

# **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER RESOURCE GUIDE:**

*A Guide for Rural Districts with  
a Low Incidence of ELLs*

Regional Educational Laboratory  
Contract #ED-01-CO-0006  
Deliverable #2004-05

*Prepared by*  
Jane Donnelly Hill, M.S.  
Kathleen Flynn, J.D.

November 30, 2004



©2004 McREL

This document has been funded at least in part with federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-01-CO-0006. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
SECTION 1: BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY .....	3
Experiences from the Field.....	3
Identifying Core Knowledge.....	3
Developing a Guiding Document .....	4
Monitoring and Evaluating Progress.....	5
Leading Professional Development. ....	6
Stimulating Parent and Family Involvement. ....	6
Recommendations for Building Leadership Capacity .....	7
Key Resources .....	9
SECTION 2: BUILDING INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF CAPACITY.....	11
Experiences from the Field.....	11
Designing a Professional Development Program. ....	11
Linking to Credit-Bearing College Coursework.....	13
Recommendations Concerning Professional Development .....	14
Key Resources .....	18
SECTION 3: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT .....	21
Experiences from the Field.....	21
Assessing Parent and Family Needs. ....	21
Developing Parents’ Understanding. ....	21
Encouraging Parent Involvement.....	22
Recommendations Concerning Parent Involvement .....	23
Key Resources .....	23
REFERENCES .....	25
APPENDIX A:     ELL Advisory Committee Survey	
APPENDIX B:     ELLs Administrative Guide	
APPENDIX C:     ELLs Administrative Guide — Identification of ELLs	
APPENDIX D:     Language Development Profile for ELLs	
APPENDIX E:     Spanish Language Questionnaire	

# INTRODUCTION

---

This resource guide will help rural school districts with a low incidence of English language learners (ELLs) develop the capacity to build and implement a comprehensive program that meets both the academic and language proficiency needs of ELLs. Under Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, ELLs must show increased academic achievement in content areas each year, even as they are also learning English. Low incidence districts, therefore, must seek creative means for delivering services to these students. This guide will assist administrators and teachers in such districts create and provide necessary services.

The number of English language learners attending American schools has grown dramatically over the past decade. More than 10 million students currently enrolled in U.S. schools come from homes in which a language other than English is spoken. These students represent the fastest growing segment of the school-age population. Census 2000 information shows that this population has and will continue to increase in classrooms in virtually every section of the country. Census findings also demonstrate that much of the growth has occurred in states which previously had not enrolled any or had small numbers of English language learners.

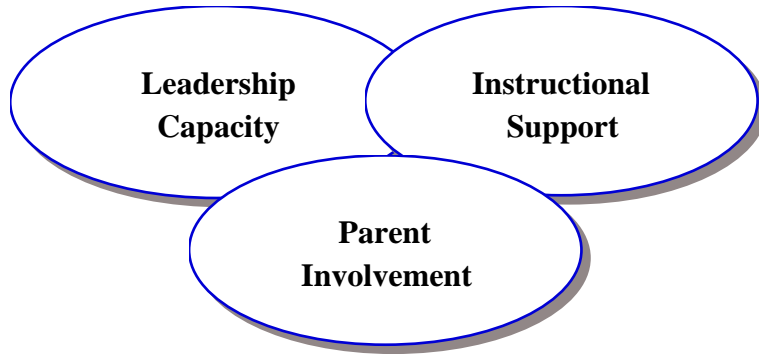
Several states in the Regional Educational Laboratory Central Region states are prime examples of predominantly white, English-speaking states that are now experiencing marked increases in the number of students who are English language learners. School districts in Kansas, Nebraska, and Wyoming are enrolling unprecedented numbers of non-English-speaking immigrant children. As these families move into middle America, some are selecting small rural communities as their home, challenging school districts to develop instructional services for a handful of ELL students. Immigrants currently make up about two percent of the total rural population (Huang, 1999). With such small numbers, these districts face particular challenges not seen in urban settings. First, in most instances, school staff members do not have any experience working with diverse populations and lack basic knowledge on how best to educate English language learners. Second, resources, financial and human, are often limited or absent.

McREL's framework for assisting rural schools with low incidence ELLs was created to guide the technical assistance McREL offered to a small rural district in Green River, Wyoming (Sweetwater County School District #2). This district had a limited number of Spanish-speaking ELLs in the 2003-2004 school year. Building on relevant literature, consultation with other professionals in the field, and the experience and expertise of McREL staff, McREL developed a three-pronged approach to meet the needs of this district: building capacity for leadership, instruction, and parent involvement (Figure 1). These components comprised a systemic intervention to develop, improve, or enhance specific strategies essential to ELL instruction and to the integration of the non-English-speaking population into the overall school community.

Each component is addressed in a separate section in this resource guide, although inevitably there is some overlap among the sections. Each section discusses McREL's actual implementation efforts in this Wyoming district and offers recommendations for rural schools with low incidence ELLs based on this experience. A list of suggested resource materials is provided at the end of each section. Appendices contain artifacts and sample materials from McREL's work with Sweetwater County School District #2.

Evidence was collected to authenticate capacity building and knowledge gained by the Advisory Council, the district leadership team in Sweetwater County School District #2. As part of an evaluation of the leadership component, members of this team were asked to complete a survey at the end of the school

year. (See Appendix A). Overall, the results show that activities engaged in by the Advisory Council during the 2003-2004 academic year were effective in increasing the participants' knowledge and skills regarding ELL services. They noted accomplishments in all three components of the intervention: leadership, instruction, and parent involvement. Their work included gaining approval for district ELL policy and finalizing the ELL Administrative Guide, providing district-wide staff training in using the Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP) model, and establishing a strong parent group and promoting the parent component to the Board of Education.



**Figure 1. Framework for Rural Schools with Low Incidence ELLs**

By sharing our experiences in the Sweetwater School District and offering recommendations that grew out of these experiences, we hope to provide useful guidance to other rural districts that are struggling to offer appropriate services to growing numbers of English language learners in their communities.

# SECTION 1: BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

---

## EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD

The primary purpose of McREL's first component of its intervention in Sweetwater County School District #2 was to develop the capacity of a leadership team to effectively address the needs of English language learners in the district. The newly formed Advisory Council in Sweetwater consisted of the Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum Secretary, Special Services Director, the ELL Coordinator, principals, a Title I teacher, an elementary school teacher, and McREL staff. McREL staff worked with the Advisory Council to build their knowledge of the district's legal obligations to ELLs and then to draft a guiding document that set forth district policies and procedures regarding ELLs. To ensure that instructional staff were prepared to teach English language learners, the Advisory Council developed a district-wide professional development program. Finally, the Council conducted a needs assessment to learn more about the ELLs' parents and measure their knowledge of topics such as standards-based education and NCLB in order to improve communication and provide appropriate services.

**Identifying Core Knowledge.** To start with, the Council members needed to increase their knowledge of legal requirements pertaining to ELLs, particularly under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), gather knowledge about the ELLs in their district, and learn about instructional programs for ELLs so that they could make informed decisions about adequately addressing their needs.

McREL staff used several resources to help build the Council's knowledge of the district's legal obligations to ELL students. First among these resources was a manual developed in 1999 by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Education, titled *Programs for English Language Learners: Resource Materials for Planning and Self-Assessment*.

This manual offers school districts a step-by-step process for developing or revising a comprehensive program for ELLs. Although not a legally binding statement of requirements, this resource addresses the district's responsibilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. The manual recaps key legal cases, such as *Lau v. Nichols*, the U.S. Supreme Court case that affirmed the May 1975 Department of Education memorandum that directed school districts to take steps to help ELL students overcome language barriers and to ensure that they can participate meaningfully in the district's educational programs. The manual also includes a glossary, a resource list, and a series of ELL program charts depicting effective service delivery models.

Another useful resource was *No Child Left Behind: A Desktop Reference*, an expansive guide to the No Child Left Behind Act that was published in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. This guide highlights what is new under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 for each program supported under the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965, which was reauthorized by NCLB, and other earlier statutes. The guide describes how NCLB's four guiding principles (accountability, flexibility and local control, parental choice, and what works) affect Title I and other federal education programs.

Finally, the Council reviewed *Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act: An Implementation Guide*, published by the National Association of Bilingual Education in 2002. This guide focuses on how to implement Title III, as revised in the No Child Left Behind Act, at the school district level. It provides directions on interpreting the law, highlighting major changes and identifying strategies for program planning. Planning tools, checklists, and samples of home/school correspondence are provided.

**Developing a Guiding Document.** Once the Advisory Council understood the legal and federal requirements regulating services for ELLs, they began to draft, with help from McREL staff, a manual outlining steps and processes for developing a comprehensive ELL program for their district. The *English Language Learners Administrative Guide for Sweetwater County School District #2* outlines the Council's approach to providing equal educational opportunities for students who are linguistically and culturally diverse. This guide establishes an overarching program goal:

*Sweetwater County School District #2 will meet the needs of English language learners by providing appropriate and necessary language instruction so that students will acquire the language communication skills to meet the state and district standards and succeed socially in a general education environment.*

The Guide addresses the following topics:

- *Legal requirements:* NCLB requirements are discussed in the guide, including, but not limited to, the disaggregation of data for ELLs and testing requirements for English language proficiency as well as in reading and math. A synopsis of federal court cases that support the rights of English language learners to an adequate education is provided. (See Appendix B.)
- *Identification of English language learners:* The manual provides specific guidance on how to identify, assess, and recommend appropriate instructional services for students in the Sweetwater District whose primary or home language is other than English. First, all parents must complete the Home Language Survey at the time of registration. Any student whose survey indicates that English is not the primary language spoken at home is referred to the district's ELL Coordinator. Students who speak no English are immediately placed in the ELL program with their parents' or guardian's permission. (See Appendix C.)
- *Participant needs assessment:* To determine which students who have been referred to the ELL Coordinator need the program of ELL services to participate meaningfully in the district's regular instructional program, the ELL Coordinator or ELL staff administer the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey. If necessary, the student is also assessed in his or her primary language. Recommendations for placement, ranging from part-time placement in the ELL program to full-time placement in a mainstream classroom, may be made based on a student's performance on this assessment.
- *Program of services:* The stated goal of the Program of Services section is as follows:

*To provide English language learners appropriate English language development services as well as services to enable the student to use English to communicate in social settings, to use English to achieve academically in Wyoming standard areas, and to use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways.*

An educationally appropriate instructional plan is developed for each student based on his or her individual needs. If necessary, the student is referred to other support services, such as Title I, Building Intervention Team, or the gifted and talented

program. Once the student is properly placed, English language development and literacy instruction is provided.

- *Parent and family involvement:* This Administrative Guide provides strategies to support parents in making well-informed decisions about their child's progress in becoming proficient in English. Communication between instructional staff and parents is central to this goal; strategies discussed include written communication in the parents' home language, telephone contacts in the parents' home language, and conferences among parents, ELL staff, and instructional staff, with an interpreter present if needed. Important school and district information will be translated for parents so that they can participate in decision making. Parent involvement programs for culturally and linguistically diverse families are also part of the plan.
- *Staffing, training, and resources:* The district tries to predict enrollment of English language learners each coming school year to ensure they have a sufficient number of qualified ELL staff. Should the district be unable to recruit enough qualified staff, it will provide the necessary training to existing staff to maintain quality instruction. Extensive professional development, including conferences, workshops, classes, and book studies, will be provided for the ELL coordinator and ELL staff; the district will also provide opportunities for the instructional staff to collaborate with the ELL staff to review individual student progress and examine instructional strategies.
- *Assessment of progress and transition from ELL service:* Student performance on the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey and on district and state-wide assessments, together with informal instructional staff observations are used to determine whether a student needs continued ELL services or is ready to transition from ELL services into regular instructional programs and classrooms. Students who are transitioned from ELL services are monitored for one year to ensure that they are making appropriate progress in a general education classroom.

**Monitoring and Evaluating Progress.** Developing this manual led to the need for additional technical assistance. For example, the district needed assistance in data collection. Since data collection is a necessary component of program design, implementation, and improvement, a spreadsheet was developed and refined throughout the year to track identifying information (school, grade, student), place of birth, time in U.S., grade point average, pretest/posttest scores, projected gains in language acquisition, and whether or not gains were achieved.

Projected gains in English language proficiency were based on amount of time in instruction. For example, assume a student is administered the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey at the end of September. His or her level and grade equivalent are recorded for each of the three sections of the test; i.e., Broad, Oral, and Reading/Writing. The same student is post-tested at the end of April, seven months later. The expectation then is for the student to have grown at least seven months in his language acquisition. Sweetwater County School District #2 set a goal for themselves in 2003-2004: 80 percent of the English language learners will meet their expected gains in English language acquisition based on grade equivalent scores. Sweetwater came very close to meeting this goal: in the first year of implementation, 67 percent of students met expected gains in oral language, and 78 percent did so in reading and writing. Projected gains were developed as a way to increase accountability for student performance as mandated by Title III of The No Child Left Behind Act. Until the state of Wyoming establishes and disseminates their "annual measurable achievement objectives," as required by NCLB, for districts to utilize, Sweetwater will have a system of accountability for measuring gains in English language proficiency.



The Council also developed an Individual Student Profile sheet so that any teacher could open a student's file and find demographic and outcome data at a glance (see Appendix D). The demographic data include a student's place of birth, primary language, grade level, special programs, language proficiency, and history of prior instruction. Outcome data consist of achievement data for the state assessment and district level tests.

**Leading Professional Development.** Following the policy established in the Administrative Guide, the Advisory Council worked with McREL staff to enable all school staff to gain the skills necessary to instruct English language learners. First, because the district had purchased an elementary and secondary ESL (English as a Second Language) curriculum over the summer, McREL provided staff development at the beginning of the school year so that ELL paraprofessionals could begin implementing language support in a pull-out setting.

The Advisory Council then chose the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model as its district-wide model for all staff to use in instructing ELLs while in mainstream classrooms. After selecting the SIOP model, the Advisory Council developed a plan for training staff. The content of the training was based on the training manual provided with the SIOP model (Short, Hudec, & Echevarria, 2002). McREL used this manual to provide training in the Sweetwater district, and the district will use it for future staff development sessions. Each section of the manual contains detailed information for training, black line masters for handouts, and overhead transparencies.

The Advisory Council decided to offer half-day trainings to every teacher in the district in order to provide them with an overview of the SIOP model. A year-long training plan was developed so that all teachers and administrators would have at least a basic understanding of the model. Under this plan, ELLs would be spending the majority of their instructional time in their mainstream classrooms, and, since the schools had limited numbers of bilingual staff, all teachers were expected to be language facilitators.

The district selected the half-day training structure so that substitute teachers and teacher release time could be used effectively. Starting in October, 2003, and going through February, 2004, McREL offered its SIOP training, "Helping All Students Succeed – The SIOP Model" in morning and afternoon sessions for one high school, two middle schools, five elementary schools, all special education teachers, and all district administrators and principals.

Each school received a follow-up to their initial half-day SIOP training, and each school structured its follow-up staff development session to best meet its individual needs. For example, Truman Elementary asked that McREL staff be available to meet with individual staff members. At Lincoln Middle School, McREL staff facilitated grade-level discussion groups, while at Washington Elementary School, McREL staff modeled lessons in teachers' classrooms.

**Stimulating Parent and Family Involvement.** The Advisory Council also focused on improving communication with and services to ELLs and their families. The Council asked themselves what they knew about ELLs' parents and how they could better communicate with them, and they conducted a needs assessment to further their knowledge and develop appropriate services. They then participated in monthly parent meetings at which McREL staff conducted trainings on topics for which the needs assessment had indicated more knowledge was necessary.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

Based on our experience in Sweetwater County School District #2, McREL offers the following recommendations regarding building leadership capacity to rural districts that need to offer instruction to a fairly small number of English language learners.

***Strong leadership is crucial:*** Before any district or school can be successful in implementing programs and practices for ELLs, leadership team members must adopt a positive “can-do” attitude. Rural areas have typically been ethnically homogeneous, and many community members may have little experience with people from other cultures. When a community encounters diversity for the first time, the response to be emulated must be demonstrated by those in leadership roles. If district and school leadership make it clear that the success of ELL students is everybody’s business, the stage is set for acceptance and focused problem solving. In a rural environment, a welcoming attitude and meaningful communication with parents are the foundations upon which programs will be built. Learning the phrases for social greetings in the second language is an example of a welcoming gesture. Finding ways to translate important documents is another way to demonstrate meaningful efforts at communication.

***Make all staff aware of the legal requirements for serving ELLs:*** For example, NCLB requires that teachers be certified as English language proficient and that curricula be demonstrated to be effective. Schools must teach English as well as the content specified in state standards. Although NCLB does not prescribe any specific program models or “how to’s,” the Office of Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education outlines three fundamental principles for compliance:

- an ELL program should be based on a sound educational theory;
- in implementing an ELL program, resources, personnel, and time must be reasonable and adequate to ensure success;
- the ELL program needs to be evaluated, and revised if necessary.

***Support teachers in their instructional efforts:*** Teachers must share a sense of collective efficacy, a belief that together they can make a difference in the way instruction is provided. If teachers believe there are barriers that cannot be overcome, such as poverty, family education levels, lack of literacy in the home, or a second language, then student outcomes will be limited. Teachers who realize they have the power to make a difference at school will see substantial gains in student achievement because they are not afraid to examine their instructional practices. School and district leadership can help teachers review their instructional practices by providing opportunities for collaborative planning. Teachers must have time to engage in structured conversations to examine their educational practices. Time needs to be allocated for teachers to talk with other teachers about the instructional strategies they are implementing and to share their successes and “unsuccesses.”

***Make professional development a priority:*** Besides promoting and supporting efficacy, leadership must make staff development a priority. The best strategies for teachers are the ones that can be most effectively used with a class that includes both ELLs and English speakers and are based on scientific research. Providing a toolkit of instructional strategies for teachers gives them what they need the most for doing their jobs. Ongoing

training that addresses strategies for teaching English and the features of second language acquisition should occur for all teachers. Since it is difficult for teachers to be experts in everything, wise administrators will look for teachers who can serve as trainers, coaches, or mentors for their colleagues to build professional development resources for now and years to come.

***Create an environment that accepts diversity:*** It is the leadership team's responsibility to cultivate an adequate awareness of diversity and validate ethnic groups that are new to the community. When leaders model acceptance behaviors toward the new group and incorporate the new culture into school situations, they foster a collective responsibility for the success of ELL students. This means finding successful ethnic representation in the community and making them a part of the school in order to gain different perspectives. Teachers may need time to speak with a member or members of the new, growing ethnic community in order to dispel any misconceptions and to gain cultural sensitivity and perspective.

***Allocate resources equitably:*** As leaders pursue educational reform for students who are not yet proficient in English, the equitable use of resources becomes an issue. Leaders need to determine what resources they need in order to provide adequate instruction for ELLs, take stock of their existing resources, and decide how they will reallocate them. Time, for example, is a precious commodity that should be used for designing or improving planning and instruction. In addition, in a rural setting, the entire staff, not just ELL instructors, should be considered as an educational resource. The most experienced teachers should be matched with the children who need them the most, and using the SIOP model, this can be done regardless of whether those teachers are bilingual.

***Integrate your ELL program:*** Districts and schools should guard against developing a new program, with new teachers and new funding, that is essentially an add-on program and is peripheral to the functioning of the school. A program to assist students in acquiring English must be well integrated in the mainstream school operations. ELLs cannot be segregated or tracked for the entire school day.

***Expect student achievement in the content areas:*** Exemplary leadership results in the expectation that ELLs can participate in challenging academic course work while they are learning English. In the past, there was a mistaken assumption that ELLs had to learn English before they could participate in core academics. Unfortunately, while the students who were not yet proficient in English were excluded from content area classes in order to learn English, their English dominant counterparts were making a year's growth in curricular knowledge, leaving ELLs to receive compensatory education (e.g., tutoring, summer school) to move toward grade level.

***Monitor and evaluate the ELL program:*** As soon as the program is in place, the monitoring and evaluating process begins. Districts must account for the performance of their ELL students, and gather and report data to demonstrate progress. The goal of evaluation is not to find a program that fits for all children in all schools. Instead, schools want to determine if the instructional strategies they have chosen are working given their own student demographics, program goals, and resources. In short, they must determine if their ELL students are showing adequate progress in English language acquisition, reading, and mathematics.

## KEY RESOURCES

*Determining Appropriate Referrals of English Language Learners to Special Education: A Self-Assessment Guide for Principals.* Washington, D.C.: National Association of Bilingual Education, 2002.

This guide provides principals and others with a general overview of the over representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in some special education programs. It highlights effective strategies to assess if this is happening in your district and steps to correct this situation. It also provides guidance on assessment, program design, staff professional development, communication with parents and families and sample tools and resources.

*The New Title I: The Changing Landscape of Accountability,* Kristen Tosh Cowan, Esq., Brustein and Manasevit, Attorneys at Law. Washington, D.C.: Thompson Publishing Group, 2003.

This reference tool provides an updated explanation of the Title I, Part A, provisions of the NCLB Act of 2001.

*The New Title I: Balancing Flexibility with Accountability,* Brustein and Manasevit, Washington, D.C.: Thompson Publishing Group, 2002.

This reference tool provides a quick, helpful overview of Title I, Part A, of the NCLB legislation. This information is essential in instructing staff on the accountability requirements of NCLB as it relates to ELL instruction.

*No Child Left Behind Legislation: A Desktop Reference.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2002.

This Desktop Reference outlines what is new under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 for each program supported under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 and other statutes. It also describes how the Act's four guiding principles (accountability, flexibility and local control, parental choice, and what works) are brought to bear on many of these programs. The intent is to provide a substantive overview of policy changes and emphases for state and district officials.

*Programs for English Language Learners, Resource Materials for Planning and Self-Assessment.* Washington D.C: U. S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 1999.

Developed by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), this reference manual offers school districts a step by step process for developing or revising a comprehensive program for ELLs. Although not a legally binding statement of requirements, this resource helps schools and districts address the obligatory responsibilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. This manual includes a glossary, a resource list, and a series of ELL program charts depicting effective service delivery models.

*Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act: An Implementation Guide.* Washington, D.C.: National Association of Bilingual Education, 2002.

This guide is focused on how to implement the new Title III of NCLB at the school district level. It provides directions on interpreting the law, highlighting major changes and strategies for program planning. Planning tools, checklists, and samples of home/school correspondence are provided.

## SECTION 2: BUILDING INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF CAPACITY

---

### EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD

The primary purpose of the second component of McREL's intervention in Sweetwater County School District #2 was to build the capacity of mainstream teachers, specialists, and paraprofessionals to effectively address the needs of ELLs. McREL provided staff with learning opportunities that helped them better instruct ELLs using research-based strategies and models. Because a school district must offer both high quality education for English language learners and appropriate supports for the instructional structure, McREL's second component focused on changing classroom practice and building a comprehensive and cohesive system of instructional services.

As noted in the previous section, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires schools to provide adequate education for English language learners. This legislation recognizes that there is a growing number of English language learners in the United States and identifies the need for research-based practices that will lead students whose first language is not English to fluent levels of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. To comply with NCLB, all state and local education agencies must establish English proficiency standards as well as standards for reading and math. Other requirements involve placing highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals in classrooms to teach English language learners. States are obligated to not only find the best methods of instruction for teaching children English but to also ensure that ELLs are learning academic content at the same time so that they are not "left behind." Although NCLB does not prescribe a particular method of instruction for ELL students, schools must provide language instruction that is based on scientific research.

**Designing a Professional Development Program.** District and school leaders in Sweetwater County School District #2 responded to their increasing ELL population by providing staff development for all administrators, principals, teachers, and paraprofessionals. Bilingual ELL paraprofessionals were trained in the use of an ESL (English as a Second Language) curriculum, i.e., an English language acquisition curriculum designed to reinforce classroom language, literacy, and content instruction, before the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year. The district selected Hampton-Brown's *High Points* and *Avenues* curricula to address the students' English language proficiency needs because these curricula provide daily oral language development, explicit grammar instruction, vocabulary activities, fiction/non-fiction reading selections, and tools for increasing written language skills. ELL paraprofessionals use these instructional materials, which are aligned with the SIOP model (described below) to support oral language and literacy, during a pullout period when ELLs leave their classrooms to work in small grade level groups.

However, because ELL students would spend most of the school day in a mainstream classroom, the district needed to select an instructional model that could be used by all teachers in the district. This approach needed to be one that would help ELLs learn English while also improving academic literacy skills and content knowledge in the mainstream classroom. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is a research-based model that is being used across the United States to help mainstream teachers better instruct ELL students. The SIOP model guides mainstream classroom teachers in teaching academic content to ELLs while supporting English language development. This is done through a process called "sheltered instruction."

Sheltered Instruction was a model originally designed by Krashen and others (see, e.g., Krashen, 1985) for students at an intermediate level of English language acquisition and adequate formal schooling in their primary language. Students who were instructed with this model usually began school with content

area classes in their primary language and then segued into English sheltered classes and finally into mainstream classes with dominant English speakers.

Over time, the term “sheltered instruction,” took on different meanings. In some educational settings, all English language learners were placed in the same classroom for a content area and teachers, knowing all students were still in the process of acquiring English, used special techniques to assist them in their understanding of the academic content. Thus, the students were “sheltered” from dominant English speakers and did not have to compete with native speakers.

In other learning environments, “sheltered” did not refer to the students but to the way content was delivered. Teachers who had ELLs as well as dominant English speakers were expected to make their content understandable to both groups of learners. “Sheltering” refers to the practice of making content accessible to ELLs by using techniques such as visual aids, gesturing, speaking clearly and slowly, reducing the use of idioms, and paraphrasing. Sweetwater adopted this latter concept of “sheltering” instruction for English language learners.

The SIOP model was a particularly appropriate choice for the Sweetwater district because, as in many rural areas, the district had few bilingual staff or community members to turn to for help in educating their English language learners. The district was able to hire a number of bilingual paraprofessionals, and the district ELL Coordinator spoke some Spanish, but otherwise there were no Spanish-speaking teachers in the district. The SIOP model works well in these conditions because it provides strategies for teachers who do not speak their students’ primary language to still convey academic content and increase English language skills.

Sweetwater chose the SIOP model for another important reason: it meets the NCLB requirement that language instruction be tied to scientifically-based research. SIOP was first used as a research instrument before it was modified into a system for lesson planning and instruction. Six years of research by the National Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence supports the protocol’s effectiveness (Short, n.d.). SIOP emphasizes content objectives and language objectives in grade level curriculum, helping districts to teach English to ELLs and helping these students meet the challenging state standards required of all students under NCLB. The model trains teachers to use eight components in planning and preparing their instruction (Short, Hudec, & Echevarria, 2002). These eight components include 30 observable indicators of effective lessons. In addition to providing guidelines for teachers, the SIOP model provides a formal observation protocol for principals to use. Examples of these expectations in each of the eight components are described as follows:

- *Preparation:* In the preparation phase, teachers must identify clearly defined content objectives and language objectives, and supplementary materials that will be used throughout the lesson. A skilled teacher can demonstrate that content has been adapted to the level of the students’ language proficiency. The preparation phase has been successfully accomplished when the teacher has planned meaningful activities that integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- *Building background:* ELL students may not understand a classroom concept because they do not have the prior knowledge that would assist them in constructing meaning or they may not have the same schema, or knowledge frameworks, as the English speaking students. The skillful sheltered instruction teacher uses strategies to access and activate prior knowledge and link past learning with new concepts. When vocabulary development is explicitly taught, it is a good indicator that building background is taking place in a classroom.

- *Comprehensible input:* Because NCLB mandates the teaching of the English language and content area knowledge, teachers must adjust their styles of presentation so the language and the subject matter can be understood. If a student is at a beginning level of understanding English, the teacher needs to use simple sentence types rather than long, complex sentences in explanations. Comprehensible input is taking place when sentences are presented at a slower rate of production to assist students in processing what has been said by the teacher, idiomatic expressions and jargon are eliminated from the teacher's speech, and techniques such as showing visuals, real objects, gestures, and body language are evident.
- *Strategies:* Effective sheltered instruction teachers help students understand themselves as learners, i.e., understand the demands of a task and the thinking processes they need to use. Strategies, as used in the SIOP model, refers to providing ELLs with explicit ways to monitor their thinking and to be engaged with the learning process. During this component of instruction, strategies are modeled and students are given opportunities to practice them within a lesson. Observable indicators also include scaffolding, whereby the teacher gives verbal prompts to move students from their current level of understanding to a higher level of understanding.
- *Interaction:* When frequent opportunities for interaction and/or discussion are provided between teacher-student and student-student, language proficiency can increase. This means that in a sheltered instruction classroom, a balance between teacher-talk and student-talk promoting oral language development would be observed. One would also see a variety of grouping configurations in the classroom, which aids in the development of English because it provides opportunities for students to practice English in small groups and benefit from English proficient models.
- *Practice/application:* Effective teachers using sheltered instruction provide hands-on activities so students can practice and apply new subject area knowledge and skills. While content is practiced, the activities must also promote the language objectives, which integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- *Lesson delivery:* Good lesson delivery involves appropriate pacing so activities can be accomplished and content and language objectives met. When teachers are observed during this instructional time, an observer would see students engaged 90%-100% of the class time with pacing appropriate to students' ability levels.
- *Review/assessment:* The key features of this component are comprehensive review of key vocabulary and content concepts so students are learning English while learning subject matter. Purposeful and intentional assessments are conducted at the end of a lesson by checking for comprehension and feedback is provided on student output.

**Linking to Credit-Bearing College Coursework.** Twelve teachers and five paraprofessionals attended a two-credit college class offered by McREL in the spring semester, which was titled "ED/LD (English Development/Literacy Development) Workshop : Literacy and Language Development for English Language Learners for Teachers/Paraprofessionals." Undergraduate credit was offered through Western Wyoming Community College and graduate credit through the University of Wyoming; staff could also earn credit for certification through the Professional Teaching Standards Board. The course covered, among other things, theories and research findings about instructing English language learners and further



training in the SIOP model. All teachers and paraprofessionals involved in the course also received feedback on their implementation of sheltered instruction strategies. At the end of the class, participants completed a survey; preliminary findings show increased knowledge and skills for addressing the needs of ELLs. Follow-up data regarding the learners' actual use of their knowledge and skills from the class is currently being collected through a second survey.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Based on our experience in Sweetwater County School District #2, McREL offers the following recommendations to rural districts about the professional development needs of educators who need to instruct English language learners.

***Use the primary language when possible:*** Types of languages spoken, numbers of students in those groups, availability of bilingual staff, and resources are some of the factors that will determine how the primary language will be used, for what amount of time, and for what purposes. Schools have the responsibility to actively pursue ways to support a child's learning in their primary language. If instruction cannot be provided, schools must still look for ways to access the students' conceptual base in their first language. Perhaps language development and maintenance of the native language occurs at home with parents being encouraged to speak, read, and write in their first language with their children or talk about familial associations with upcoming topics at school. Parents experience relief and a release from any guilt of not being fully English proficient when encouraged to use their native language at home because it is their strength. Keeping parents informed of topics of instruction and concepts to talk about at home with their children also provides a focus for parent involvement.

***Be resourceful when human resources are limited:*** Even though research (Garcia, 1991; Wong-Fillmore & Valdez, 1986) emphasizes the importance of providing instruction in the native language, there will be times when a bilingual staff member is not available, particularly in rural areas. In the case of Sweetwater County School District #2, the district did find some bilingual individuals in the community, mainly paraprofessionals, who were willing to work toward endorsements in ESL (English as a Second Language). If ELL students are not able to activate and access the knowledge (i.e., concepts, vocabulary, skills, and processes) in their first language, learning will need to focus on content instruction that is made understandable, oral language development, and literacy. Choosing an instructional model such as SIOP allows all instructional staff to assist students with English language acquisition. In addition, the role of parents may look different when native language instruction is not available. Parents need to serve as partners in the education process and need to be informed of upcoming unit themes. When it is not possible to use primary language instructionally during the day, the home language can be honored by finding community members who may be able to serve as translators, providing meaningful parent communication. Even if the school cannot provide native language instruction, it is important for the school to recognize the existence of other cultures and languages in the school community with evidence of signs, greetings, maps, and artifacts.

***Use bilingual paraprofessionals effectively to support monolingual teachers:*** In many rural school districts, paraprofessionals recruited from the community may be the only bilingual instructional staff in a school. These paraprofessionals can support teachers who do not speak an ELL student's primary language in a number of ways. For example,

paraprofessionals can preview mainstream classroom content with ELLs in their primary language and then review the content with them after it is presented in English by the classroom teacher. Districts need to be cognizant, however, of NCLB's requirements that paraprofessionals, like teachers, be "highly qualified." There is one exception to this rule that could be relevant to rural school districts: bilingual paraprofessionals who are used solely for translation or for parent involvement activities need only have a high school diploma. Districts can help their paraprofessionals become highly qualified by, for example, using Sweetwater's strategy of sponsoring a college credit-bearing course on ELL instructional strategies or other relevant subjects.

***Use content-based ESL instruction or sheltered instruction:*** Content-based ESL (English as a Second Language) instruction or sheltered instruction provides models for making the content of a particular academic class comprehensible and encourages language learning by highlighting key features of the English language. To use this effective technique, in addition to setting content objectives, the teacher looks at the lesson and sees what linguistic functions and structures the student(s) will need to participate. For example, in second grade, the theme could be Communities. During Social Studies, the students are asked to make a map of the community and give directions on getting from home to school, or from school to a nearby park. The language function required is "giving directions." The language structures needed are the command form of the verb "to go" with numbers and directional vocabulary, for example "Go two blocks and turn right." The teacher strives to demystify language by teaching the formal aspects of language, emphasizing grammar, vocabulary, and spelling, during authentic situations. Gersten and Baker's study (2000) clearly delineates the need to distinguish between language and academic goals. The language growth can be measured separately by looking at benchmarks in language development, and academic content can be assessed independently from language. In addition to content and language objectives, the teacher plans modifications to support ELL comprehension. Input can be made comprehensible by planning ways to integrate instructional talk with visuals (photos, pictures, drawings), real objects, body language, slower rate of speech, and high frequency vocabulary.

***Know your students' history and culture:*** In order to help students draw on their prior knowledge, it is important to learn about their culture and background experiences. Peregoy and Boyle (2001) recommend three initial steps. First, it is important to find out country of birth, length of time in U.S., language of the home, and the events associated with immigration, particularly any traumatic situations. The second step is to learn about their cultural background such as customs, religion, traditions, family life, holidays, celebrations, clothing, and food. Finally, explore their academic history to learn about their time in school and literacy level. Districts can conduct an audit of files to determine place of birth, length of time in the United States, exposure to English, and prior educational experiences. This information will prove valuable when planning tailored instructional programs. When students arrive in the U.S. having had adequate schooling in their native country, they usually have many academic skills in their native language that will transfer into English. Students who were born in the United States may present a more complicated picture for ELL staff because they may have been in and out of ESL (English as a Second Language) or bilingual programs, resulting in instructional gaps.

***Make connections between students' background experiences and content they are expected to learn:*** Before reading, determine what students already know about the topic. When familiarity is absent, topic knowledge is built through pictures, films,

demonstrations, and drawings. It is our constant mission to help the English language learners negotiate meaning. Effective teachers draw upon the language, culture, and background experiences a student brings to the learning environment and builds new concepts upon their experiential foundation.

***Determine each student's level of English language acquisition:*** Besides understanding where they draw their knowledge from, it is obligatory to determine their level of English language acquisition. Krashen and Terrel (1983), for example, identify four stages of language acquisition: preproduction, early production, speech emergence, and intermediate fluency. Knowing the level of language acquisition allows for verbal scaffolding which helps students through modeling, questioning, and instruction. When the level of language acquisition is known, appropriate levels of questions can be asked so content, not language acquisition, is being tested. In other words, if a student is at a preproduction stage of language acquisition, they can be successful by pointing, finding, or circling while the teacher also leads students to answering questions at the next level, in this case early production, by asking yes/no questions, either/or questions, or prompting one word responses. In the early production stage, a student can be successful with one and two word answers or by listing, categorizing, and labeling, while being presented with why and how questions at the speech emergence level. Students in the speech emergence stage of acquisition can describe and explain and move into intermediate fluency by being asked "What do you think about...?" and "What will happen next...?" Imagine the frustration, therefore, for a student in the intermediate fluency stage being asked to perform a preproduction stage task, such as pointing to an object. The Ramirez Report (1990) found that in all the programs studied, teachers tended to ask low level questions. By knowing the stages of language acquisition with accompanying questioning strategies, teachers can avoid the tendency to ask beginner level questions and thus move students into more appropriate levels of discourse.

***Emphasize literacy across the curriculum:*** Teachers with students who are new to their classroom can be puzzled by what level of performance to expect from the students regarding reading and writing in English. Determining the student's level of language proficiency is essential to making accurate literacy determinations. Students in the early stages of English language acquisition will rely heavily on background knowledge and strategies such as using pictures in a book to create meaning. Students at an intermediate level will be able to relate to information about plot, characters, and other features of the text. Beginning students will use drawings and single words to convey written meaning. Intermediate-level students can be expected to write narratives with beginning, middle, and end.

***Help students transfer existing native language skills to English language acquisition:*** While determining what to expect from English language learners and in discovering their level of literacy in their primary language, it is also valuable to understand the concept of transferability. For example, an early emergent student in Spanish will transfer certain consonant sounds from Spanish to English without direct instruction; e.g., p, f, m, t, s. However, many English vowel sounds will need explicit teaching. An upper emergent student will be able to transfer certain punctuation marks from Spanish to English, so time need not be wasted on teaching periods, parenthesis, and colons, to name a few. English contractions and possessive pronouns, however, will need to be taught.

***Provide explicit instruction within the context of literacy:*** Letter and sound recognition should be embedded in an authentic piece of literature rather than teaching skills

discretely removed from any meaningful text. Reading daily to students will provide the opportunities to build vocabulary, make predictions, and teach missing skills.

***Teach reading and writing together:*** When students are at a beginning level of English acquisition, they can benefit from a language experience approach to reading and writing. Students dictate a story based on a recent experience or on a topic of high, common interest. These stories are written with large print so students can copy and keep a continuous record of the stories they have created and continue to read them. As students grow in their English proficiency, so will their stories in their approximations to English text. Just as different genres of literature are read to students, different purposes of writing are warranted; i.e., explaining, describing, informing, and persuading. Students can then segue into a process writing approach that includes planning, writing, editing, revising, and discussing their writing.

***Develop academic language:*** Academic language takes longer to develop than conversational language and is more difficult to understand. The task can be made easier for Spanish-speaking students by pointing out cognates so they will automatically comprehend some of the text. English texts contain many words that are similar in Spanish and English because academic language often comes from the Latin and Greek languages. Opportunities to learn academic language present themselves throughout a curriculum and often present themselves as teachable moments. High interest reading materials on different topics also provide opportunities to increase academic language. By dissecting the purpose behind reading, academic language is used in describing reasons to gain information or read for enjoyment. Describing how a text is approached - reading from start to finish, skimming, looking for headings, finding main ideas- will require higher level language competency.

***Allow students to talk more than the teacher:*** There can never be enough spoken language in classrooms for ELLs. Somewhere after kindergarten and its Show and Tell sessions, U.S. schools shift away from growth in oral language toward an emphasis on reading and writing. Spontaneous expressive language does not just happen for ELLs without a deliberate and planned oral event. When ELLs do not have to compete with the English-dominant students for speaking time and when they feel they can take verbal risks, productive talk will occur. This can be accomplished when teachers cluster students into homogeneous as well as heterogeneous groups of students. When ELL students are in a homogeneous setting, oral language can be a priority. If the science unit is about magnets and polarization, beginning level ELLs can be examining a paper clip and nail while orally describing similarities and differences for color, size, shape, function, and composition. Emphasis can also be placed on situational language; e.g., how to ask another student to borrow a magnet or a pair of scissors or a pencil. Don't count on oral language development; plan for it. Besides emphasizing particular grammatical structures, students can use oral language to grow in any of the functions of language: describing, explaining, reporting, persuading, evaluating, debating, questioning, and discussing. Consider how many English dominant students may not be proficient in written language in the varied functions of language. While ELLs are developing orally in a given role of language, the rest of the class can be exhibiting their knowledge base by writing.

***Seek external help:*** When needed, outside assistance can be obtained in the initial stages of providing professional development until a cadre of internal experts is developed. In addition to using McREL for assistance, Sweetwater County School District #2 sent their

ELL Coordinator to conferences and helped her get connected to an online ESL (English as a Second Language) endorsement program in Utah. Since the neighboring school district was also experiencing growth, the districts were able to share some of the same external resources.

## **KEY RESOURCES**

*Access and Engagement, Program Design and Instructional Approaches for Immigrant Students in Secondary School.* Aida Walqui. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 2000.

This book describes the characteristics of secondary schools in the United States that make it difficult for immigrant students to succeed. These include the following: fragmented school days and instructional programs in which English as a Second Language and content area teachers work in separate departments and rarely interact; the complex system of courses and of graduation and college entrance requirements; the practice of placing students in classes chiefly according to age; tracking students learning English into courses that may not grant the credits they need; and inadequate methods to document student achievement. Six high school students (from El Salvador, Brazil, Haiti, Russia, Mexico, and Vietnam) are profiled. Common misconceptions about adolescents' second language acquisition and academic skills are addressed, and what current research reveals about these problems is discussed. Ten priorities for the design of programs that can foster effective teaching and learning for immigrant youth are set forth, including creating a community of learners in the classroom and ensuring that immigrant students are part of that community, contextualizing new ideas and tasks, and giving students multiple opportunities to extend their understandings and apply knowledge. Recommendations for program development and practice are made, as are suggestions for future research. Extensive references and an index are included.

*Bridging Cultures Between Home and School, A Guide for Teachers.* Elise Trumbull, Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, Patricia M. Greenfield, and Blanca Quiroz. Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001.

Teaching students from a range of cultural backgrounds is made easier when teachers understand the cultural norms of both the mainstream culture of schools and the cultures of their students. This guide provides a framework for learning about culture, along with many teacher-created strategies for making classrooms more successful for students, particularly those from immigrant Latino backgrounds.

Contents of the guide include chapters that describe the Bridging Cultures framework of individualism/collectivism for understanding cultures and why parent involvement is not always successful; some ways to improve working with parents; the cross-cultural parent-teacher conference; learning what works cross-culturally through teacher research with ethnography as a research tool; and a reflection on the Bridging Cultures project (a collaboration among WestEd; UCLA; California State University, Northridge; and bilingual public school teachers in three school districts).

*Enhancing English Language in Elementary Classrooms: A Comprehensive Professional Development Program for Elementary Teachers of LEP Students.* Allene Grognet, Judith Jameson, Lynda Franco, and Maria Derrick-Mescua. McHenry, IL: Delta Systems, 2000.

This professional development program prepares teachers who work with ELL students to use strategies that develop students' social and academic English and support their transition to U.S. culture and schools. Appropriate for a variety of program models, mainstream classrooms, self-contained ESL (English as a Second Language) classroom, or bilingual programs, this professional development program offers great flexibility for local adaptations.

*Enriching Content Classes for Secondary ESOL Students.* Judith Jameson. McHenry, IL: Delta Systems, 1998.

This manual contains comprehensive training materials designed for middle and high school content teachers whose mainstream classroom include ELLs. Training shows teachers how to teach both content and related academic language to all students including ELLs, using techniques such as graphic organizers, scaffolded lessons, cooperative learning, alternative assessment, and multicultural activities. Training targets academic competencies, language learning, study skills, culture, and literacy development. Structured in-class and outside assignments support teachers in applying new skills to their specific situation.

*ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students.* Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc., 1997.

ESL Standards for Pre-K–12 contains nine ESL content standards, organized under three educational goals. They state what students should know and be able to do as a result of ESL instruction and set goals for students' social and academic language development and sociocultural competence.

*Making Content Comprehensible for English Language Learners: The SIOP Model.* Jana Echevarria, Mary Ellen Vogt, Deborah J. Short. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2000.

This resource is for training educators to work effectively with ELLs. It presents a model of sheltered instruction, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), which provides educators with a tool for observing and quantifying a teacher's implementation of quality sheltered instruction. The text presents a coherent, specific, field-tested model of sheltered instruction that specifies the features of a high quality lesson that teaches content information to ELLs. This text offers different approaches that can be applied to a variety of content areas and grade levels. A second edition of this book was published in 2003.

*Professional Development: Learning from the Best: A Toolkit for Schools and Districts Based on Model Professional Development Award Winners.* Naperville, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1999.

This toolkit pulls out the key lessons across award-winning schools and districts and organizes them into a step-by-step process a district can use to meet the U.S. Department of Education award criteria. It includes:

- Professional Development Action Planner: Organizer's Checklist;
- Step One: Designing Professional Development;
- Step Two: Implementing Professional Development;
- Step Three: Evaluating and Improving Professional Development;

- Step Four: Sharing Professional Development Learning; and
- Action Planner Tools.

*Standards for Staff Development, Revised Edition.* Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council, 2001.

This guide provides a comprehensive list of standards guiding the development and implementation of an effective professional development program. It provides the rationale and research information to support specific practices and structures.

## SECTION 3: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

---

### EXPERIENCES FROM THE FIELD

The third component of McREL's intervention was aimed at engaging the families of ELL students at several levels. Joyce Epstein's framework of types of parental involvement is popular among theorists and educators because it is the only research-based comprehensive model (Montemayer, 2000). Using the Epstein framework as the foundation of this component of the intervention (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 1997), McREL conducted work at two levels. First, we needed to develop school staff capacity to work effectively with parents and families by helping district and school staff learn more about the ELLs' parents and families. Second, it was important to increase the knowledge and skills of parents and families so that they could actively participate in school activities and in their child's education.

**Assessing Parent and Family Needs.** The Advisory Council needed to know what parents and families in the community needed to learn. In order to get to know the community, information about ELLs' parents and families was gathered at a parent meeting at the beginning of the school year using two Spanish-language questionnaires. One questionnaire was designed to gather basic information, such as where the family was from originally, how long they had lived in the United States and in Green River, and what academic expectations the parents had for their children. The other questionnaire (Appendix E) was designed to determine what parents knew of school systems in the United States. It measured the extent of their knowledge on topics such as NCLB, standards-based education, and whether they had had opportunities to learn how to communicate with their child's teacher and how to help their child learn. The results of both questionnaires were used to outline the content of parent meetings for the rest of the year.

**Developing Parents' Understanding.** After completing this needs assessment, McREL took a number of steps to ensure parent participation in this part of the intervention. Intensive outreach was conducted (flyers were sent home, followed by phone calls, both in Spanish) to ensure that a reasonable number of parents participated in scheduled meetings. McREL staff conducted monthly on-site parent/family meetings, and all training and assistance activities were conducted in Spanish. To develop the knowledge and skills parents need to actively participate in the decision-making aspect of schooling, McREL offered training on the following topics:

- *Parent rights and responsibilities under NCLB:* Parents learned they can expect to have their children taught by a highly qualified teacher, become proficient in English while learning academic content, and be tested annually for their English language proficiency. Parents should expect to know if their children have been identified and recommended for placement in an ELL program and that they can accept or refuse these services. They can also expect to receive information on their children's performance on tests of academic achievement.
- *Standards-based education:* Wyoming standards for language development were shared with parents. Parents learned their children will increase their proficiency in the personal, social, and academic uses of English when teachers implement these standards. Through these standards, students will learn to understand, speak, read, and write English fluently.



- *Communicating effectively at parent-teacher conferences:* McREL based its training on this topic on Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's (SEDL, 2003) advice for parents on preparing and participating actively in parent teacher conferences. Parents were encouraged to ask the teacher what strategies will be used to help their children gain knowledge and skills in the content areas, how their children's performance will be assessed, and what they can do at home to assist their children in learning. Parents were also advised to plan a follow-up conference to stay abreast of their child's progress.
- *Availability of classes for learning English:* A partnership was formed with the Western Wyoming Community College whereby college staff attended a parent meeting and invited the adults to attend ESL (English as a Second Language) classes in the evening. The teachers of the ESL classes distributed brochures explaining the courses and indicating the community centers in which they would be held. At the end of the year, the Community College's ESL teachers presented the parents with awards for hours completed.
- *Accessing services in the community:* Parents shared information and learned about additional opportunities for accessing the following community resources: ESL classes for adults; summer reading programs at the library; year-round activities at the Recreation Center; summer school; community agencies that are available for assistance with health issues; and summer employment opportunities for teens.

**Encouraging Parent Involvement.** Parents from other cultures may view their role in their child's education differently than American parents. For example, culturally and linguistically different parents may provide literacy experiences to their children at home, but they may do so in a way that differs from an American teacher's expectations. Instead of asking their children questions about the story, asking them to predict the outcome, or having them interpret the story based on their own experiences, immigrant parents from rural areas of Mexico and Central America, for example, are more likely to use the story to teach a moral lesson (Valdes, 1996). To help the Sweetwater County parents contribute more actively to the education of their children, McREL also offered training at the monthly meetings on the following topics:

- increasing the knowledge and skills parents need to assist their children with the acquisition of English, literacy development, and academic proficiency in different content areas; and
- increasing the knowledge and skills parents need to effectively collaborate with their children's teachers, specialists, and paraprofessionals.

An average of twenty parents attended each of the meetings, which were held at elementary school sites. Dinner was provided, or a potluck meal was planned. Childcare was provided in a nearby area of the school. Prizes were donated by the community (e.g., gift certificates, free pizzas) and given at the end of the evening. Parents received notebooks for organizing the handouts they received at each meeting. At the end of the year, the parents made a presentation to the School Board during which they shared the training materials they had received over the course of the year.

## RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Based on our experience in Sweetwater County School District #2, McREL offers the following recommendations to help schools involve the parents of ELL students in the educational process.

***Begin with the school itself:*** Make it evident through visuals that another language or languages are represented in the school. Visuals could include signs that say “Welcome” in another language as well as signage for “Visitors Must Check in at the Office” and art work representing different cultures. Reallocate library resources for buying books in the other language(s) along with representing the culture. Reallocate other financial resources to purchase classroom materials that broaden all students’ understanding of different cultures.

***Use bilingual staff to the extent possible:*** If bilingual staff is available in the district, there are approaches and ideas above that can guide their training and work with the parents of ELL students. It is important to note that bilingual paraprofessionals are exempt from NCLB’s “highly qualified” requirements if they work solely as translators or on parental involvement issues.

***Involve the community:*** Besides inviting the parents, it is important to search out other community members who share the same native language as the newcomers. Include them in all plans for building not only a family-school partnership but also a family-community-school network.

***Hold regular meetings:*** Hold monthly or bi-monthly meetings that provide parents with opportunities to learn about how they can actively participate in decision-making at their schools and how they can contribute to their children’s education. Make sure to extend the invitation several times and in several ways. During meetings, actively engage parents by having the facilitator check for understanding, ask for personal stories, and ask them for what else they would like to learn.

***Offer ESL classes for parents:*** As in Sweetwater, districts can form partnerships with community colleges to offer ESL classes to the parents of ELLs.

## KEY RESOURCES

*Building Successful Partnerships: A Guide for Developing Parent and Family Involvement Programs.* National PTA. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service, 2000.

This guide presents useful research findings and best practice information about developing parent and family involvement programs. The first chapter focuses on reporting research findings on parent involvement and highlights pertinent findings on how parent involvement benefits students, parents, teachers, school quality, and program designs. Chapters 2 through 7 each focus on a specific program standard for establishing quality parent and family involvement programs. These standards are related to: (1) communicating; (2) parenting; (3) student learning; (4) volunteering; (5) school decision making and advocacy; and (6) collaborating with the community. Chapter 8 focuses on important issues to consider when developing parent involvement programs, including overcoming barriers and knowing how to reach out to key players. Chapter 9 examines three important activities for program development, and Chapter 10 summarizes the main

ideas in the guide. Four appendixes contain a National PTA position statement on parent and family involvement, parent and faculty survey responses, forms and worksheets for program implementation, and a list of resources.

*La Ley Para No Dejar Atras a Ningun Nino: Lo que Implica Para Los Padres.* Anne T. Henderson. Parent Leadership Associates, 2003 (now available through KSA Plus Communications, Arlington, VA).

This guide takes a closer look at how NCLB requires schools and districts to involve parents in the hard work of school improvement. Readers also will learn about six leverage points that parents and community members can use to ensure every child receives a high-quality education. For each leverage point, the guide suggests specific steps parents can take to ensure that their schools are doing what the federal law requires of them.

*National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs.* National PTA. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service, 1997.

This guide outlines national standards on parent/family involvement as defined by the National Parent Teacher Association.

*Parents Assuring Student Success: Achievement Made Easy by Learning Together.* John R. Ban. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service, 1993.

This is a self-help handbook for families to follow in order to function as teachers at home. By following a step-by-step format, parents can help their children improve the study skills that are essential for classroom learning. Also available in Spanish as *PASS: Padres Aseguran que Sus Hijos Sean Estudiantes Exitosos, El Logro Academico Se Hace Mas Facil al Trabajar Juntos.*

*School, Family, and Community Partnerships Your Handbook for Action.* Joyce Epstein, Lucretia Coates, Karen Clark Salinas, Mavis G. Sanders, and Beth Simon. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 1997.

This user-friendly handbook guides school, district, and state leaders in organizing and implementing positive and permanent programs of school, family, and community partnerships. The Second Edition includes new research summaries and useful tools for developing and evaluating family and community involvement programs. The Handbook is designed to guide the work of Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) consisting of teachers, parents, administrators, and others. The information, forms, and activities in the Handbook also help district and state leaders support, facilitate, and reward the work of their schools. Ten chapters offer step-by-step strategies to improve school, family, and community connections.

*Supporting Parent, Family and Community Involvement in Your School.* Debra Davis. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2002.

This guide provides ideas and suggestions taken from research on family and community involvement in schools and can help school staff and others design a long-term approach to garnering the positive involvement of all concerned.

## REFERENCES

---

- Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. J. (2000). *Making content comprehensible for English language learners – the SIOP model*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Epstein, J.L. (1985). *Effects of teacher practices of parent involvement on change in student achievement in reading and math*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center for Social Organization of Schools.
- Epstein, J.L. (1986). Parent involvement: Implications for limited-English-proficient parents. " In C. Simich Dudgeon (Ed.), *Issues of parent involvement and literacy*. Washington, DC: Trinity College.
- Epstein, J.L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(9), 701-712.
- Epstein, J.L., Coates, L., Salinas, K.C., Sanders, M.G., & Simon, B. (1997). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships Your Handbook for Action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Garcia, E. E. (1991). *The education of linguistically and culturally diverse students: Effective instructional practices*. Santa Cruz, CA: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning.
- Gersten, R., & Baker, S. (2000). What we know about effective instructional practices for English-language learners. *Exceptional Children*, 66(4), 454-470.
- Huang, G. (1999). *Sociodemographic changes: Promises and problems for rural education*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.
- Krashen, S., & Terrel, T. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. Hayward, CA: Alemany Press.
- Krashen, S. (1985). *Inquiries and insights*. Haywood, CA: Alemany Press.
- Montemayor, A.M., & Romero, A.A. (2000, June-July). Valued parent leadership. *IDRA Newsletter*.
- Peregoy, S. F., & Boyle, O. F. (2001). *Reading, writing, and learning in ESL: A resource book for k-12 teachers*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Ramirez, J.D. (1990). *Final report: Longitudinal study of immersion strategy, early-exit and late-exit transitional bilingual education programs for language-minority children*. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International.
- Short, D. (n.d.). *The SIOP model for English language learners*. Carmel, CA: Hampton-Brown.
- Short, D., Hudec, J., & Echevarria, J. (2002). *Using the SIOP model: Professional development manual for sheltered instruction*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics.

- Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). (2003). *SEDL helps parents prepare for parent-teacher conferences* (press release). Austin, TX: Author. Retrieved November 18, 2004, from [www.sedl.org/new/pressrelease/20031001\\_16.html](http://www.sedl.org/new/pressrelease/20031001_16.html).
- Valdes, G. (1996). *Con respeto: Bridging the distance between culturally diverse families and schools: An ethnographic portrait*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wong-Fillmore L., & Valdez, C. (1986). Teaching bilingual learners. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). New York: Macmillan.