Title: Instructional strategies for English learner (EL) students in elementary
          school

Date: December 2016

Question: Could you provide research-based instructional strategies for
                 English learner (EL) students in elementary school?

Response:

We have prepared the following memo with information on instructional strategies for English learner (EL) students in elementary school. Citations and resources include a link to a free online version, when available. All citations are accompanied by an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the author or publisher of the document. We have not done an evaluation of the methodological rigor of these resources, but provide them for your information only.

References

Baker, S., Lesaux, N., Jayanthi, M., Dimino, J., Proctor, C. P., Morris, J., Gersten, R., Haymond, K., Kieffer, M. J., Linan-Thompson, S., & Newman-Gonchar, R. (2014). *Teaching academic content and literacy to English learners in elementary and middle school* (NCEE 2014-4012). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved on December 13, 2016, from
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/english_learners_pg_040114.pdf

Abstract: This practice guide provides four recommendations that address what works for English learners during reading and content area instruction. Each recommendation includes extensive examples of activities that can be used to support students as they build the language and literacy skills needed to be successful in school, including examples of how the recommendations align with Common Core and other contemporary state standards. The recommendations also summarize and rate supporting evidence. This guide is geared toward teachers, administrators, and other educators who want to improve instruction in academic content and literacy for English learners in elementary and middle school.

Calderón, M., Slavin, R. & Sánchez, M. (2011). Effective instruction for English learners. *The Future of Children, 21*(1), 103-127. Retrieved on December 13, 2016, from
http://www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/21_01_05.pdf

Excerpt: Based on the studies presented here, Calderón, Slavin, and Sánchez assert that the quality of instruction is what matters most in educating English learners. They highlight comprehensive

reform models, as well as individual components of these models: school structures and leadership; language and literacy instruction; integration of language, literacy, and content instruction in secondary schools; cooperative learning; professional development; parent and family support teams; tutoring; and monitoring implementation and outcomes.

Gersten, R., Baker, S.K., Shanahan, T., Linan-Thompson, S., Collins, P., & Scarcella, R. (2007). *Effective literacy and English language instruction for English learners in the elementary grades: A Practice Guide* (NCEE 2007-4011). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved on December 13, 2016, from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/20074011.pdf

Abstract: The target audience for this guide is a broad spectrum of school practitioners such as administrators, curriculum specialists, coaches, staff development specialists and teachers who face the challenge of providing effective literacy instruction for English language learners in the elementary grades. The guide also aims to reach district-level administrators who develop practice and policy options for their schools.

Li, J., Steele, J., Slater, R., Bacon, M., & Miller, T. (2015). Teaching practices and language use in two-way dual language immersion programs in a large public school district. *International Multilingual Research Journal, 10*(1), 31-43. Retrieved on December 13, 2016, from http://www.rand.org/pubs/external_publications/EP66572.html

Abstract: Many educators and policy makers look to two-way dual language immersion as one of the most promising options to close achievement gaps for English learners. However, the programs' effectiveness depends on the quality of their implementation. This article reports on a large-scale study of the implementation of dual language immersion across a large, urban school district. Using classroom observations, we examined teaching practices and language use by teachers and students in dual language immersion classrooms across an entire school district. We found strong implementation of teaching practices consistent with sheltered instruction and strong adherence by teachers to partner language use as prescribed by the district's guidelines. This article provides a descriptive view of what is happening in two-way dual language immersion classrooms in a large, urban U.S. school district. While other studies may examine classroom practices, few have done so on this scale.

O'Day, J. (2009). Good instruction is good for everyone—Or is it? English language learners in a balanced literacy approach. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 14*, 97–119. Retrieved on December 13, 2016, from http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/o-day_article_0.pdf

Abstract: Prior research suggests that many of the elements of effective instruction for native speakers are beneficial for English learners as well. But are specific strategies that appear effective for native speakers equally so for nonnative speakers? Are other companion efforts necessary? This article explores these questions by examining the comparative effects of selected literacy instructional practices on reading comprehension for English learners and non-English learners, using data from a three-year study of the implementation and effects of a balanced literacy approach in San Diego City Schools. Then, using qualitative data gathered over two years from 133 teachers, as well as school administrators and instructional coaches in 9 case study elementary schools, the article considers what might have been missing in the district's approach to its over 24,000 elementary English learner students and how the strengths that were developed during the district's literacy reforms might be used to address continuing weaknesses.

Sanford, A. K., Brown, J. E., & Turner, M. (2012). Enhancing instruction for English learners in Response to Intervention systems: The PLUSS Model. *Multiple Voices For Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, *13*(1), 56-70. Retrieved on December 13, 2016, from http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=ae193900-d16b-4655-bcfd-22c18ec74ffb%40sessionmgr4006&vid=9&hid=4002

Abstract: This paper proposes a model of effective instruction and intervention for English Learners (ELs) within a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. First, we review literature on effective instruction for ELs and how RTI can address the needs of these students. Then, we describe the PLUSS model, which integrates research on effective instruction for ELs, tiered models of support, and teacher practices. The model includes the following elements: Pre-teaching critical vocabulary; Language modeling and opportunities to use academic language; Using visuals and graphic organizers; Systematic and explicit instruction; and Strategic use of native language and teaching for transfer. Finally, we provide an example of a PLUSS model lesson for Tier 2 instruction within an RTI framework.

Schulz, M. M. (2009). Effective writing assessment and instruction for young English language learners. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *37*(1), 57-62. Retrieved on December 13, 2016, from http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=ae193900-d16b-4655-bcfd-22c18ec74ffb%40sessionmgr4006&vid=14&hid=4002

Abstract: The total number of English Language Learners in the American public schools is more than 4.5 million students or 9.6% of the total school population. This article focuses on instructional writing strategies and assessments for English Language Learners in the elementary classroom. This article provides early childhood education teachers with information about differences amongst English Language Learners because they are not a homogenous group. English Language Learners' academic abilities can range from emergent readers, writers, and speakers of English to proficient readers, writers, and speakers of English.

Valentino, R. A. & Reardon, S. F. (2015). Effectiveness of four instructional programs designed to serve English language learners: Variation by ethnicity and initial English proficiency. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 37*(4), 612-637. Retrieved on December 13, 2016, from http://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Valentino_Reardon_EL%20Programs_12_15_14.pdf

Abstract: This paper investigates the differences in academic achievement trajectories from elementary through middle school among English Learner students in four different instructional programs: English Immersion, Transitional Bilingual, Developmental Bilingual, and Dual Immersion programs. Comparing students with the same parental preferences but who attend different programs, we find that the ELA test scores of ELs in all bilingual programs grow at least as fast as, if not faster than those in English immersion. The same is generally true of math, with the exception of developmental bilingual programs, where average student scores grow more slowly than those of students in English immersion. Further, Latino ELs perform better longitudinally in both subjects when in bilingual programs than their Chinese EL counterparts. We find no differences in program effectiveness by ELs' initial English proficiency.

Other resources

Colorín Colorado: ELL strategies and best practices
http://www.colorincolorado.org/ell-strategies-best-practices

There are a number of ways to support the language and literacy development of English language learners (ELLs) that also allow students to participate more fully in classroom activities and lessons. This section provides specific ideas and strategies, such as tips for planning lessons and the use of language objectives, as well as broader approaches such as using informal assessment and differentiation for varying language levels.

Effective instruction of English language learners: Q&A with Dr. Esther Geva
REL Mid-Atlantic Educator Effectiveness Webinar Series
http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED564375.pdf

This webinar provided an overview of the research behind literacy for second language learners, the different variables that influence a second language learners' reading abilities, and strategies to improve instruction for these students. Drawing from her research and experience, Dr. Esther Geva discussed the different skills and variables that must be addressed when teaching literacy to English learners.

Teaching academic content and literacy to English learners in elementary and middle school: Findings from intervention studies with English learners
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWunEUkQ9Ck

This Bridge Event conference was hosted by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest on July 22, 2014, in San Antonio, Texas. The conference focused on the four recommendations in the new educator's practice guide, *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School*, produced by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) through the Institute of Education Sciences. Two conference sessions are available as video.

Methods

Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Search
- Instructional strategies/instruction AND English learner students/EL students AND elementary school
- English learner students/EL students AND elementary school

Search of Databases
EBSCO Host, ERIC, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, Google, and Google Scholar

Criteria for Inclusion
When REL West staff review resources, they consider—among other things—four factors:

- **Date of the Publication:** The most current information is included, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.

- **Source and Funder of the Report/Study/Brief/Article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols.

- **Methodology:** Sources include randomized controlled trial studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, and policy briefs. Priority for inclusion generally is given to randomized controlled trial study findings, but the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: numbers of participants (Just a few? Thousands?); selection (Did the participants volunteer for the study or were they chosen?); representation (Were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?).

- **Existing Knowledge Base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is limited or nonexistent. In these cases, we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, and other sources.