

EL Questions from attendees at BTTP Meeting 9/24/08

Question: *Please share how the CPM EL monitor will review ELD and discuss different specific ways of structuring ELD instruction that would meet the legal requirements.*

Answer: Gains in student English language proficiency provide the most important evidence that the district's ELD program is effective. The monitor will look for a district-wide instructional plan for English learners, fidelity of implementation of the curriculum by teachers who are authorized to teach ELD, differentiated instruction by proficiency level (EC 305), the obvious use of ELD standards as a guide to day-to-day instruction, systems in place at the district and site level to monitor student progress, and interventions which occur when students are not making expected progress. The English Learner Ongoing Program Self-Evaluation Tool (OPSET), provided by the Calif. Dept. of Education, specifies the types of evidence which will be reviewed to determine legal compliance during a CPM review. This includes: LEA descriptions of ELD instructional design, classroom observations, teacher interviews, information about progress assessment strategies, student data and appropriate use of funding.

Question: *Could you provide examples of differentiated instruction for ELD for different proficiency levels?*

Answer: Differentiated instruction is teaching with student variance in mind. It means starting where the students ARE rather than adopting a standardized approach to teaching that seems to presume that all learners of a given age or grade are essentially alike. Differentiated instruction is *responsive teaching*, not "one-size-fits-all" teaching.

The first step to differentiated instruction for EL students is to understand the learners and determine their needs through an EL profile. Knowing the specific experiences and knowledge each child brings to school allows teachers to modify the process, content, or product according to each EL's needs, keeping in mind:

- English proficiency level as measured by the CELDT and the teacher's assessment of their mastery of ELD standards
- Primary language proficiency level
- Schooling background

Question: *What does ELD look like in a mainstream language arts class (for different levels, especially high level 4's & 5's?)*

Answer: It is often assumed that an English learner who has reached an Early Advanced (4) or Advanced (5) level of proficiency in the Listening and Speaking domains on the CELDT has mastered English. These students may give an uninformed observer the impression that they are fully prepared to compete with their English only peers. Many times, however, their CST scores or classroom performance will provide evidence that they are still struggling academically, and need continued targeted instruction and support

to master the academic language and the reading and writing skills necessary to compete on an equal footing in all core curriculum.

The key point here is that the law requires all English learners to receive direct ELD instruction appropriate to their level until they are reclassified. For students who have reached the proficiency level defined by the district as “reasonable proficiency,” ELD instruction may be provided in the context of a mainstream English language arts class. *Despite their placement in this instructional setting, the student’s needs as an English learner cannot be ignored and must continue to be directly addressed*. Furthermore, the ELA teacher must be authorized to provide such instruction to English learners, and should be able to articulate the process and strategies they use to teach English learners, including how they work closely with ELD staff at the site.

Specifically, when first bringing EL students into a mainstream ELA class, special preparation is crucial. This will include:

- Review of the individual student’s records (CELDT scores and sub-scores, CST ELA scores and other achievement measures), and the gathering of all available information on the student’s prior education, primary language literacy skills, and other personal and/or academic strengths;
- Unpacking of the student’s current mastery of the English language development standards;
- Review of the individual student’s classroom performance in the area of language arts (especially reading and writing skills) as appropriate for their grade level;
- And most importantly, the establishment of specific learning objectives for ELD and ELA, based upon the information above.

Once completed, the site must develop a focused strategy to support each mainstreamed English learner’s identified learning needs. This may include:

- Flexible grouping: small group instruction from the ELA teacher, directed support from an instructional aide during part of the ELA class, deployment of the student to work with another ELA teacher instructing other English learners with similar needs and pairing or grouping ELs with fluent English speakers;
- The utilization of additional resource materials and curricula to reinforce instruction in needed areas;
- Tutoring or other interventions;
- Frequent assessment to measure mastery of concepts and skills, followed by re-teaching of difficult areas and re-grouping, as appropriate.