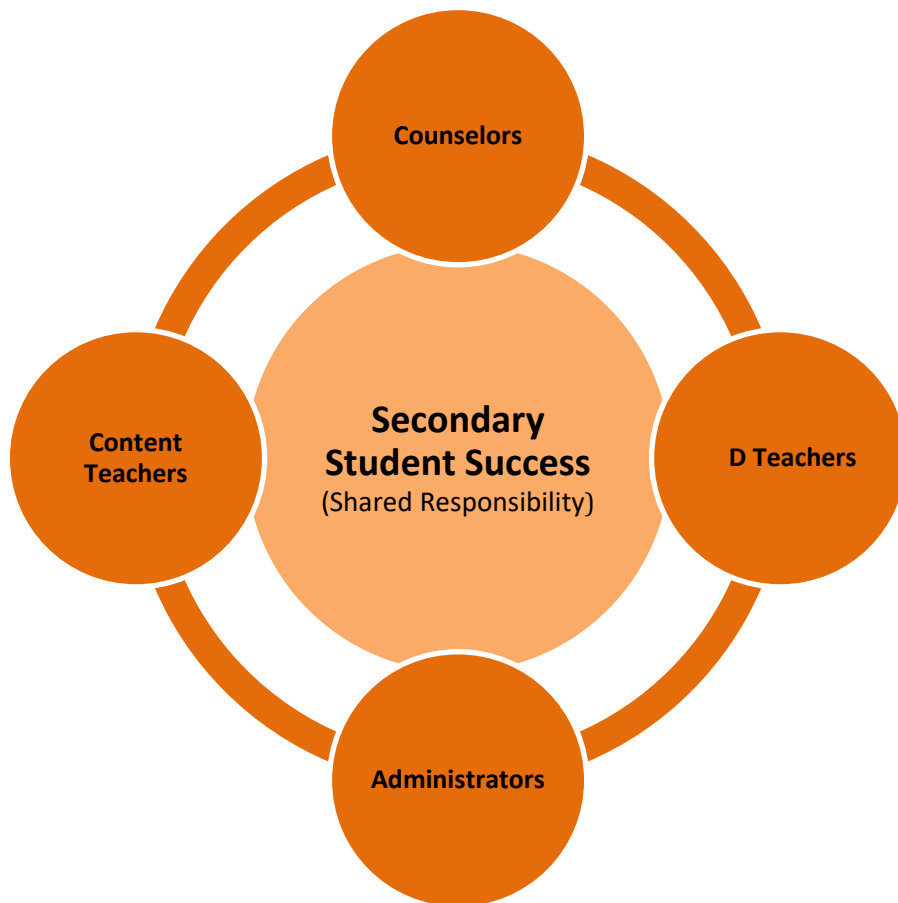


Chapter 9: Understanding Secondary English Learners

Secondary schools in Colorado strive to raise graduation rates, reduce dropout rates, and provide a rigorous curriculum that prepares students to be college and career ready. In order to reach these critical goals and include English learners (ELs), it is often tempting to immediately jump to structural changes. Although schools must change the way they offer courses and schedule ELs, Salazar (2009) suggests there is a more critical component that must come first: “the relentless belief in the potential of culturally and linguistically diverse youth” to achieve academically.

There are no simple solutions or one-size-fits all formulas for fostering success for secondary ELs. Every school must consider the particular needs of its own community. Even if a given EL population appears on the surface to be relatively homogenous, assessments will reveal that those students have all sorts of differing educational backgrounds and unique needs.

This chapter supports those who play a major part in the academic success of secondary ELs: administrators, counselors, content area teachers, parents, and English Language Development (ELD) teachers. Sharing responsibilities will be a continuous theme to highlight the system’s changes around factors that influence student needs, programmatic options and promising practices that are needed so that secondary students are successful.



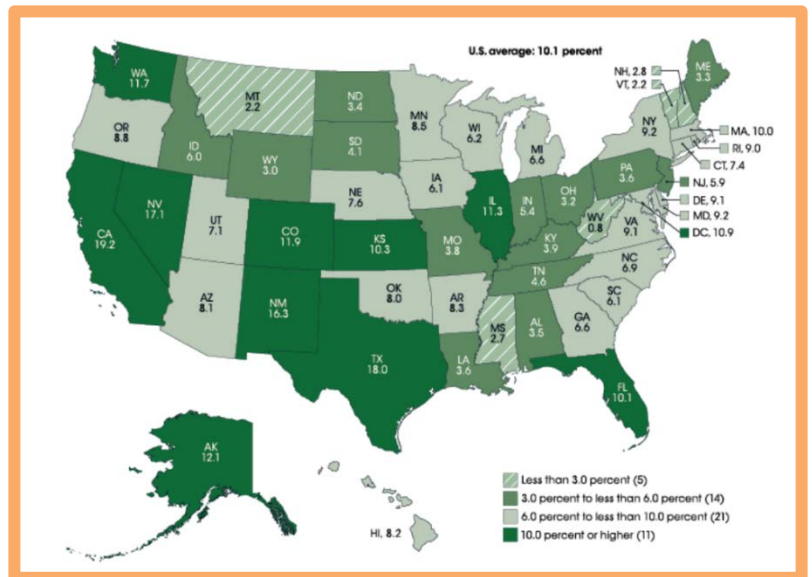
9.1 Challenges and Opportunities

Demographics

English learners represent one of the fastest growing student population group in U.S. schools. In fall 2017, the percentage of public school students who were ELs was 5 million representing 10.1 percent or an increase from 8.1 percent (3.8 million) since 2000. Colorado is one of twelve states that has an EL population that is over 10 percent of the public school students. In general, a higher percentage of public school students in lower grades than of those in upper grades were EL students in fall 2017. For example, 15.9 percent of kindergarteners were EL students, compared with 8.6 percent of 6th-graders and 7.0 percent of 8th-graders. Among 12th-graders, only 4.6 percent of students were EL students.

About 1 out of every 10 public school students in the United States right now is learning to speak English. The Census Bureau reports at least 350 languages are spoken in U.S. homes. In 2018, over 12 million or 23 percent of all students in the U.S. were reported as speaking a language other than English at home. 62 percent of middle and high school English learners are native born.

Between 1990 and 2013, the LEP population grew 80 percent from nearly 14 million to 25.1 million. In 2013, approximately 61.6 million individuals, foreign and U.S. born, spoke a language other than English at home. While the majority of these individuals also spoke English with native fluency or very well, about 41 percent or 25.1 million were considered Limited English Proficient (LEP).



Source: [NCES](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coel/indicator_cgf.asp) (https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coel/indicator_cgf.asp)

English Learner Graduation Rates

As the nation begins to narrow its focus on graduation and dropout rates, ELs are forced to the forefront. The [Migration Policy Institute](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/ELGradRates-FINALWEB.pdf) (www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/ELGradRates-FINALWEB.pdf) reports in 2015-16, 67% of ELs graduate from high school, compared with the overall national rate of 84%. With achievement gaps widening for this population, districts need to take a closer look at their programs and policies to identify where they may be limiting opportunities for ELs.

National Perspective

In 2018, there were 2.1 million status dropouts between the ages of 16 and 24 and the overall status dropout rate was 5.3 percent which is a decrease from 9.7 percent in 2006. The dropout rate varied by race/ethnicity in 2018: American Indian/Alaska Native youth had the highest status dropout rate (9.5 percent) of all racial/ethnic groups, including youth who were Hispanic (8.0 percent), Black (6.4 percent), of Two or more races (5.2 percent), White (4.2 percent), Pacific Islander (8.1 percent), and Asian (1.9 percent). Dropout rate for those who were White was lower than that of every other racial/ethnic group except those who were Asian. The status dropout rate for those who were Hispanic was higher than that of most racial/ethnic groups but was not measurably different from the rates for those who were Pacific Islander and American Indian/Alaska Native.

For more information about [National Dropout Rates](https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16), visit nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=16



Colorado Perspective

Colorado has experienced a demographic shift in the K-12 population over the last decade. With more than 122,000 ELs, including immigrants, migrants and refugees, Colorado is among 12 states with the highest EL population. Unfortunately, Colorado's graduation and completion rates are far below that of their non-EL peers.

ESSA requires states to present the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates, but also gives states the discretion to include extended-year adjusted cohort graduation rates as well. Extended-year rates account for students who may require additional time to complete high school, such as those in five-year programs (e.g., ASCENT: Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment, a state program that allows a limited number of students to attend a post-secondary education after completion of 12th grade, while still in the K-12 system), those who started below grade-level, and students whose coursework is interrupted for a semester or more.

Under the Anticipated Year of Graduation (AYG) cohort formula that was implemented beginning in 2010, students are assigned an unchanging anticipated year of graduation (AYG) when they enter into ninth grade. The anticipated year of graduation is assigned by adding three years to the school year that a student begins ninth grade. For example, the formula anticipates that a student starting ninth grade in the fall of the 2015-2016 school year will graduate with the Class of 2019. For more information, visit [Graduation Statistics FAQs](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradcurrentfaq) at www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradcurrentfaq.

To view graduation data on the [Colorado Graduate Dashboard](http://www.cde.state.co.us/code/graduationrate), visit www.cde.state.co.us/code/graduationrate

The 4-year AYG rate for the class of 2019, shows 81.1% of all students graduated within four years, compared to 68.6% for English learners.

Student Group	Number (N) of Students in Graduation Base	Number (N) of Graduates	Graduation Rate (%)
All Students	66,852	54,239	81.1%
English Learners (NEP/LEP)	9,103	6,246	68.6%

Four-Year AYG Cohort Rates, by Student Group

The 5-year AYG rate for the class of 2018, shows 84.9% of all students graduated within five years, compared to 74.0% for English learners.

Student Group	Number (N) of Students in Graduation Base	Number (N) of Graduates	Graduation Rate (%)
All Students	65,744	55,800	84.9%
English Learners (NEP/LEP)	8,424	6,235	74.0%

Five-Year AYG Cohort Rates, by Student Group



The 6-year AYG rate for the class of 2017, shows that 85.7% of all students graduated within six years, compared to 76.6% for English learners.

Student Group	Number (N) of Students in Graduation Base	Number (N) of Graduates	Graduation Rate (%)
All Students	63,860	54,721	85.7%
English Learners (NEP/LEP)	7,637	5,851	76.6%

Six-Year AYG Cohort Rates, by Student Group

The 7-year AYG rate for the class of 2016, shows that 86.4% of all students graduated within seven years, compared to 76.0% for English learners.

Student Group	Number (N) of Students in Graduation Base	Number (N) of Graduates	Graduation Rate (%)
All Students	62,978	54,431	86.4%
English Learners (NEP/LEP)	7,371	5,600	76.0%

Seven-Year AYG Cohort Rates, by Student Group

For more information about graduation rates, and for school and district level results, visit the [CDE Graduation Statistics](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradratecurrent) at www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/gradratecurrent

For more information about interactive graduation data, visit [CDE Graduation Dashboard](http://www.cde.state.co.us/code/graduationrate) at www.cde.state.co.us/code/graduationrate

For information about [CDE Dropout Statistics](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/dropoutcurrent), visit www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/dropoutcurrent

For information about [ASCENT Options](http://www.cde.state.co.us/concurrentenrollment/options-ascent), visit www.cde.state.co.us/concurrentenrollment/options-ascent

For information about [College Admissions in Colorado](http://higher.ed.colorado.gov/students/preparing-for-college/admissions-eligibility), visit higher.ed.colorado.gov/students/preparing-for-college/admissions-eligibility



9.2 Shared Responsibilities Relative to Factors that Influence Students' Needs and School Success

District's Obligation to Serve Secondary ELs

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) makes clear that state departments and local school districts must serve and be accountable for ELs. When people think about ELs, they primarily think of elementary students, but data shows there are many ELs at the secondary level and their numbers are growing. During school year 2018-19, there were 56,773 ELs in 6th-12th grade in Colorado. Districts need to ensure that they are in compliance with ESSA and other federal and state laws by serving this population of students and providing them with what they need to succeed.

The Office for Civil Rights (34 C.F.R. Part 100) and ESSA both stipulate that all children have the right to public education through age 21. Therefore, districts must provide services to older students who have not graduated from any other secondary institution.

Plyer vs. Doe (457 U.S. 202, 1982) delineates that schools cannot ask students any questions about their legal status or behave in such a way as to deter them from attending school. Principals, teachers, secretaries, counselors, and enrollment staff must make sure to behave in a way that does not "chill" a child's opportunity to attend public school.

Colorado Revised Statute (CRS) A22-7-409 states that all students enrolled in Colorado public schools are required to take state assessments. If alternative schools that serve older students (up to the age of 21) take per-pupil operating revenue (PPOR), these students must be tested using the state assessments.

Middle and high schools are enrolling an increasing number of ELs, but they are far from a uniform group. For example, 62% of secondary ELs were born in the U.S. (MPI, 2015). Those who arrive from foreign countries during adolescence vary widely in educational experience, home language literacy, and acculturation to life in the U.S. Factors that influence students' needs and school success fall into two categories (Walqui, 2000): socio-cultural and prior schooling. Socio-cultural factors are socioeconomic and immigration status, family support and expectations, social challenges, and sense of self. Prior schooling factors are previous academic achievement, educational continuity, language proficiency and access to core curriculum. The more information schools have, the better able they will be to help students be successful.

Example

Lone Valley High School is a suburban school where about 80% of the graduates matriculate into higher education. About 5% of students are ELs. Each fall, the school holds a meeting for immigrant parents to explain the high school credit system, the college admission process, and how to access online grades and attendance. Students and parents go to a computer lab and access their grades and attendance together, which leads to some transforming conversations. Translators are provided for Spanish, Chinese and Korean. The ESL teacher is part of a larger school ESL committee that organizes the event. As a follow-up, counselors meet with ELs each semester to check in on progress, field questions, and adjust schedules as necessary.



Socio-Cultural

Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Research suggests ties between poverty and low literacy skills. Educators should take low SES into consideration but not make assumptions about achievement based on SES alone. Many countries only provide compulsory education through elementary or middle school. Students from more affluent families may have had the privilege of attending private secondary schools with rigorous academics, while those of more modest means may have only been to middle school. For example, in Mexico there are not always high schools available in rural areas, so students may find themselves working migrant jobs to help support the family. When families migrate to the U.S., some are able to maintain their SES from their home country while others find themselves starting over. It is common to meet parents who were engineers in their home countries working minimum wage jobs in the U.S. due to licensing problems, immigration status delays, or lack of English proficiency.

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Socio-Cultural:

- Connect families to resources available in the school and community.
- Ensure equal access to programs and opportunities, such as extracurricular activities and advanced classes.
- Help families understand the U.S. education system and the value placed on a high school diploma.
- Hold parent meetings specifically designed for parents and guardians of English learners. Even if parents have university degrees from other countries, the U.S. system and college admissions process will be new to them.

Immigration Status

More than their younger counterparts, adolescents are aware of their families' immigration status and its impact on their educational opportunities. Even families with legal status face obstacles in the wave of anti-immigrant sentiment that targets certain minority groups (Walqui, 2000).

DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) passed in June 2012, the Department of Homeland announced that "certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal. They are also eligible for work authorization. Deferred action is a use of prosecutorial discretion to defer removal action against an individual for a certain period of time. Deferred action does not provide lawful status."

For more information about [Student and Family Rights to an Education](#), visit www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/studentfamilyrightstoaneducation#daca

In 2019, the General Assembly passed [H.B. 19-1196](http://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb19-1196) (leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb19-1196), Financial Aid For Students With In-state Tuition, which allows state-funded financial aid to be awarded to students who do not have lawful immigration status but have resided in the state for at least three years before graduating from a Colorado high school or passing a high school equivalency exam, and admitted to a participating college within 12 months of graduating high school. They must also sign an affidavit affirming that they are seeking or will seek legal status as soon as they are eligible. These students are historically called ASSET (Advancing Students for a Stronger Tomorrow) students after [Senate Bill 13-033](#) (www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/13HigherEducationLEGIS.pdf).

For more information about [Colorado ASSET](#) visit highered.colorado.gov/news-article/new-portal-allows-colorado-asset-students-to-apply-for-state-financial-aid



Shared Responsibilities Regarding Immigration Status:

- Welcome all students to school and set them up for success.
- Work with your district to develop a process for enrolling speakers of other languages and then provide training for staff.
- Though some students may face obstacles in attending higher education institutions, it is the school's obligation to create programs that allow all students, regardless of immigration status, an opportunity to earn a high school diploma.

Family Support and Expectations

Research shows that “parents of English learners value formal schooling and academic achievement, want to help their children succeed and are often able to do so.” (Samway & McKeon, 2007, p. 61). It is critical that schools form partnerships with all families and build these bridges between home and school to help ELs succeed in school. Even ELs who are born in the U.S. may have parents that experienced their schooling outside of the U.S.

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Family Support and Expectations:

- Hold meetings for immigrant parents to explain how parent involvement is carried out in U.S. schools. Topics for such meetings may include how to access student grades and attendance online, explanation of high school credits and graduation requirements, and methods for supporting literacy in the home.
- If parents do not speak English, encourage them to continue using their home language in the home and read to their children in their own language.
- Provide translators who can also act as “cultural brokers” for parent meetings and school events so parents feel more comfortable asking questions.
- Schools are required to provide communication in the student's home language when possible.

Social Challenges and Sense of Self

Adolescents often articulate feeling caught between two worlds.

Acculturation and assimilation can lead to conflicts at home around cultural/ familial expectations and students may have difficulty navigating between differing cultures. Children who may have been successful in their home country lose self-confidence as they struggle to learn English, academic content, and a new educational system. They must also balance adopting a new culture while maintaining the culture and traditions of their home. Research shows that immigrant youth who maintain a strong sense of pride in their heritage are more successful in school (Nieto, 1999).

Possibility

Consider activities or clubs that address college and career planning, peer relationships, communication, problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution, and/or multicultural awareness to raise achievement and create a sense of belonging.



Shared Responsibilities Regarding Social Challenges and Sense of Self:

- Effective school practices build on students' background, including language, culture, and life experiences.
- Educators should advance a systematic, integrated and school-wide approach to infusing students' background in the physical environment, classroom learning community, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Celebrate the culture of all students.
- Provide courses such as Spanish for Spanish Speakers so students can continue to deepen their literacy in their own language.
- Encourage student leadership groups to support ELs during orientation and throughout the school year.
- Provide avenues for ELs and their parents to become involved in school leadership, such as participation on school accountability committees.
- Make an extra effort to include ELs in the culture of your school, including extracurricular activities, school committees, and celebrations.

Prior Schooling

Previous Academic Achievement

English learners bring a reservoir of content knowledge from previous schooling. Adolescents' level of success or failure in school influences their self-confidence and attitude toward learning.

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Prior Schooling:

- Request and utilize transcripts from previous academic institutions to design academic programs for students.
- With the help of translators, interview students and parents about their prior experiences and consider student strengths when designing an academic plan.
- Help teachers to recognize that content knowledge from previous schooling is a resource to build on in the classroom. For instance, a student who has mastered algebra in their country does not need to re-learn algebra; they need to learn the new language that allows them to access algebraic concepts.

Scenario

Jesus attended school in Guatemala up through 9th grade. When he enrolled in the U.S., his school provided a Spanish for Spanish Speakers course that led him to take AP Spanish his senior year. Besides being better prepared for college, Jesus also felt that a course designed for native Spanish speakers gave him additional confidence in all of his subjects. His pathway to graduation acknowledged the value of bilingualism.



Educational Continuity

ELs who have attended schools in the U.S. may have experienced a variety of program models in different districts. It is not unusual for a student to have experienced bilingual education, English immersion, and ESL programs at various times throughout their educational history (Walqui, 2000). Also, they may have experienced interrupted schooling for a variety of reasons. Students with Interrupted Formal Schooling (SIFE) tend to be the most at risk of dropping out, so it is important to identify these students and design programs to fit their specific needs.

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Educational Continuity:

- Provide both adult and peer support to help ELs navigate the new school and new schedules.
- For ELs who have moved through many districts and programs, conduct thorough assessments at intake to identify their needs and design their program accordingly.
- Communicate with parents early and often to help them understand what school programs will provide and how they may be different/similar to what their child has received in the past.

Language Proficiencies

Language proficiency is of particular concern for secondary ELs because as students enter a U.S. middle or high school, they can have varying degrees of proficiencies in one or both languages. It is critical that schools consider proficiency in both the L1 and L2 when placing students in classes.

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Language Proficiencies:

Find as much as possible about the student's level of literacy in their first language. Some schools ask for a native language writing sample during intake and have bilingual staff or world language teachers assist in evaluating students' L1 writing.

Access to Core Curriculum

Students need the opportunity to earn credit from day one. Research shows that one of the factors that causes ELs to drop out is the lack of relevant, credit-bearing courses (Maxwell-Jolly, Gandara, & Mendez- Benavidez, 2007). Schools ensure access to core curriculum when they provide appropriate English Language Development (ELD) courses and academic content courses that use sheltered instruction to "change the load, not the level."

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Access to Core Curriculum:

- Place ELs with teachers who are highly skilled at meeting the needs of English Learners.
- Recruit teachers who have a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse endorsement or appropriate training.
- Provide ELs with explicit instruction in listening, reading, writing, and speaking in English before they are considered for interventions.
- Only place newly arrived ELs in Special Education courses or specialized intervention courses if they have been previously staffed at their prior school. The MTSS process must be followed for ELs to be placed in Special Education or intervention services.



Education Background

Intake procedures for secondary students must include several qualitative measures. Although writing samples and W-APT/WIDA Screener provide vital information, taking the time to understand students' academic experience makes the greatest difference in properly placing them in classes. Locke (2006) states that flexibility in attendance, scheduling, and timelines greatly aids older ELs in their academic experience.

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Educational Background:

To get a complete picture of a secondary EL, the school/district needs to go beyond the initial intake assessments. Conduct a background interview *before* creating student schedules as a means to determine appropriate supports and placement.

Out-of-School Youth

Out-of-school youth (OSY) have little or no access to federal or state resources. OSY are the fastest growing population within the migrant community because they often are disengaged and alienated from schools and learning.

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Out-of-School Youth:

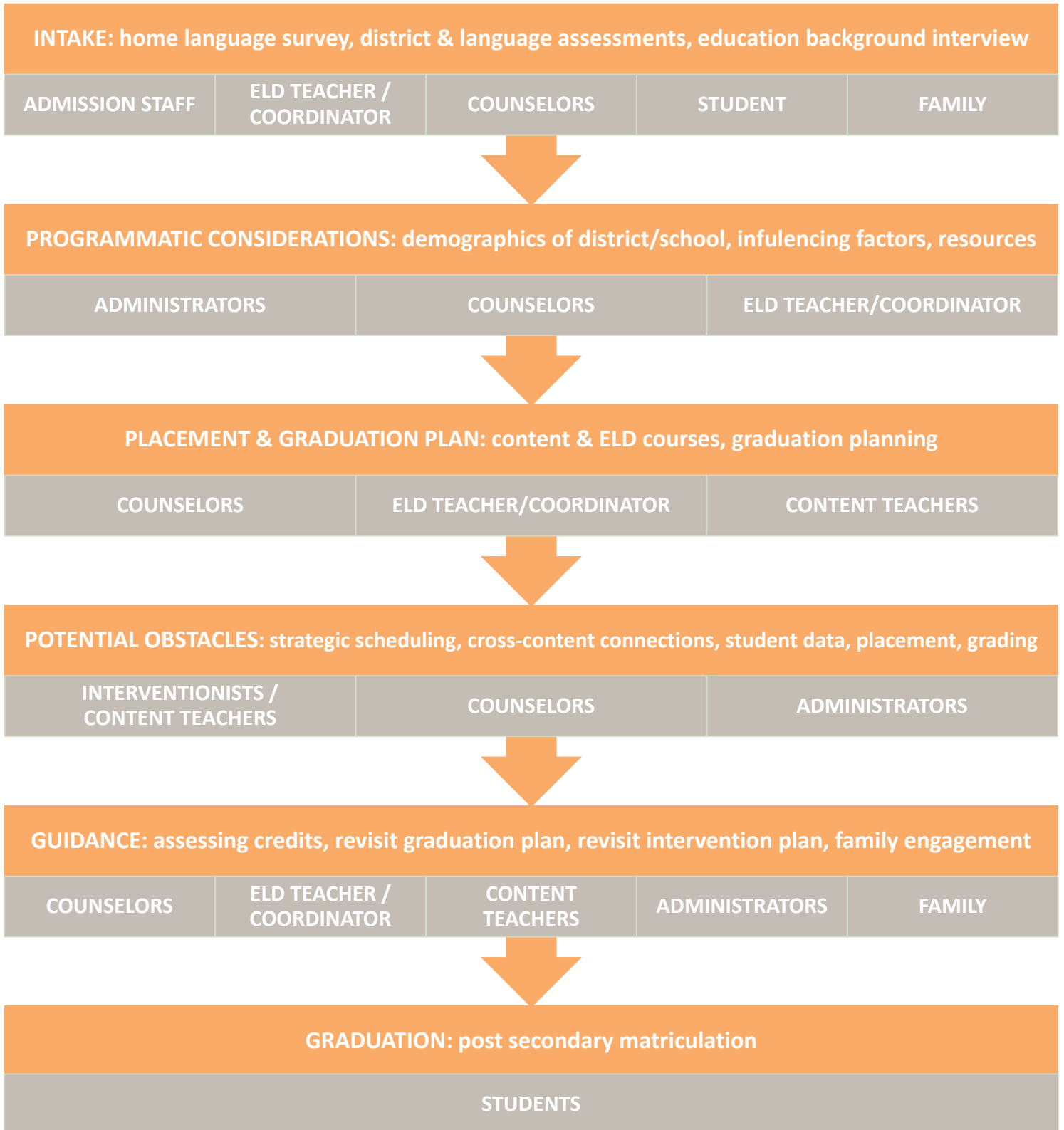
- Create a supportive environment for students so that they do not feel forced to choose between school and their families.
- Create policies and procedures for re-admitting OSY who may have dropped out in the past.
- Provide GED courses for OSY.
- Encourage OSY to engage in basic skills courses.
- Work with the Migrant Education Program and other relevant programs to provide practical life skills classes/activities for OSY.

Scenario

Jimmy arrived from Vietnam at 15 and struggled in all of his high school courses. He was especially slow copying information from the board and several teachers referred him to special education. A counselor who was experienced in working with ELs explained the language acquisition process to the staff and demonstrated the vast differences between the alphabetic systems of Vietnamese and English. Eventually the teachers began to incorporate strategies such as giving Jimmy the notes ahead of time, using visuals, and providing a peer tutor. Jimmy's ESL teacher provided both an English language development class and an additional ESL study skills class to help him develop additional learning strategies. Now the counselor and ESL teacher work together to schedule Jimmy's courses and select his teachers in order to ensure that his linguistic needs are met.



SECONDARY EDUCATION: FROM INTAKE TO GRADUATION





9.3 Programmatic Considerations

Schools that make a difference for diverse learners must show a “willingness to accept, embrace and navigate the complexity of teaching and learning in collaboration with others” (Salazar, 2009, p. 23). Whatever the programmatic approach, it must recognize and build on the identity, language, and knowledge ELs already possess. Specific practices to build on student identity and culture include:

- Provide opportunities during the school day for students to process in their native language with their peers.
- Revisit school traditions, pictures in the hallways, bulletin boards and announcements. How are all backgrounds and cultures reflected in your school?
- Create opportunities for students to share their background knowledge and perspective on topics in the curriculum.
- Allow students to access bilingual resources to help facilitate their understanding of content.
- Create different levels of ELD courses that meet the various needs of the EL population. Students at lower L1 and L2 literacy levels may need two beginning ELD periods per day; students with higher levels may need one period of an advanced class.
- Middle and high schools have some flexibility to structure instructional time, class size, course design and other organizational features to best serve their ELs. Research suggests that an average 9th grade EL will require 4–7 years of instruction to read and write as well as a typical 12th grade native English speaker (Hakuta et al., 2000).
- Permit newly arrived immigrant ELs to stay in high school for more than the usual four years (Garcia, 1999).
- Schools may reduce class size to better serve adolescent ELs (Boyson & Short, 2003; Crandall et al., 1998; Garcia, 1999). Programs that effectively target adolescent ELs for accelerated learning—either during the school day or through extended hours—typically include opportunities for small group or pair learning.
- Schools with many Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) provide small literacy classes that are co-taught by a CLD or Native Language Arts teacher and a reading specialist.

EL programs generally include English language instruction as a central feature. EL programs may include other components, such as teacher professional development; academic and other counseling for students; skill building, such as study- or vocational-skill building; or family/community involvement. The program should be explicit concerning:

- Who will provide instruction to the English learning students?
- The curriculum and methods of instruction within the program (including setting (s) in which the curriculum is to be implemented).
- What language will be used for instruction.
- The desired outcomes for the students to become bilingual or to “transition from” or “exit” the program. Programs for ELs need to be well defined (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004).



9.4 Navigation of Secondary Systems and Structures

For many ELs, U.S. schools represent a better future; however, they also represent a foreign system with many obstacles. ELs must successfully navigate fragmented school days, departmentalization, and systems of courses. Schools can create policies and procedures to break down these obstacles and clear a path for student success. In addition to the changes all adolescents go through during this period, ELs are confronted with cultural identity issues of assimilation or acculturation and the need to learn a new language and in turn learn *through* that new language in order to graduate and reach their full potential.

Potential Structural Obstacles

Strategic Scheduling

The continuous movement from class to class in an unfamiliar building and the constant shifting of classmates increases confusion and alienation for secondary ELs (Walqui, 2007). Some districts utilize block scheduling, with the advantage for ELs being extended class periods with fewer class periods per day. Another way of scheduling ELs is to look at the whole day for these students and strategically schedule academic classes. Place electives or lunch between the most challenging classes to provide a break so that students do not become overloaded and tune out.

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Strategic Scheduling:

- Organize the master schedule around what is best for all students
- Create the master schedule with special populations in mind first
- Hand-schedule ELs into appropriate classes

Cross-Content Connections

Elementary school teachers consider themselves generalists while secondary teachers think of themselves as subject matter experts. Content teachers may not see themselves as teachers of reading and writing because they expect students to be competent in literacy when they arrive. This assumption poses a problem for newcomers who lack these skills. When schools have strong departmental boundaries, there are no clearly established responsibilities for the education of students who need to develop academic knowledge and acquire English (Walqui, 2007).

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Cross-Content Connections:

- Content teachers make connections across ideas and content.
- Provide professional development which helps content teachers address the linguistic needs of ELs
- Set up structures that allow for cross-departmental work
- Build team planning into the school day
- Build awareness of the needs of ELs
- Consider co-teaching as one model for instruction
- Develop school leadership teams that combine ELD teachers, content teachers, administrators, and counselors



Data-Informed Course Scheduling

Secondary schools have complex systems of courses and requirements that are difficult for students from different educational systems, languages, and cultures to grasp and negotiate. Too often 12th grade ELs learn that they do not have enough credits to graduate right before graduation day. It is crucial to communicate, in the students' primary language(s) and in the simplest format possible, the graduation requirements as well as the courses necessary to matriculate into college.

Placing students in courses based on data (interviews, transcripts, intake assessments) linked to the factors mentioned, not teacher perception. When teachers' remedial or low perceptions drive placement, students often are treated consistent with these perceptions. Once a student begins to own these perceptions, a self-fulfilling cycle begins. If, for example, a student who took high level math in Mexico is placed in a remedial math class because of language, she/he may start to think of her/himself as remedial. Some students rise to this challenge and do not legitimize their misplacement, but others become bored and give up. Additionally, students placed in lower tracks may not receive the courses that are required for graduation or certain postsecondary options. A system of assessment and placement that better serves ELs should be a priority for schools and counselors.

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Data-Informed Course Scheduling:

Optimal guiding principles when scheduling ELs:

- Collect language proficiency data in both L1 and L2
- Schedule to the strengths of the student
- Schedule ELD courses/sheltered content courses first
- If sheltered content courses are not available, hand-schedule content courses with qualified instructors
- Schedule core courses before electives

Placement and Assessment

Students who are assessed, placed and monitored based on their knowledge and skills are more likely to receive instruction that meets their needs. Making time for placement is crucial because it saves time in the long run. It takes more time to reschedule a student who has been misplaced in courses. Additionally, such misplacement could in turn create challenges with regards to motivation and behavior. It is important to provide high school students with high quality—as opposed to remedial—instruction. Once placed, effective programs measure progress in ways that allow modifications in order to improve student performance. Diagnostic assessments—including formal assessments in the native language and English assessments with necessary accommodations, as well as portfolios and formative classroom assessments—ascertain the diverse language and academic strengths of ELs. Schools that effectively serve ELs establish multiple measures for examining student gains and instructional improvements. Regular quality review cycles (optimally every six weeks), during which data is gathered and analyzed to track the development of students and teachers over time, allow for appropriate program refinement.

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Placement and Assessment:

- Have policies and procedures for intake assessments for secondary ELs
- Include writing samples
- Use additional assessments, specifically in math
- Counselors need to create a graduation plan for proper placement into classes



Grading

Teachers new to working with ELs often express concern about fair grading. ELs are “faced with three significant challenges: they must learn new concepts (often quite abstract especially above third grade), they must learn in a language in which they are not proficient, and they must learn in a cultural context that may be quite unfamiliar to them” (Hamayan & Freeman, 2006). As students face these challenges, they may struggle with written assignments and assessments where the language load exceeds their current level of English language proficiency. Even with their best efforts, students may struggle to achieve high marks on assignments and assessments compared to their native-English speaking peers. The following suggestions (adapted from Jameson, 2003, p. 171) will help teachers develop ways to grade ELs equitably.

Shared Responsibilities Regarding Grading:

- Explain what and how you grade early in the class; show examples of good work. Talk to students after grading if you think their expectations were different from the grade they received.
- Use the standards as a guide to teach what is most essential. What are the essential concepts they must learn? What vocabulary is most critical?
- Focus on meaning and content knowledge, not language errors such as grammar mistakes. Ask yourself: Did the student understand the question? Did she/he answer the question?
- Design assessments that allow students to express their knowledge. Matching words with pictures, filling in diagrams and answering questions orally are strategies that work.
- When writing test questions, adjust the language load, not the cognitive level. Avoid idioms, passive voice and vocabulary that could distract from the heart of the question.
- Grade using a combination of *process* and *product*.
- Adapt tests and test administration (allow more time for ELs, read the test to them, etc.). Teach test-taking skills and strategies. Use criterion-referenced tests.
- Teach students how to evaluate their own work. Provide rubrics for self-evaluations.
- If necessary, use pass/fail grades for newcomer ELs on the report card for the first or second marking period. As students learn more English and become accustomed to content courses, transition to letter grades.

Teachers may struggle at first, but with more experience they can develop a grading policy that equitably reflects the content knowledge of ELs.

Special Notes for School Administrators

Successful schools effectively target resources, position themselves with key constituencies and provide strong guidance so ELs receive high quality instruction in environments that are safe, supportive, and connected to the broader school community. A school culture mindful of the contributions of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and experiential backgrounds fosters learning and achievement (Faltis & Coulter, 2007). A strong school leadership team must build structures and schedules for a comprehensive service model that addresses the needs of all students. The team must engage guidance counselors and ELD teachers in order to provide professional development that addresses cultural sensitivity as well as instructional goals.



As needs grow more diverse among adolescent learners, all middle and high school teachers must understand second language acquisition, know the basic principles of second language literacy instruction, how to teach in cross-cultural contexts, and how to provide ELs with content-based instruction that includes academic language instruction. This requires an administrative commitment to provide deep and sustained opportunities for professional development. Administrators should meet with EL staff regularly to analyze and strengthen instructional strategies such as scaffolding, use of appropriate materials and how to make connections to student experiences.

Special Notes for Counselors

The school must provide ELs with frequent access to staff, including guidance counselors, social workers, intervention specialists, librarians, and mentors. Encourage strong parent and community involvement. Build the school community by engaging families and using neighborhood resources to strengthen EL services and opportunities for college and career guidance.

Walqui (2007) found that secondary school counselors too often equate limited English language proficiency with academic limitations and act as gatekeepers to more challenging academic credit-bearing courses that lend more post-secondary options. Begin with the end in mind and create a plan for ELs' success.

Develop a Graduation Plan

From the day a student arrives at high school, guidance counselors should begin developing a graduation plan. This plan should be developed mutually with the student and should be reviewed and updated at least once each year, or even once each semester or quarter. Changes to the plan should be ongoing and based on the student's progress during that time period. The EL's graduation plan may not look like the graduation plan for a native English speaker.

Assessing Credits

Evaluate the complete course credit history of an EL before designing the schedule and graduation plan. ELs often come with a non-traditional educational history. The student may have attended two or more schools during the year, come from a 7-period day vs. a 4-period day, have been enrolled in a course not offered at the new school, have trade/training program certifications, or have taken content courses in a different order. Complications arise when students move from one state to another with each state having different graduation requirements, standards, and assessment systems. This can result in many students not receiving credit for the coursework they have completed. Not receiving credits can lead to apathy, despair and dropping out (Johnson, et al. 1986; Rasmussen 1988). Careful credit assessment of all high school coursework is critically important.

Working with Partial Credits

ELs often lose credits when they move mid-semester. When the semester is interrupted by a move, any "partial" credit is lost. Partial credit is the percentage of the semester's requirements that the student completed successfully, and it is vital to the student's ability to graduate. If the school does not conserve and record partial credit, students may end up repeating a portion of a course that they have already completed.

Take steps to ensure maximum credit accrual for partially completed semesters. If a student must leave in the middle of the semester, code the transcript so that the student receives partial credit. If a student arrives at your school outside the normal entry time, work with the previous school to give the student credit for work completed and avoid repeating course work. When working with migrant families, find out when annual migrations are likely to take place and take proactive steps to ensure that students leave with partial credit.



Setting up English Learners for Success

After conducting thorough intake assessments, conducting interviews, and evaluating transcripts, school staff can then begin to plan for appropriate instructional programming for each English learner. It is important to provide students the opportunity to follow a rigorous academic curriculum, which fosters academic success and helps them integrate into the fabric of school and society. Callahan (2005) notes that in schools where teaching only basic English is the focus, secondary ELs tend to achieve poorly, lose hope, and often drop out. She also found that curriculum placement into regular college preparatory courses was a better predictor of academic achievement than students' English language proficiency.

A comprehensive school-wide program includes qualified ELD teachers as well as content teachers who shelter grade-level content for ELs. Schools must provide qualified staff, continuous professional development, and design and implement a rigorous and relevant curriculum that prepares ELs for college.

Higher Education Admissions Requirements

In 2003, the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) adopted the Higher Education Admission Requirements (changed to "Recommendations" in 2018 to more accurately reflect that it is not required for admission to fulfill HEAR), which provide a high school course mix and rigor guideline for students planning to attend any of Colorado's public four-year colleges or universities. The recommendations were implemented in two phases: Phase 1 for students graduating in 2008 and 2009, and Phase 2 for students graduating in 2010 and beyond. Private colleges and universities set their own admission standards, so students should contact those institutions directly for information regarding their enrollment policies. Additionally, public two-year colleges have open enrollment policies, meaning that students applying to these schools do not need to meet HEAR, however, it will certainly benefit their success if they do.

ACADEMIC AREA	2008/2009 GRADUATE	2010+ GRADUATES
English*	4 years	4 years
Mathematics (Must include Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II or equivalents)**	3 years	4 years
Natural/Physical Sciences (two units must be lab-based)**	3 years	3 years
Social Sciences (at least one unit of U.S. or world history)	3 years	3 years
World/Foreign Language***	not required	1 year
Academic Electives****	2 years	2 years

*Two units of ESL English may count for HEAR recommendations when combined with two units of successfully completed college preparatory English.

**College-preparatory ESL mathematics/science courses that include content and academic rigor/level comparable to other acceptable courses may satisfy HEAR recommendations.

***[American Sign Language \(ASL\)](https://higher.ed.colorado.gov/sites/highered/files/2020-03/i-partu.pdf) (higher.ed.colorado.gov/sites/highered/files/2020-03/i-partu.pdf) courses can count toward the Word/Foreign Language recommendation.

****Acceptable Academic Electives include additional courses in English, mathematics, natural/physical sciences and social sciences, foreign languages, art, music, journalism, drama, computer science, honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate courses, and appropriate CTE courses.

The Colorado Commission on Higher Education does not review individual high school courses to determine whether or not they meet Colorado's Higher Education Admissions Recommendations. Because local school districts in Colorado oversee their high school curricula and colleges and universities establish their own entrance standards, it is their discretion to determine what coursework meets HEAR.

To view [HEAR Requirements](https://higher.ed.colorado.gov/higher-education-admission-recommendations), visit
higher.ed.colorado.gov/higher-education-admission-recommendations



CDE Graduation Guidelines and English Learners

The Colorado graduation guidelines have two purposes, the first is to articulate Colorado's shared beliefs about the value and meaning of a high school diploma. The second is to outline the minimum components, expectations, and responsibilities of local districts and the state to support students in attaining their high school diploma. Districts have the authority to adapt the college and career demonstrations necessary to earn a standard high school diploma to accommodate for students with exceptions: English learners, gifted students, and students with disabilities.

For more information about [Students with Exceptions](#), visit www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/grad-exceptional

Secondary schools in Colorado strive to raise graduation rates, reduce dropout rates, and provide a rigorous curriculum that prepares students to be college and career ready. In order to reach these critical goals and include English learners, it is often tempting to immediately jump to structural changes. Although schools must change the way they offer courses and schedule English learners, Salazar (2009) suggests there is a more critical component that must come first: "the relentless belief in the potential of culturally and linguistically diverse youth" to achieve academically.

There are no simple solutions or one-size fits all formulas for fostering success for secondary English learners. Every school must consider the particular needs of its own community. Even if a given English learner population appears on the surface to be relatively homogenous, assessment will reveal that those students have all sorts of differing educational backgrounds and unique needs.

To view the [Graduation Guidelines Engagement Toolkit](#), visit www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/graduationguidelinesengagementtoolkit

A Capstone Project is a multifaceted body of work that is district determined and serves as a culminating academic and intellectual experience for students. When developed through an inclusive process, capstone experiences and portfolios offer an authentic, rigorous learning opportunity for students, and they provide school faculty and staff a meaningful professional growth opportunity. Capstone projects allow students to draw on knowledge and skills from a variety of content areas and apply it in meaningful ways. Portfolios serve as a mechanism for students to curate and display high quality work that demonstrates their mastery of course content, career, and college readiness. The strongest practice or approach helps students demonstrate academic, professional, and entrepreneurial competencies, while encouraging them to develop expertise in an area of deep interest. This investigative process encourages and requires a high degree of collaboration and coordination among faculty and staff.

For more information about [Capstone Project](#), visit www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/grad-capstonefactsheet

The Seal of Biliteracy is an award made by a state department of education or local district to recognize a student who has attained proficiency in English and one or more other world languages by high school graduation. The recognition of attaining biliteracy becomes part of the high school transcript and diploma for these students. The Seal serves to certify attainment of biliteracy for students, employers, and universities. It is a statement of accomplishment that helps to signal evidence of a student's readiness for career and college, and for engagement as a global citizen.

For more information about the [Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines](#), visit sealofbiliteracy.org/state-guidelines/

For more information about [Seal of Biliteracy for Colorado High School Diplomas](#), visit www.cde.state.co.us/cde_english/high-school-diploma-endorsement-for-biliteracy



9.5 Principles of Instruction with Promising Practices and Strategies

Once programmatic decisions have been made, incorporating strategic teaching and learning guided by researched based principles and promising practices are important in accelerating learning, promoting student academic achievement, and fostering language acquisition. Levine, Lukens, and Smallwood (2007) have indicated there are 5 research-based principles for English language learners:

- **Principle 1: Focus on academic language, literacy, and vocabulary across content areas:** teach the language and skills required for content learning.
- **Principle 2: Link background knowledge and culture to learning:** Explicitly plan and incorporate ways to engage students in thinking about and drawing from their life experiences and prior knowledge.
- **Principle 3: Increase comprehensible input and language output:** Make meaning through visuals, demonstrations, and other means while providing students multiple opportunities to produce language
- **Principle 4: Promote classroom interaction:** Engage students in using English to accomplish academic tasks
- **Principle 5: Stimulate higher order thinking and the use of learning strategies:** Explicitly teach thinking skills and learning strategies to develop English learners as effective, independent learners

Principle 1: Focus on academic language, literacy, and vocabulary across content areas	
Promising practice	Example Strategies
Use sheltered instructional practices	Structured note taking, sentence frames and starters, sort tasks, mix and match activities
Use effective reading strategies	Anticipation guides, cloze passages, guided reading, chunking, picture walks, reciprocal teaching, teach the text backwards
Use effective writing strategies	Graphic organizers, outlines, sentence stem and frames
Emphasize early and ongoing extensive oral language development to improve reading and writing skills	Accountable talk, language models, sentence starters, think-pair-share, questioning techniques
Principle 2: Link background knowledge and culture to learning	
Promising practice	Example Strategies
Assess and build on students' language and background	Pre-teaching concepts, preview/review, KWL, frequent checks/formative assessment, provide multiple examples from diverse perspectives, provide opportunities for students to develop native language when possible
Provide a culturally inclusive environment	Ensure multicultural resources are displayed and utilized, anchor charts, culturally relevant texts
Scaffold content connections by building students' experiential knowledge, and connecting to their interests and perspectives	Make explicit links to prior knowledge and skills, real world connections, introduce new content via familiar resources, help students make text-to-text and text-to-self connections



Principle 3: Increase comprehensible input and language output	
Promising practice	Example Strategies
Utilize sheltered strategies	Visuals, consistent routines, graphic organizers, total physical response, manipulatives, wait time, gestures, realia
Provide various options for assignments and assessments	Provide choice when possible, provide differentiated opportunities to demonstrate understanding as appropriate to English proficiency level
Principle 4: Promote classroom interaction	
Promising practice	Example Strategies
Create opportunities for movement and student interaction	Use flexible and purposeful pairing/grouping based on academic and linguistic needs, provide specific roles in cooperative learning, structured oral routines (numbered heads and give one-get one), provide clear and consistent rituals and routines
Principle 5: Stimulate higher order thinking and the use of learning strategies	
Promising practice	Example Strategies
Ensure students goals are based on standards and all students have access grade level content	Select and accommodate materials based on English language proficiency level, provide targeted support and instruction
Target higher level academic vocabulary	Provide explicit instruction and modeling of academic language throughout the lesson. Explicitly teach cognate relationships, word attack strategies, idioms, word banks, word squares, Tier 2 vocabulary. Provide language rigor by expanding students' language complexity (more sophisticated) and/or quantity (extending the length of discourse)
Explicitly teach learning and cognitive strategies	Model, name and explain learning strategies and metacognition to students. Model metalinguistic awareness (thinking about language)

For more information about [The Five Principles of Instruction for English Language Learners](http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/English-Language-Learners/go-to-strategies.pdf), visit www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/English-Language-Learners/go-to-strategies.pdf



9.6 Promising Practices for School Leadership and Administration

English learners represent one of the fastest growing groups in U.S. schools. It is important for administrators to maintain an understanding and focus through principles, practices, and strategies presented below:

Principle 1: Establish a culturally inclusive environment	
Promising practice	Example Strategies
Foster an affirming attitude towards students and their families	Invite families to inclusive events at school, provide information in their native language when possible, ensure diverse role models are available, honor student and family diversity, adapt practices to meet the needs of your current student population
Use home school connections to enhance student engagement, motivation and participation	Support and encourage families to build native language and literacy in the home, communicate with families using various means (home visits, phone calls, texts, email, cultural liaisons/navigators)
Principle 2: Create environments of success for students	
Promising practice	Example Strategies
Ensure students are participating in English language development (i.e. ELD courses, co-taught, push-in support) and grade level instruction in all content areas.	Create schedules that allow students to participate in dedicated and integrated ELD and core content based on individual student needs, support teachers with best practices and effective instruction, ensure students are scheduled in the most highly qualified teachers' classrooms
Provide opportunities for success toward college and career readiness	Ensure students' schedules include classes that are at grade level and taught toward standards, create an environment of high expectations for all, provide multiple opportunities for students to participate in activities and programs school-wide. Provide differentiated approaches towards communicating post-secondary information
Ensure English learners have equal opportunity to be enrolled in academic coursework such as IB, AP, Concurrent Enrollment, AVID, and/or Honors	Provide targeted recruitment, professional development for teachers, and additional support for students
Principle 3: Create environments of success for staff	
Promising practice	Example Strategies
Support teachers who work with EL students	Allocate resources to ensure equity and access, create a vision/UIP goals that include EL students. Support professional learning for teachers towards EL instruction, add specific criteria to classroom observation documents that support effective strategies for EL instruction.

Resources

[English Language Learners: How Your State is Doing](http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/02/23/512451228/5-million-english-language-learners-a-vast-pool-of-talent-at-risk)

(www.npr.org/sections/ed/2017/02/23/512451228/5-million-english-language-learners-a-vast-pool-of-talent-at-risk)

[Limited English Proficient Population in the United States](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/limited-english-proficient-population-united-states#LEP%20Children)

(www.migrationpolicy.org/article/limited-english-proficient-population-united-states#LEP%20Children)

[National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition \(NELA\) Fact Sheets](http://ncela.ed.gov/fact-sheets) (ncela.ed.gov/fact-sheets)

[Immigrants in the U.S. States with the Fastest-Growing Foreign-Born Populations](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigrants-us-states-fastest-growing-foreign-born-populations) (www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigrants-us-states-fastest-growing-foreign-born-populations)

[U.S Department of Education: Who are English Learners](http://www2.ed.gov/datastory/el-characteristics/index.html#one)

(www2.ed.gov/datastory/el-characteristics/index.html#one)

[CDE Migrant Education Program](http://www.cde.state.co.us/migrant) (www.cde.state.co.us/migrant)

[The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition: Language Instruction Educational Program Models](http://ncela.ed.gov/files/uploads/5/LIEPs0406BR.pdf) (NCELA) (ncela.ed.gov/files/uploads/5/LIEPs0406BR.pdf)

[Census Bureau-Languages Spoken at Home](http://census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-185.html)

(census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-185.html)

[Kids Count Data Center](http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/81-children-who-speak-a-language-other-than-english-at-home#detailed/1/any/false/37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38/any/396,397)

(datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/81-children-who-speak-a-language-other-than-english-at-home#detailed/1/any/false/37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38/any/396,397)

(See Appendix H and Appendix I)



Appendix H

Secondary English Learner Educational History Checklist

(Adapted from the Washington State Counselor's Guide)

To adequately assess the needs of secondary English learners, obtaining the educational history is a preliminary and crucial factor.

- Examine all of the records you receive from the sending institution or relatives of the student.
- Determine the student's years of U.S. and/or foreign education and any gaps in the educational process. Obtain and validate transcripts from all previous schools, including private or foreign schools. Make sure all credits are posted.
- Determine if the student has ever attended a summer school program. Determine if the student has any grade reports or certificates from attending trade schools, training programs, community service programs, or other educational programs. Obtain, validate, and post records.
- Make a thorough evaluation of all credits earned and credits needed for graduation and for post-secondary education. Look at past transcripts to identify if the student is repeating coursework unnecessarily.
- Review requirements for graduation from the local district and those for post-secondary entrance to college or vocational training.
- Assist the student in developing a graduation plan of coursework that incorporates the results of your complete credit analysis, the requirements for graduation and the student's career pathway.
- Enroll the student in appropriate courses. Within a week of placement, check with teachers to verify correct placement.
- Empower the student with information so that she/he can accept personal responsibility to manage her/his education. Involving the student and her/his relatives in educational career planning not only assists in making good educational decisions, it also provides the counselor with information on the student's interests.
- Review scores from State and local academic and language proficiency assessments. Establish whether the student has met mastery in all required areas.
- Compare the student's age and grade level to see if they are on track to graduate by the required age.



Appendix I

Educating English Learners at the High School Level

Educating ELs at the High School Level: A Coherent Approach to District- and School-Level Support

In 2000, The American Institutes for Research (AIR), assisted by WestEd, completed a 5-year evaluation of educational environments for ELs in California. The study identifies an array of factors that make a positive difference for EL achievement, not only in California but potentially across the country. The study found that there is no single path to ensuring high EL achievement. However, the following practices appear to be more important contributors to success with ELs than using a specific instructional model:

- Implement a well-defined, rigorously structured plan of instruction for ELs
- Ensure that teachers are skilled in addressing the needs of ELs
- Systematically use data to assess teaching and learning
- Regularly adjust instructional planning based on student performance

As EL enrollment continues to grow, issues facing schools tasked with educating these students become increasingly important. According to federal statistics, an estimated five million ELs were enrolled in U.S. public schools in 2004–2005, an increase of more than 65% from 1993–1994 (Parrish et al., 2006). Spanish is the most common primary language spoken by ELs, and about 70% of ELs are native Spanish speakers (Capps et al., 2005).

Districts face diverse circumstances in their EL populations. Some serve populations in which one primary language is spoken by the majority of ELs. In other districts, dozens of language groups may be represented in a single school. Adding to the complexity is variation in the length of residence in the United States: some are newly arrived; others are U.S. born children of immigrants. There also are wide-ranging levels of literacy skills and previous schooling (Genesee, Lindholmleary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). A range of factors, including local contextual factors, must be considered when determining what works best for ELs (Parrish et al., 2006).

States set high academic standards for ELs who face the extraordinary challenge of learning academic English and mastering the same core content standards (in English) that are expected of all students. A major concern in the education of ELs that surfaced throughout the study is that in some cases, language status hampers access to grade-level instruction in the core curriculum and may impede attainment of academic English and grade-level performance standards. At the study's high schools, some ELs and their parents raised concerns that they were "stuck in the EL track" and that this track of courses was not preparing them for college.

What improvement strategies make the most difference in educating ELs? The study gathered information from 66 schools with high EL performance relative to other schools with similar demographics. Some schools in the sample offered bilingual instruction; some offered immersion; and several offered multiple options for ELD instruction. Schools were selected from across the state and had a broad range of demographics. However, all had significant EL populations, and all had high levels of poverty.



Research findings suggest there is no one path to academic excellence for ELs. However, administrators tend to pinpoint a few key features upon which ELs' success hinges. School principals identified the following as most critical:

- Staff capacity to address the needs of ELs
- Schoolwide focus on English language development (ELD) and standards-based instruction
- Shared priorities and expectations in regard to educating ELs
- Systematic, ongoing assessment and data-driven decision making

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be derived for administrators, schools, and districts.

- **Articulate EL policies across classes, grades, and schools.** A coherent set of performance expectations for ELs and a carefully designed plan to guide their progress through the grades and create coherent instructional transitions across schools are essential to the success of ELs.
- **Use data to guide policy and instruction.** The use of data to guide EL policy and to measure the results of instructional practices was prevalent among the successful schools/districts in the study.
- **Except under very limited circumstances, schools/districts should offer ELs the same range of challenging coursework offered to English-speaking students.** The study found that instructional programs in place were ostensibly designed to improve the English language acquisition and academic achievement of ELs but resulted in offering ELs a narrower range of less challenging coursework than was available to English-speaking students, often characterized by low expectations. Although the separation of ELs for targeted support is sometimes justified, this should be done strategically and limited to cases justified by specific instructional purposes and demonstrated success.
- **Districts should support ongoing, job-embedded PD to promote ELs' ELD and academic achievement and ensure appropriate deployment of skilled teachers to schools in which they are needed most.**
- **Schools should emphasize literacy, personalized learning communities, distributed leadership, and teacher collaboration.** Teaching literacy across the curriculum was identified as a priority in schools that had better-than-average performance among ELs. The development of personalized learning communities and teacher teams were effective strategies for teaching literacy. Empowering members of a school community, such as teacher teams and other staff, to contribute to shaping the direction of student learning positively influenced achievement outcomes and increased the cohesiveness of the school community.



Ten Tips from the Successful Principals Interviewed for this Study

1) Establish consistent standards around high expectations and strategies:

“I think the key to our success is consistency. That’s the key. The expectations—the standards—have to be set, and the expectations are high for all children. The support that we give them has to be there. But the standards, or the expectations, are never lowered. You cannot do that without consistency. So, it doesn’t really matter necessarily what the curriculum is, as long as the strategies that are used to deliver that instruction are consistent across the grade levels, in every strand.”

2) Don’t underestimate ELs:

“Remember that these students are highly motivated and want to learn English. It’s important to provide them with a good support group and to ensure that their first experiences help them to keep their goals high. This is critical.”

3) Make ELs a whole-school priority:

“All teachers must take responsibility for EL kids—it can’t just be the EL department. We only have 40 kids in our ELD classes, but we have one third of our school classified as EL. So they are sitting in regular classes, and we need to get them to a fluent level. All teachers have to know who they are, what level they are, in order to bring them up to the fluent level, and that involves the whole staff.”

4) Motivate, train, and involve teachers:

“Developing highly efficient and effective teachers is the first challenge as a principal. Start by sharing research and demographics with them. Teach them how to read and analyze test scores. Teach them step-by-step all the issues with ELs...what the typical life experience of an EL in the school is like, etc. Work as a team to solve the problems. Build in time for lots of dialogue and reflection. Work collaboratively as an entire school through vertical and grade-level meetings. Include teachers in decision making.”

5) Focus on the needs of individuals:

“It’s hard to do that. Teachers can’t look at 30+ students and say, ‘I’m going to meet all of your needs every day.’ It’s overwhelming, and you can’t do it. But you must identify needs and find commonalities to group. Where groupings don’t work, address it as an individual need. You can’t approach it as a ‘one-size-fits-all’.”

6) Be an active participant in instruction:

“As principals, we really need to be instructional leaders—to be in the classroom and speaking with kids...What do they understand and what do they struggle with? I try to get in as often as I can, set aside time during the day. Sometimes there are barriers. That’s where we are as instructional leaders across the nation: how do we delegate, give up, let go of the various administrative things that we have throughout the day to really get in and look at classrooms and come out as instructional leaders? Coming back into staff meetings or professional development and teachers taking you as someone who’s credible, saying, ‘That principal came into my classroom and sat through a guided reading lesson and found the same obstacles as I found.’ Then we can talk about those issues and how do we overcome them.”

**7) Emphasize literacy:**

“In our school, everything is based on language. Schools are language places. If kids are going to do well in schools, they have to be good at language. Everything is based on language. You have to work on language composition. We have put most of our eggs in reading and comprehension. The library here is a hoppin’ place, and it is well used.”

8) Encourage collaboration:

“Make sure to allow opportunities for cross-dialogue among teachers within and across grade levels to make sure there is coordination and information-sharing about what various teachers have been focusing on and how kids are doing.”

9) Seek staff input about training needs:

“Offer staff opportunities for development and conduct an inventory of staff development needs to see if they are fully prepared. Ask them what they feel would help them best serve these students, and they will be candid.”

10) Have a dedicated classroom for late-entry newcomers:

“Keep the class size small. In our school, these students get ELD all morning and then are mainstreamed with native English speakers in the afternoon. I find that the students speak a lot more in this special classroom. Then they get role models with the English speakers in the afternoon. After 1 year, they are transitioned into another class. Sometimes they can move out sooner than 1 year.”

This brief was adapted from a longer summary that highlights a 5-year study conducted by AIR and WestEd. The summary provides recommendations and approaches to supporting and instructing ELs in California.

