shaped their work in the Long Term English Learners classes and guided the selection of curriculum.

Academic Conversations (Jeff Swiers)

Recognizing the central role of oral-language development and talking with others as a vehicle for learning, *Academic Conversations* is an approach through which students explore ideas and negotiate meanings to deepen understanding and connections. While this strategy cultivates a range of thinking and language skills, it emphasizes developing conversation skills across disciplines: elaborating, clarifying, and questioning; supporting ideas with examples and evidence; paraphrasing; building on ideas; and synthesizing the conversation's key ideas. Developing these skills helps students to fortify their academic language, critical thinking skills, content understanding, academic writing, and oral communication skills.

The CSU Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC) was developed by a Task Force concerned about preparing students for college-level English. High school English teachers receive professional development on implementing the expository reading and writing course for high school juniors and seniors. The course emphasizes the in-depth study of expository, analytical and argumentative reading and writing, meeting the fifth year A-G English requirement and addressing critical reading and writing problems identified by the CSU English Placement Test. There are 14 course modules, each taking between one to three weeks to teach. They are composed of a sequence of integrated reading and writing experiences, beginning with pre-reading activities, moving into reading and post-reading activities, and continuing through informal and formal writing assignments. Along the way, students learn to make predictions about their reading, analyze content and rhetorical structures, and properly use materials from the texts they read to support their own

written arguments. Course readings appeal to high school students' interests and vary in style and genre.

Socratic Seminars: A Socratic seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue facilitated with open-ended questions about a text. A Socratic Seminar's purpose is to achieve a deeper understanding about a text's ideas and values. In the Seminar, participants systematically question and examine issues and principles related to a particular content, and they articulate different points of view. The group conversation assists participants in constructing meaning through disciplined analysis, interpretation, listening, and participation. In a Socratic Seminar, good discussions occur when participants study the text closely in advance, listen actively, share their ideas and questions in response to the ideas and questions of others, and search for evidence in the text to support their ideas. The discussion is not about right answers; it is not a debate. Students are encouraged to think out loud and to exchange ideas openly while examining ideas in a rigorous, thoughtful, manner. A Seminar has several basic elements. All participants read the text in advance. The text (or article, film clip, or other artifact) contains important and powerful ideas and values, is the appropriate level for the students in terms of complexity, and relates directly to core concepts of the content being studied. A certain degree of ambiguity or potential for different interpretations also makes for richer discussion. The questions are key. They should lead participants into the core ideas and values and to use the text in their answers. Questions must be open-ended, reflect genuine curiosity, and have no "one right answer." The core of the Socratic Seminar is devoted to considering questions that ask students to *interpret* the text. Evaluative questions are sometimes used at the very end of a seminar, to allow students to share their own positions and opinions. Answers to evaluative questions rely on student's own experiences, not on the text itself.

The Long Term English Learners courses are usually one component of a broader district action plan to meet the needs of Long Term English Learners. In several districts, the instructional and lesson planning approach used in the Long Term English Learners course draws upon strategies and approaches being implemented in a school-wide initiative to address academic language and the needs of English Learners across the curriculum. The specific professional development and lesson design models and resources drawn upon include:

SIOP: The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model is a research-based and validated model of sheltered instruction. Professional development in the SIOP Model helps teachers plan and deliver lessons in all academic content areas that allow English learners to acquire academic knowledge as they develop English-language proficiency. The SIOP Model has proven effective in addressing the academic needs of English learners throughout the United States. It consists of eight interrelated components: Lesson Preparation, Building Background, Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice/Application, Lesson Delivery, and Review/Assessment. Using instructional strategies connected to each of these components, teachers design and deliver lessons that address the academic and linguistic needs of English learners.

Constructing Meaning is a professional development and lesson planning approach developed by EL Achieve. It is designed to address the need of English Learners to both master the conventions of English while also acquiring the discipline-specific language of multiple content areas through language instruction in the context of content-area instruction. *Constructing Meaning* leads teachers with the process and tools to identify specific, content-driven language objectives and then design instruction to address those objectives. It is a backward design approach fused with principles of second-language acquisition. There are content-specific handbooks for English/Language Arts, Science, and History/Social Science.

Structural considerations

Districts have incorporated structural considerations into their Long Term English Learners courses' design. These include:

- ***Smaller class size.*** Teachers agree that a smaller class size facilitates creating opportunities for students to actively use language, and it enables the teacher to build relationships with students so essential in the goal-setting and trust-building aspects of an effective Long Term English Learners class. With fewer students, teachers can pay targeted attention to the students' specific academic and linguistic gaps. In some cases, districts are using categorical funds to keep these classes small.
- ***A more fluid pacing guide.*** There are multiple components of what needs to occur in an effective Long Term English Learners class. It is reportedly difficult, particularly in the first month of the course, to keep to pacing guides that do not take into account the kind of goal setting, community and trust-building, and basic study skills development that need to occur up front for students to be prepared for the pace and rigor. Teachers speak about how important it is to approach the pacing of the class in a way that accommodates getting students "on board," and then to gear the curriculum and instruction to the necessary level of depth and rigor. As one teacher explained, *"It's okay to go slower, as long as the assignments are rigorous and engaging. Depth and rigor and serious engagement are what we need to go for. And for Long Term English Learners, this may mean covering less and doing it with maximum rigor."*
- ***A dedicated Long Term English Learners class just for Long Term English Learners:*** Generally, Long Term English Learners should be placed in heterogeneous mainstream classes for most of their academic schedule. Most educators concur with the *Reparable Harm* recommendation that it is important to have one dedicated Long Term English Learners class, just for Long Term English Learners, which focuses on this group's needs. Because the basic recommendation is that the students be placed in regular grade-level mainstream academic classes for all other academic courses, this course becomes the one setting in which the students' unique needs can be targeted head-on. Academic vocabulary, academic writing, and reading comprehension are issues for many struggling secondary school students, but Long Term English Learners typically have specific language needs that are distinct. They often need more context building for vocabulary (and comprehension) than do other students. Teachers report that the dedicated Long Term English Learner class works better than mixing Long Term English Learners for academic language support with other struggling students. If mixing needs to occur (due to numbers), teachers report that it is better to mix Long Term English Learners with higher level English Learners, native English speakers, or Redesignated English Learners rather than newcomer English Learners. However, mixing students with other struggling students can create negative self-perceptions and does not provide

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the academic or language models Long Term English Learners need. Furthermore, teachers find these mixed classes extremely challenging because of divergent needs. In the words of one teacher in a district that finally abandoned the mixed placement approach, *"It was a disaster."*

- ***Attention to maximizing graduation credits and fulfillment of the A–G requirements in high school.*** The issue of whether the Long Term English Learner class is considered an elective, a support/intervention class or gets credit as an English class for purposes of fulfilling graduation and A–G requirements must be considered. From the student point of view, filling an elective slot with a language development or support class denies them access to a wide range of arts and specialty interest classes that can be key to engagement in school. Some districts, such as Modesto City Schools, have added a seventh period to the day for Long Term English Learners, enabling them to have both an elective period and the dedicated language development class. Accruing credits towards graduation is often a challenge for Long Term English Learners because of the combination of failed academic classes and a schedule filled with interventions and support classes. If the dedicated language development class is designed with appropriate rigor and incorporation of academic writing and literature, it can fulfill CSU/UC requirements for A–G credit. Ventura Unified School District, for example, grants their ELD level IV (for Long Term English Learners) one year of CSU/UC English credit.

- ***The same teacher for the dedicated Long Term English Learner class as for the core English class?*** There have been various approaches to staffing the dedicated Long Term English Learners class. In some districts, the decision has been to staff the dedicated Long Term English Learners course with the same teacher who teaches the core English class. They do so because they intend that the Long Term English Learners class will support academic engagement and success in the core academic program. Using the same teacher the students have for core English provides a direct alignment between the two courses. It also provides the teacher of the Long Term English Learners class with personal understanding of the particular challenges facing the Long Term English Learners students in the regular English class. Those districts that have tried this staffing pattern as well as piloted the course with teachers who do not have that crossover experience, are convinced it has significant benefits. However, to staff the Long Term English Learners class this way is a challenge for building the master schedule. It is essential, therefore, that the counselors and administrators understand the benefits and rationale for staffing in this way. However, other districts have decided it is better not to staff the dedicated Long Term English Learners class with the English core teacher out of concern that the dedicated Long Term English Learners class will become simply an extension course — more time put into doing the work of the core class — rather than serve the academic language development needs of Long Term English Learners that are beyond what is covered in grade level English standards.

4 IMPACTS

Districts are piloting the Long Term English Learners classes. For most of the districts engaged in this effort, the past year was the first year they had offered the classes. The intention is to closely watch the outcomes, refine the courses as needed, and determine whether they sufficiently benefit and address the Long Term English Learners' unmet needs. It is important, therefore, to be clear about what the desired outcomes include:

- Success in the English-language arts curriculum
- Active participation in English-language arts classrooms
- Active participation and success in other academic core courses
- Scoring proficient or above on the CST
- Redesignation as Fluent English Proficient
- Preparation for and acceptance into 2 or4 year college/university

Teachers and district administrators monitoring the courses look for indications of progress towards those outcomes. Shadowing Long Term English Learner students at regular intervals provides data on the degree of active engagement and oral language used in academic classes. Diagnostic, midpoint, and summative tests and assessments are either included in the curriculum units used in the courses, or are developed by the teacher and district committees. Growth on CELDT (particularly important for Long Term English Learners who by definition have been stuck at the same level on CELDT for several years) is monitored as well.

In general, the reports from the field are that Long Term English Learners are becoming more engaged in school and more active participants in using academic language as a result of the classes. Teachers and district administrators have reported the following impacts from individual schools:

- Students significantly increased their reading; (e.g., they now read 22 novels in a year versus one or two.)
- Student motivation increased.
- Student writing has improved and reading levels have gone up several grade levels.
- Students feel proud of their work.
- Students who were previously "stuck" in progressing towards English proficiency are now exiting the program and redesignating.
- Students are now passing the California High School Exit Examination at much higher rates.
- Students have gains on the English Language Arts section of the California Standards Test (CST) of an average of 88 points.
- The students' in the dedicated Long Term English Learners class show a redesignation rate that outpaces rates in other schools in the district that do not offer the course.
- The number of Long Term English Learners who reach the Proficient level on the CST has significantly increased.

Consistent data across sites does not yet exist, nor have districts amassed multiple years of data that are needed in order to determine whether the courses are as effective as hoped. Yet, educators in the piloting districts have

Consistent data across sites does not yet exist, nor have districts amassed multiple years of data that are needed in order to determine whether the courses are as effective as hoped. Yet, educators in the piloting districts have determined there is sufficient indication that the courses are having a positive impact to merit continued piloting and monitoring of the classes into the new school year.

determined there is sufficient indication that the courses are having a positive impact to merit continued piloting and monitoring of the classes into the new school year. When asked whether the classes should continue, every teacher and administrator except one replied, "Definitely, yes." Four out of five respondents reported that the class is working well. Others said, "I can't tell yet." Everyone is awaiting data on CELDT in the fall of 2012 and analysis of the Spring CST results. And, in the spirit of a serious pilot, almost all are proceeding to refine the courses as they move forward. The consensus is that the courses are a very promising approach.

"No one warned me that my students would perform beyond my expectations — and my expectations were high! It has been harder to convince other teachers of the kids' potential than it was to convince the kids. No one told me how much hard work it would be — but they also didn't tell me how amazingly rewarding it would be."

5 CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

"I wish someone had told me...."

Building awareness of the needs of a population of students who have largely been overlooked, and creating new action plans and courses are major undertakings. Despite the commitment and will that characterizes the educators who forged ahead with Long Term English Learner action plans, the challenges have been significant. Seeking to articulate the lessons learned in the design and piloting of Long Term English Learners courses, the following challenges and lessons were identified:

Assembling an appropriate and comprehensive curriculum is complex and requires time, collaborative effort, and resources.

Creating the curriculum should not be left up to individual teachers to design on their own as they go. Because no single existing curriculum adequately addresses the multiple components that need to be included in a Long Term English Learners course, districts need to recognize that time has to be allocated for curriculum planning before the course begins and throughout the piloting of the course. To the degree possible, teachers should be supported with the time and structures to work collaboratively to plan and refine lessons, find relevant and challenging books and materials, and create materials as needed. Districts should be prepared to purchase supplementary materials and curricula. Categorical funds have been particularly useful for this purpose.

The dedicated Long Term English Learners courses must address the central issue of motivating, reigniting, and engaging Long Term English Learners who have been academically struggling for years.

Teachers need to be prepared for this aspect of teaching the classes, and the instruction needs to be planned to address it. Teachers assigned to the courses should be selected with this focus in mind. Compassion, high expectations for students, genuine caring about and liking Long Term English Learners, understanding of the needs of Long Term English Learners, and knowledge of strategies for motivating and engaging students are primary criteria for selecting teachers for Long Term English Learners classes. Administrators across the districts agree that the success of the classes begins with choosing the right teachers who have these characteristics in addition to prior successful experience teaching English Learners. Curriculum planning has to build in time for trust and community building at the start of the courses, and for the goal setting and regular check-ins that support Long Term English Learners in progressing.

Make sure that everyone understands the needs of Long Term English Learners and the purpose of the Long Term English Learners class.

In most cases, in the pilot year, districts found that students were inappropriately placed into the Long Term English Learners classes, and that lack of clarity about whom the class was for and the purpose of the class resulted in added challenges for teachers and students. District administrators discovered that it is important to include principals and counselors in professional development and dialogue to deepen their awareness about Long Term English Learners needs. Through this process, those site administrators are helped to understand the design, structure, curriculum and intention of the dedicated Long Term English Learners classes and how those classes fit into pathways to success for Long Term English Learner students. The districts learned it was important to adopt a clear definition of a Long Term English Learner. They found they needed to institute systems to monitor Long Term English Learner placement in classes and to articulate entry, placement, and exit criteria. They articulated pathways and course sequences along with guidelines for moving Long Term English Learner students through the sequence into the full college-preparatory curriculum. Districts that had used existing course codes and titles as the "buckets" for the new Long Term English Learners courses learned they had to clean up and clarify the course codes to ensure appropriate placement. Tracy Unified School District, for example, has guidelines for Long Term English Learners placement and then uses an individual Long Term English Learner student data card, including CELDT and CST history and years in program, as it looks at each student to determine the appropriate placement. El Monte Union High School District and two feeder elementary districts have developed an information-sharing system to target attention on their Long Term English Learners and facilitate appropriate placements as students move from middle school into high school. Anaheim Union High School District does universal screening at the district level, using multiple measures and comparing three years of CELDT as entry criteria. Long Term English Learners at the Intermediate levels are targeted as candidates for the course. Students placed in the course are monitored throughout the year and their growth measured longitudinally. The district is now working on assessments that reliably measure language growth.

Begin with data and keep it in the forefront — for administrators, teachers, and students.

Data matter and are powerful. Every district begins with examining its Long Term English Learners data to understand the issue's magnitude and to pinpoint areas of need. This step is also crucial

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in building the sense of urgency needed to focus attention on creating a Long Term English Learners action plan. Then districts need to create a system for accurately identifying Long Term English Learners, regularly monitoring their progress, accelerating movement into the full A–G curriculum, and determining efficacy of piloted supports and courses. For teachers of Long Term English Learners classes, the student's history of language development and academic success is a key element in tailoring instruction and a foundation for the goal-setting functions of the courses. Teachers of Long Term English Learners classes maintain student data profiles that are used for conversations with students to help them understand their CELDT scores and what grades, course placements and other test scores mean for college and career options. Supportive districts provide professional development for teachers to understand CELDT and language/academic assessments. The districts offer release time for teachers to examine student data and refine their planning, based upon that data. In numerous cases, districts have developed specific assessments focusing on the skills emphasized in the Long Term English Learners classes. For example, Fresno Unified School District developed a "Test of Academic Language Use" to measure grammatical competencies and language functions (pre and post) to identify gaps to address in instruction.

Provide professional development and ongoing support to teachers.

It is essential that teachers receive professional development to understand the language and academic needs of Long Term English Learners and to tailor instruction to meet those needs. The content of this professional development focuses on issues such as clarifying the purposes of the class and delivering specific curriculum, structuring opportunities for academic talk in the classroom, developing reading fluency, developing skills in a variety of expository reading and writing genres, motivating and supporting discouraged learners, and second-language development for students at the intermediate levels and above. Teachers benefit from collaborative planning and coaching support as they pilot the new approaches, refine the curriculum, and come to new understandings about what it takes to engage and accelerate the learning of Long Term English Learners. Planning the time and resources for such professional development and collaboration is a major task for districts embarking on a Long Term English Learners Action Plan. Categorical funds can be used to support course development, professional development and purchase of supplemental materials. In addition to the support for teachers of the Long Term English Learners class, some districts have implemented professional development efforts across disciplines to facilitate alignment and consistency of routines and strategies that students are applying across the curriculum. Some districts, such as El Monte Union High School District, have teachers shadow Long Term English Learners students throughout the day to observe levels of engagement and how much students are actively using language. After identifying teachers who are successful with these strategies, they then videotape samples of the instruction. Many districts assign coaches or teachers on special assignment to provide classroom support and modeling for teachers. Several districts have created professional learning communities where teachers of the pilot classes come together to talk about successes and struggles. In Anaheim Union High School District, the Long Term English Learners Action Plan includes professional development and site coaches at every high school on lesson design, language objectives, and addressing the needs of English Learners across the curriculum. Without professional development, coaching, and collaboration supports, teachers report that it is very challenging to successfully implement the Long Term English Learners courses.

Compassion, high expectations for students, genuine caring about and liking Long Term English Learners, understanding of the needs of Long Term English Learners, and knowledge of strategies for motivating and engaging students are primary criteria for selecting teachers for Long Term English Learners classes.

Build leadership and infrastructure at the site and district to successfully implement the dedicated Long Term English Learners course.

Designing and piloting an effective course to meet Long Term English Learners needs takes more than simply adopting a course outline and assigning a teacher. In reflecting on lessons learned after a year or two of trying to implement the courses, educators were unanimous that the dedicated Long Term English Learners courses should be mounted in the context of a larger Long Term English Learners action plan, and that leadership and infrastructure should be built at both the site and district level to support the plan's effective implementation.

It is the district role to create a vision and overall Long Term English Learners action plan, articulate goals and expected outcomes, formally adopt a definition of a Long Term English Learners, and create systems to monitor both implementation and the progress of Long Term English Learners. It is helpful if the plan is codified in a district English Learner Master Plan and through curriculum policy to ensure continuity as staff roles and district leadership shift. For example, in the Los Angeles Unified School District, a new English Learner Master Plan has an entire section devoted to Long Term English Learners, including describing the courses needed to provide targeted support. In the San Francisco Unified School District, the formalized Lau Action Plan describes the pathway of classes that will be provided to meet Long Term English Learners' needs. Even in the absence of such formal policy, district leadership should understand that staying the course for several years is important when piloting a new effort so that refinements can be made and success can take hold.

District leadership should make addressing the needs of Long Term English Learners a high priority and clearly articulate to principals the urgency and stakes. For example, in Ventura Unified School District, the Superintendent spearheaded the effort to increase the academic success rate for English Learners, and holds regular meetings with principals to check how the effort is going. In some cases, districts are coming together to work on the Long Term English Learners issue. For example, the superintendents of the El Monte Union High School District and its two feeder elementary school districts have met regularly over the past two years to work together on an integrated approach, elementary through high school, to preventing the creation of Long Term English Learners and addressing the needs of Long Term English Learners.

The district role is also to provide support to the sites that are piloting new Long Term English Learners approaches, including

District leadership should make addressing the needs of Long Term English Learners a high priority and clearly articulate to principals the urgency and stakes.

creating networks of teachers across the pilot sites, providing coaching and facilitation for collaborative planning, and arranging for review and purchase of materials that are needed to enact the plan.

Building site administrators and counselors commitment and understanding about the needs of Long Term English Learners and the pathways to success for Long Term English Learners is paramount. In a strong system, it is the principal's job to assign appropriate and strong teachers to teach the classes and to ensure that Long Term English Learner students are identified and placed appropriately. The administrators and counselors need to understand clearly the purposes of the class, and the skills and kind of teachers who are needed to teach the class and feel the urgency to make those assignments a priority. Part of the principal's role should also be to meet regularly with teachers of the courses in the initial years of implementation to monitor how the classes are going and what kind of support teachers may need to refine and target instruction to directly address student needs.

> "I wish I had had networking resources before piloting and designing the course. I don't feel I always asked the right questions. I thought a purchased curriculum would do the trick. I have much more clarity now about the task at hand and what to target. I now know where my efforts and energy need to be funneled and what can be put aside. I now know there are others out there who are trying to do what we are trying to do for our Long Term English Learners. Together, in collaboration, we can have much more power."

6 DOING THIS TOGETHER — AS A STATE AND AS A FIELD

Recommendations

Thus far, individual districts have taken up the challenge to do something proactive to address the urgent issue of Long Term English Learners. They have sought ideas and support from other educators wherever they could — through people they meet at conference workshops and via an informal information network that has emerged through Californians Together's work on Long Term English Learners in disseminating the findings of *Reparable Harm*. Basically, however, to a large extent, the wheel is being invented anew district by district. This strategy is woefully inadequate for a state as large as California. The Long Term English Learners challenge is too great, the numbers staggeringly large (well over 100,000 Long Term English Learners in secondary grades in California schools), and the stakes too high to continue with the chancy approach of letting everyone find their own way.

In the focus group discussions, the survey poll, and the day-long convening of dozens of educators from all parts of the state involved in mounting and piloting Long Term English Learner dedicated classes, what came through loud and clear was a call for a more systemic and formalized approach to supporting the work that has to be done in districts if California is to deliver on the promise of educational opportunity for our Long Term English Learners. No stand-alone course can adequately address the depth and magnitude of the academic and language gaps that Long Term English Learners have accrued as they have moved through school without the supports needed for access and participation. And, no single teacher or even school site can mount a comprehensive effort to meet the needs of this large group of students and prevent the development of even more Long Term English Learners. Recommendations from this group to the California Department of Education, the California State Legislature, major technical assistance organizations (such as the Comprehensive Assistance Center at Wested), and schools of education include:

- **Adoption of a formal, consistent, state definition of Long Term English Learners, and a mechanism for identifying English Learners who are at risk for becoming Long Term English Learners**
- **Articulation of clear expectations based upon research and codified in policy for milestones and number of years in U.S. schools after which English Learners should reach those milestones towards achieving English proficiency.**
- **State mechanisms that ensure that all school districts will collect, analyze, and report data on English Learner progress towards English proficiency by the number of years they have been in U.S. schools — and that Corrective Action/Program Improvement Plans will incorporate actions to address the needs of Long Term English Learners. Districts should be required to develop task forces to monitor implementation of that plan.**
- **Document and make available, through online or publication formats and conferences, updated information on best practices in addressing Long Term English Learners' needs.**

- Convene groups of educators from around the state working on specific pilot efforts to meet the needs of Long Term English Learners to focus on specific challenges, such as creating a common criteria for entry, placement and exit from dedicated Long Term English Learners classes.
- Implement a state-supported professional development initiative for teachers, administrators, and counselors on addressing Long-Term English Learner needs.
- Ensure that the new English Language Arts/ English Language Development Curriculum Framework includes specific attention to the needs of Long Term English Learners as one typology of English Learners.

"We drew on everything we could to put this together. We looked at our data, we visited a few other districts we had heard about that were working on Long Term English Learner programs, we read whatever we could find, we asked everyone for their ideas and best thinking. But we finally just had to jump in and try something. Is that what everyone is doing? Is every district really having to figure it out for themselves? Is that really the way to get this right — with everyone just trying things on their own? There's got to be a way we can find each other, support each other, learn from each other, have it all add up. Because the kids can't wait."

7 Long Term English Learner Dedicated Courses — A Planning Checklist

Getting Started/ Laying the Groundwork

- ❏ A district working group has analyzed and reflected upon data on our Long Term English Learner population, identified the extent and magnitude of the issue, and conducted an inquiry to understand the needs of this group.
- ❏ A district (or site) Long Term English Learner action plan has been developed and which may include either the Long Term English Learner dedicated course or (in cases where there is a high percentage of the student population who are Long Term English Learners) a whole school approach to meeting their specific language needs throughout the curriculum.
- ❏ Teachers have been intentionally selected to pilot the Long Term English Learner course based upon wanting to work with this population, compassion and high expectations, willingness to roll up their sleeves and participate in a pilot situation that requires reflection and refining in the process of teaching the class, and knowledge of basic English Learner needs and strategies.
- ❏ We have established a written description of the pathway for Long Term English Learners and the role of the course in that pathway. It specifies that the course be dedicated for Long Term English Learners. There is a clear definition of a Long Term English Learner, and explicit placement, entry and exit criteria.
- ❏ Site administrators and counselors in piloting schools have received an orientation to the purposes of the Long Term English Learner course, the needs of Long Term English Learners, and the placement criteria.
- ❏ A working group that includes teachers of the courses is/has collaboratively planned the Long Term English Learner course. Teachers are not left on their own to come up with curriculum, materials or approach.

Designing the Course and Planning the Components

- ❏ We have planned for how we will focus on oral language development. Key strategies and routines have been identified for building a coherent oral language component into the class that leads to writing fluency. We know what curriculum materials we will use for this purpose.
- ❏ We have planned for how we will incorporate a focus on active student engagement. Key strategies, routines and interactive structures have been identified for eliciting and supporting active student engagement in the class. We know what curriculum materials we will use for this purpose.
- ❏ We have planned for how we will incorporate a focus on academic language development. Key vocabulary and discourse patterns have been identified. Key strategies and routines have been identified for academic language development. We know what curriculum materials we will use for this purpose.
- ❏ We have planned for how we will focus on developing reading fluency and building upon that fluency to engage Long Term English learners in reading and writing expository text successfully. Key strategies, routines and materials have been identified for engaging students in making sense of academic text and writing expository genres. We know what curriculum materials we will use for this purpose.
- ❏ We have planned for consistent routines and approaches to be used in the course.
- ❏ We have planned how we will engage students in understanding where they are in the trajectory towards English proficiency and towards high graduation and college preparation. Teachers have data on their students, and we have created the formats for engaging students in goal-setting. The curriculum includes explanations of the CELDT and implications of CELDT levels and the appropriateness of couse placement in career/college acceptance. We have designed our approach, curricula and materials for the goal-setting process.
- ❏ We have discussed the kind of empowering pedagogy we expect to see in the course, and teachers have planned for how they will elicit student voice, and student's lived experience in order to build relevance into the class.
- ❏ We have planned how we will build rigor, critical thinking and creative thinking into our curriculum. Key strategies, routines and materials have been identified for engaging students in higher order thinking.
- ❏ We have planned how we will approach building a sense of safety and community in the course. Key strategies, routines and materials have been identified for this purpose.
- ❏ We have planned how we will support students in developing study skills and habits. Clear expectations have been framed. Key strategies, routines and materials have been identified for engaging students in focusing on metacognitive learning and organizational processes, and teaching skills of note-taking, time management and other key study skills.
- ❏ Teachers have had individual time to review the materials for the class, and collaborative time prior to beginning the course to work together to write the syllabus and fluid pacing guides that weave together the various components of the curriculum.
- ❏ Overall, the materials we have selected or developed are high interest, challenging and relevant.
- ❏ We have incorporated whole books, actual literature and real-life expository written materials into the course.
- ❏ The district has made resources available for the purchase of supplementary materials as needed to implement a comprehensive academic language development course for Long Term English Learners.

Structuring the Course

- ❏ We have considered whether it might be possible to staff the class at a smaller teacher to student ratio, and committed to that smaller ratio if at all possible.
- ❏ We have established a fluid pacing guide that builds in time for the community/trust building needed at the start of the class, and the goal-setting and monitoring components of the curriculum in addition to the focus on academic language.
- ❏ We have defined a regular process of monitoring the appropriateness of placement into the Long Term English Learner class, and monitor movement out of the class as soon as appropriate.
- ❏ Prior to beginning to teach the course, teachers have received professional development on the purposes of the class and the needs of Long Term English Learners

Professional Development and Support

- ❏ Prior to beginning to teach the course, teachers have received professional development on using any of the course curriculum programs or materials that have professional development support components.
- ❏ At regular intervals during the first pilot year, teachers involved in piloting the Long Term English Learner courses have paid, collaboration time to reflect on how the course is going, to refine the curriculum, to problem-solve and for additional professional development.
- ❏ At regular intervals subsequent to the pilot year, teachers have paid, collaborative time to plan, refine the curriculum, and problem-solve.
- ❏ Counselors and administrative staff have received specialized professional development on the needs — social, psychological and academic — of Long Term English Learners, as well as on placement issues, family counseling and engagement strategies, and monitoring of Long Term English Learner progress outside the specialized Long Term English Learner course.
- ❏ A teacher on special assignment or coach is assigned to observe the pilot classrooms, provide feedback and support to teachers, model strategies, and facilitate collaborative planning and reflection sessions.

Measuring Impacts

- ❏ There are clearly articulated desired outcomes for the course, as well as assessments and processes for measuring progress towards those outcomes.
- ❏ Monitoring of implementation includes shadowing Long Term English Learner students for degree of active engagement and active use of academic language, and observations of classrooms.

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CaliforniansTogether

Championing the Success of English Learners

Californians Together is a statewide coalition of 23 parent, professional and civil rights organizations that mobilize communities to protect and promote the rights of close to 1.5 million English Learners, 25% of Californian's students. Californians Together serves as a statewide voice on behalf of language minority students in California public schools. The coalition is committed to securing equal access to quality education for all children.

This report and updates on Californians Together's work to create the policies and practices for accelerating the language and academic needs of Long Term English Learners will be posted on the organization's website.

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