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AUTHOR McCallum, Myra E.
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ABSTRACT

This document presents an action plan to solve the problem of inadequate English-as-a-Second/Other-Language (ESOL) instruction in high school content area courses and to increase effort and motivation among ESOL students. ESOL students often do not have sufficient command of English to do very well in content-oriented courses (such as history, science, mathematics). The plan of action offered is a bottom-up approach with three primary objectives designed to persuade interested content area teachers to try some new strategies and techniques to better serve ESOL students in their classes. Objective 1 is to create awareness of the problem among content area teachers, parents, relevant staff, and the community. Objective 2 is to provide guidelines consisting of strategies and procedures that will ensure ESOL students have equal access to challenging academic content--emphasizing training of content area teachers to meet the special needs of ESOL students in a mainstream classroom. Objective 3 is to involve parents and the community in the school life. Overall, the plan presented in this study is an effort to provide concrete strategies to help increase teacher awareness of ESOL students and their needs, and to offer many procedures for establishing culturally friendly classes and strategies that should increase the learning and motivation of all students. Extensive references and resources are provided. (Author/KFT)

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Strategies and Activities to Stimulate Adequate ESOL Instruction in Content Area Courses and Increase Honest Effort and Motivation Among ESOL Students

Mrya E. McCallum
DeKalb County Schools
November, 1999

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PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

A large number of English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students enter high school with little or no English speaking skills and most often have chosen to attain an academic diploma (college bound diploma), rather than a Tech Prep diploma (vocational/technical diploma) (Mary Sue Howard, 1999). Many of these students have not had as much formal schooling as their American counterparts, many have attended similar courses, but ones containing less rigorous content and many have learning disabilities that have gone undetected (Ga. Dept. of Ed., 1997, p 1). This presents a difficult problem for the faculty and staff since the academic diploma students must bring with them to high school a certain amount of knowledge and skills in order to perform the rigorous curriculum. At present these students must complete, within four years, four units of English, four units of math, with the lowest level of math being offered that of Algebra I, three units of Science, including the choices of Biology, Physical Science, Chemistry and Physics, two units of world language and various other subject area units totaling 22 credits (Mary Sue Howard, 1999). Therefore, the problem is not simply one of teaching English to students of diverse populations, or acculturating them into the social setting of the school, but rather how does the faculty teach these students English within their individual content areas, acculturate them into the social culture of the class and determine these students' needs as far as their academic background is concerned and pinpoint possible learning disabilities that may exist. Added to this difficult task is the pressure ESOL students feel to keep up with and be accepted by their American classmates. Their determination to succeed often creates for them a desire to pass at all costs. Due to the quiet nature of the ESOL students, their understandable shyness around teachers and helpful peers who provide more than just guidance, many teachers do not realize their lack of knowledge and English speaking skills. Often, they reach the eleventh grade with a required grade point average (GPA) of 'C,' but fail the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHS GT) miserably due to their inability to comprehend fully the English language, particularly in various subject areas, such as Language Arts, Science and Social Studies.

BACKGROUND:

There has been a tremendous change in school populations across the U.S. within recent years. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 1994, all ethnic groups, except the white group, have shown gains. In New Mexico, California and Texas, the Hispanic population alone accounts for 45.3 percent, 35.3 percent and 34.4 percent of the total school populations respectively. These figures have increased and are expected to continue to do so (Yokota, 1995). This increase of diverse populations has created the need for some specific English training for ESOL students. Most school districts throughout the U.S. require that their ESOL students attend a separate service center for a short period of time where their prior school background (if available) can be studied and decisions made as to local school placement. Students then are placed in an ESOL English class for an average of one hour per day. The rest of the day is spent in regular subject area classes (Mary Sue Howard, 1999).

The school involved in this study is located in a large metropolitan county in the southeast. This school, as have other schools in the county, has experienced an increased population of ESOL students. Presently 110 ESOL students attend the school and come from the countries of Bangladesh, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, El Salvadore, Ethiopia, Germany, Hondourous, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Russia, Turkey and Viet Nam (Liz Boatwright, 1999). These students first attend a center for international students in order to prepare them for their local school setting. The average length of time spent there is four to six weeks, and students often learn no more than “yes/no, ma’am,” “yes/no, sir.” The philosophy seems to be that the sooner students are placed in a regular content area class the sooner they will acculturate and learn sufficient English (Diane Clark, 1999). Students receive specific English instruction for two hours each day in an ESOL English class and an ESOL reading class. Most teachers believe this is adequate English language training and therefore, they spend little or no time teaching comprehension skills (Liz Boatwright, 1999). The school is rated one of the top schools in the county and boasts one of the highest Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and GHSGT scores in the state (Diane Clark, 1999). This school is achievement oriented and teachers believe their job is that of subject area expert. It is difficult for them to accept the fact

that some students cannot read whether they be ESOL or American students. The fact that this school has fewer of this type of student perpetuates their stance to remain segregated subject area teachers that do not use thematic lessons or teach reading in the content areas. However, these are dedicated and caring teachers who wish to serve their entire student body. In all fairness, they are often unaware of how to teach a student newly arrived from another country. English is their only language and they have but 55 minutes in which to teach their lesson. It is obvious that awareness and staff development are the keys to solving this problem.

ACTION PLAN:

The goal of this plan is to solve the problem of inadequate ESOL instruction in content area courses and increase honest effort and motivation among ESOL students, thereby providing sound instruction for all.

The bottom-up approach will be used to implement this plan since it is a grassroots initiative and will be facilitated by the school's two ESOL teachers. One teaches English and the other teaches reading to limited English proficient students. The goal of this approach is to start with a few interested teachers who are willing to try some new strategies, thereby creating interest among members of the school community (Campbell, 1997). To promote this change, the facilitators will begin networking their ideas with the ninth grade academy teachers since their program is new this school year and they are sensitive to innovative ideas that will help all ninth graders. Also, this group of teachers has been targeted because they are already working together in a cohesive unit. This small number will be able to implement the suggested procedures and strategies presented in the plan consistently and share feedback on an immediate basis. The support of the principal is necessary in order to make some schedule changes that are suggested in the plan and to secure her involvement in certain procedural strategies. As school community involvement in the plan increases, the principal can lend greater support by providing time and place for increased staff development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN:

1. Create awareness of the problem
2. Provide strategies and procedures to alleviate the problem
3. Involve parents and community in school life

OBJECTIVE 1: CREATE AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

The first objective of this plan is to make content area teachers aware of the problem. Part of this awareness involves helping teachers to see how the problem relates to them. As has been discussed earlier, most high school teachers see themselves as subject area experts and feel that sheltered ESOL English and reading classes are adequate preparation for their content area courses. Providing information concerning the number of ESOL students within U.S. schools, the length of time necessary to learn content area English and the ineffectiveness of pull-out programs will aid them in the understanding of the problem and hopefully will allow them to see their responsibility in solving it.

For the 1994-95 school year a total of 3,184,696 limited English proficient (LEP) students were enrolled in U.S. schools. The process of learning academic language requires more time than that needed to learn language for interacting on a social level with English speakers (Macias and Kelly, as cited by Angstrom, 1997). Social language is usually developed within the first two years of arrival in an English speaking setting. However, the language needed for learning academic content may require five to eight years, or longer, depending on the age and prior educational background of the student (Anstrom, 1997). Since content area language is specific to a particular subject and indeed takes longer to learn than does social English, it is obvious that much of the responsibility for teaching this language falls on the mainstream teacher. It is important to note that ESOL students spend more time in mainstream classrooms than in sheltered ESOL classes. The reason why the pull-out or sheltered classes are not as effective as they should be is due to the fact that there is a tendency to assume that the short period of ESOL sheltered instruction is the major instruction of the day and adequate to instill all

language learning. Therefore, a connection between the sheltered class and the mainstream class has not been developed (Kissam and Dorsey, 1996).

The following chart provides concrete suggestions to help content area teachers remain aware of their ESOL student population. The plan's facilitators will work closely with the content area teachers supplying information and manpower necessary to accomplish these suggestions. Note that any additional manpower may include English proficient students, teachers with similar cultural backgrounds, reading paraprofessionals, community members and parents.

Objective 1: Create awareness of the problem

- **Make subject area teachers aware that:**
 - **Pullout programs do not help ESOL students in specific subjects.**
 - **ESOL students need to be academically competent in the use of English in all subject areas.**
 - **They need to encourage acceptance of other dialects in the mainstream classroom. (Just because they sound funny to your ear doesn't mean they are slow or ignorant.)**
- **Provide background portfolios on each ESOL student to give guidance to subject area teachers.**
- **Provide opportunities for students, parents and staff from multicultural backgrounds who have sufficient experience in our culture to consult with subject area teachers about problems ESOL students face.**
- **Provide current research information on ESOL strategies to subject area teachers on a biweekly basis.**
- **Separate ESOL student progress reporting from regular progress reporting.**
- **Provide for informal discussions between students, subject area teachers and counselors on a monthly basis in the ESOL classroom.**
- **Provide reading assessment test results to subject area teachers.**
- **Provide dropout rate data on a multicultural basis.**
- **Establish literacy support group made up of content area teachers, plan facilitators and other interested school and community members.**
Issues: professional literature, shared successes and failures.

The sources of the information for this document include, but are not limited to, The Southeastern Regional Vision for Education, SERVE, Leading Change in Literacy, Southeastern District Stories, 1998; Ed Kissam and Holda Dorsey, Tierra de Oportunidad, Module 12, Parents Involvement in their Children's Education, 1996; Betty Mesa-Matluck, Rosalind Alexander-Kasparik, and Robin M. Queen, Through the Golden Door: Qualities of Effective Programs for Immigrant Adolescents with Limited Schooling, Delta Systems Inc. 1998; Sandra H. Fradd, Okhee Lee, Creating Florida's Multilingual Global Work Force, 1998.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROVIDE STRATEGIES AND PROCEDURES TO ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEM

The second objective to the plan is to provide guidelines consisting of strategies and procedures that will ensure ESOL students have equal access to challenging academic content. Therefore, the use of effective educational practices for these students in mainstream classes are imperative (Anstrom, 1997). Despite the fact that at least fifty percent of American teachers teach a language minority student at some point in their careers, most receive little or not preparation in working with these students (Anstrom, 1997). Professional development for the school staff will be designed to help ninth grade academy teachers, administrators and counselors serve ESOL students more effectively. The staff development provided will be based on the theory that in order to plan and implement effective educational programs for ESOL students, classroom environments should encourage academic success through positive teacher behaviors and instructional approaches that help make language and content accessible to ESOL students (Mace-Matluck, et al, 1998).

The following strategies and procedures seek to:

1. incorporate ESOL methods into the content area classrooms.
2. make oral teacher/administrative presentations more comprehensible.
3. strive to distinguish between language difficulties and learning problems.
4. promote the interaction of ESOL students and native English speaking students through cooperative learning activities and peer coaching.
5. promote thematic lessons and team teaching among content area teachers.

Objective 2: Provide strategies and procedures to alleviate problem

• Strategies

- **Shared lessons between project facilitators (English and ESOL reading teachers) and content area teachers.**
- **Train all students to use common note taking approach, such as Cornell Note-Taking or SQ3R.**
- ***Modeling of teacher's thought processes for students.**
- **Using the internet, translate news articles from native language to English in ESOL reading classes.**
- **Use thematic units across the curriculum.**
- **Encourage use of journal writing in content area subjects, specifically mathematics.**
- **Use cooperative learning groups with student peer coaches.**
- **Take the opportunity to study various cultures, particularly in Social Studies classes.**
- **Use team teaching approach, ESOL English and reading teachers may team up with content area teachers on a short-term or part-time basis.**
- **ESOL teachers should teach cause and effect, persuasion, and comparison and contrast to facilitate their use by content area teachers.**
- **Content area teachers should focus on a few key concepts rather than trying to teach a large amount of material.**
- **Concepts should be presented in a variety of ways. This helps ESOL students, particularly in the content area of science.**
- **Praise constructively for specific reading and learning behaviors.**
- ***Simplify English and speak more slowly using correct English with gestures, actions, facial expressions and visuals.**
- ***Model acceptance and respect for ESOL students. This behavior will be reciprocated by other students in the class.**
- ***Involve students in a literature based English class with the use of a variety of books, listening, talking, dictating and composing.**

• Procedures

- Provide mentoring program involving teachers, the business community and community members who share similar backgrounds with ESOL students.
- Implement a buddy system among native speakers of English and ESOL students.
- Supply tutors for ESOL students in content area classes. Senior students with free periods can be used for this.
- Provide taped copies of chapters for ESOL students to check out and use at home or in ESOL reading class. Strategic questions can be used throughout chapter tapes to make sure students are learning important points.
- Create picture definitions for content area vocabulary.
- Provide lists of various ESOL strategies for teachers to use each week and place in lesson plans.
- Provide a review at the end of each content area lesson.
- Read silently the first ten minutes of content area class. Teacher facilitates asking particular students to read aloud.
- Complete Frye readability test on all content area text.
- Ask who-what-when-where-how questions of passages/stories read.
- *Rewrite texts giving key points of chapter sections and vocabulary words appropriate to subject.
- Use movie segments to teach such concepts as; inference, sequence, facts and characterization in ESOL English and reading classes.
- *Tests should be non-discriminatory as far as dialect and culture is concerned. Content area tests can be rewritten by ESOL reading paraprofessional.
- Use charts, graphs and tables when modeling texts rather than a narrative with simpler vocabulary and shorter sentences.
- In small groups, have students read three to five stories, choose their favorite and present as mini-drama, pictures or puppet show of main characters.
- Use quick games that foster team effort.
- *Use audiobooks to provide an oral reading model that provides listening for comprehension practice.
- *Subject area homework should include listening and reporting on a radio or TV broadcast.
- *Use chants for vocabulary pronunciation and stress practice in ESOL English and reading classes.

Objective 2 Sources:

The sources of the information for this document include, but are not limited to, *Elaine Blakey and Sheila Spence, Developing Metacognition, ERIC Digest, 1990, from the World Wide Web, <http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/npin/respar/texts/home/metacog.html>; *TESL Resource Guide, ESL Teaching and Learning Methods, from the World Wide Web, <http://www.nald.ca/province/nb/tesl/guide7.htm>; *TESL Resource Guide, Suggestions for the Classroom Teacher, from the World Wide Web, <http://www.nald.ca/province/nb/tesl/guide8.htm>; *TESL Resource Guide, Getting Started: Approaches to ESL Teaching, from the World Wide Web, <http://www.nald.ca/province/nb/tesl/guide5.htm>; *Kris Anstrom, Academic Achievement for Secondary Language Minority Students: Standards, Measures and Promising Practices, from the World Wide Web, <http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/reports/acadach.html>; Carolyn Temple Adger, Issues and Implications of English Dialects for Teaching English as a Second Language, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. 1998; Nancy E. Elrod, A Reel Road Show: Reading Film in the Classroom, DeKalb County Schools Staff Development Day presentation, 1999; *Reading Comprehension Strategies, from the World Wide Web, <http://snow.utoronto.ca/Learn2/readcom.htm>; 8Recorded Books, Inc. How Audiobooks work for your students, from the World Wide Web, <http://www.recordedbooks.com/how.asp>, 1998; * TESL Resource Guide, Activities for Secondary ESL Learners, from the World Wide Web, <http://www.nald.ca/province/nb/tesl/guide14.htm>; * TESL , Resource Guide, Activities to Facilitate ESL Learning, from the World Wide Web, <http://www.nald.ca/province/nb/tesl/guide6.htm>; Penny McKay, Long-term Mapping and measurement in School ESL – Some Perspectives, paper presented at ACTA/VATME National Conference, University of Melbourne, 1994; Penny McKay, Developing ESL proficiency descriptions for the school context: The NLLIA ESL Bandscales, Australian Education Department, 1994

OBJECTIVE 3: INVOLVE PARENTS AND COMMUNITY IN SCHOOL LIFE

The success of this plan depends a great deal on the implementation of objective three: parental and community involvement. The facilitators of the plan must be untiring in their resolve to solicit the support of teachers, administrators, staff, students, school organizations and clubs as they seek to bring ESOL students' parents into the school community. After all, an effective plan or program must incorporate not only sound instruction and staff development, but must include parental involvement and support services (Mace-Matluck, et al, 1998). This task will be most difficult since so many of the ESOL students' parents speak little or no English and feel uncomfortable in the school setting. The opportunity to meet monthly in the ESOL English or reading class is a great way in which to initially involve parents and provide them with important information. The following chart gives suggestions that include support services as well as opportunities for parental involvement.

One additional goal that has evolved from this study provides a strong incentive for parents to become involved. After learning, through research, that it requires at least three to five years for most ESOL students to learn to speak content specific English, it is felt that many ESOL high school students simply cannot finish school and receive a diploma in the time allotted. Therefore, it is purposed that ESOL students who have not completed high school by age 22 be given the opportunity to continue receiving earned credit in an adult education class (Mace-Matluck, 1998). This is a strong proposal and one in which parents have a stake. This may be the impetus for bringing them into the school community and giving them a voice.

Objective 3: Involve parents and community in school life

- Have parents visit the school at least once a month to observe ESOL students in English or reading classes.
- *Follow up initial meetings/interviews with subsequent meetings and telephone calls.
- Inform parents of adult education opportunities through ESOL and reading classes and provide applications that their students can help them complete.
- More parent involvement will promote more acceptance of English speaking at home.
- Use lay community (parents and business owners) to coach ESOL students.
- Use translators from the community to discuss student assessments, such as report cards, progress reports or standardized tests, with parents in their native language.
- Invite administrators to ESOL English and reading classes to discuss their role while parents are there.
- Provide chart to parents and students of school administration and staff phone numbers and map.
- Survey parents in English and their native language.
- Get ESOL student's parents involved on advisory committees for programs such as migrant education, bilingual education or on school site councils.

The sources of the information for this document include, but are not limited to, * TESL Resource Guide, Involving Parents: Tips for Teachers and Administrators, from the World Wide Web, <http://www.nald.ca/province/nb/tesl/guide4.htm>; Betty Mesa-Matluck, Rosalind Alexander-Kasparik, and Robin M. Queen, Through the Golden Door: Qualities of Effective Programs for Immigrant Adolescents with Limited Schooling, Delta Systems Inc. 1998; Ed Kissam and Holda Dorsey, Tierra de Oportunidad, Module 12, Parents Involvement in their Children's Education, 1996; Kris Anstrom, Academic Achievement for Secondary Language Minority Students: Standards, Measures and Promising Practices, from the World Wide Web, <http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/reports/acadach.html>; Shwu-yong L. Huang, Judith Walker de Felix, and Hersholt C. Waxman, Classroom Instruction, Home language, and English Acquisition of Secondary Bilingual Students, American Educational Research Association, 1997.

SUMMARY:

According to the International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English (1996), "we need to honor that which is distinctive in the many groups that make up our nation" (Anstrom, 1997). We, as educators, must do our best to educate all students and remember, particularly, that ESOL high school students face more difficult challenges than most as they enter American schools for the first time. They must learn a social language as well as many content specific languages in order to achieve success in school. Also, they must learn a new culture and develop acceptable social skills with which to function in the new culture. Added to these challenges is the fact that nearly all of them are here, not because they choose to be, but because their parents made the decision to move to America. Often, these students leave behind other family members and friends. This is an extremely difficult time for these children. Students who are learning another language, adjusting to a new culture, recovering from emotional trauma and lacking educational opportunities need time (*Understanding the Second Language Learner, 1998). While most educators truly strive to reach all their students, those with unique characteristics and needs often receive less than adequate attention. Generally, this is not due to prejudice, but rather a lack of time, awareness and the training necessary to effectively teach these students. The plan presented in this study is an effort to provide concrete strategies in which to help increase teacher awareness of ESOL students and their needs. It offers many procedures in which to establish a culturally friendly class and strategies that should increase the motivation and learning of all students.

Why is this here?

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