

Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) publishes practice guides in education to bring the best available evidence and expertise to bear on the types of systemic challenges that cannot currently be addressed by single interventions or programs. Authors of practice guides seldom conduct the types of systematic literature searches that are the backbone of a meta-analysis, though they take advantage of such work when it is already published. Instead, they use their expertise to identify the most important research with respect to their recommendations, augmented by a search of recent publications to assure that the research citations are up-to-date.

One unique feature of IES-sponsored practice guides is that they are subjected to rigorous external peer review through the same office that is responsible for independent review of other IES publications. A critical task of the peer reviewers of a practice guide is to determine whether the evidence cited in support of particular recommendations is up-to-date and that studies of similar or better quality that point in a different direction have not been ignored. Because practice guides depend on the expertise of their authors and their group decisionmaking, the content of a practice guide is not and should not be viewed as a set of recommendations that in every case depends on and flows inevitably from scientific research.

The goal of this Practice Guide is to formulate specific and coherent evidence-based recommendations for use by educators addressing a multifaceted challenge that lacks developed or evaluated packaged approaches. The challenge is effective literacy instruction for English learners in the elementary grades. The Guide provides practical and coherent information on critical topics related to literacy instruction for English learners.

Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades

Russell Gersten (Chair)
RG RESEARCH GROUP AND UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Scott K. Baker
PACIFIC INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH AND UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Timothy Shanahan
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO

Sylvia Linan-Thompson
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Penny Collins
Robin Scarcella
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT IRVINE

This report was prepared for the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences under Contract ED-02-CO-0022 by the What Works Clearinghouse, a project of a joint venture of the American Institutes for Research and The Campbell Collaboration, and Contract ED-05-CO-0026 by Optimal Solutions Group, LLC.

Disclaimer

The opinions and positions expressed in this practice guide are the authors' and do not necessarily represent the opinions and positions of the Institute of Education Sciences or the United States Department of Education. This practice guide should be reviewed and applied according to the specific needs of the educators and education agency using it and with full realization that it represents only one approach that might be taken, based on the research that was available at the time of publication. This practice guide should be used as a tool to assist in decision-making rather than as a "cookbook." Any references within the document to specific education products are illustrative and do not imply endorsement of these products to the exclusion of other products that are not referenced.

U.S. Department of Education

Margaret Spellings
Secretary

Institute of Education Sciences

Grover J. Whitehurst
Director

National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance

Phoebe Cottingham
Commissioner

July 2007

This report is in the public domain. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be:

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 from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee>.

This report is available on the IES web site at <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee>

Alternate Formats

On request, this publication can be made available in alternate formats, such as Braille, large print, audio tape, or computer diskette. For more information, call the Alternate Format Center at (202) 205-8113.

Contents

Foreword from the Institute of Education Sciences	iv
Preface from the authors	vi
About the authors	ix
Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest	xi
Overview	1
Checklist for carrying out the recommendations	2
Recommendation 1. Screen for reading problems and monitor progress	5
Recommendation 2. Provide intensive small-group reading interventions	10
Recommendation 3. Provide extensive and varied vocabulary instruction	13
Recommendation 4. Develop academic English	16
Recommendation 5. Schedule regular peer-assisted learning opportunities	20
Appendix 1. Technical information on the studies	22
Recommendation 1. Screen for reading problems and monitor progress	22
Recommendation 2. Provide intensive small-group reading interventions	23
Recommendation 3. Provide extensive and varied vocabulary instruction	24
Recommendation 4. Develop academic English	26
Recommendation 5. Schedule regular peer-assisted learning opportunities	27
Appendix 2. Levels of evidence for the recommendations in the practice guide	29
Notes	31
References	34

Foreword from the Institute of Education Sciences

What is a practice guide? The health care professions have embraced a mechanism for assembling and communicating evidence-based advice to practitioners about care for specific clinical conditions. Various called practice guidelines, treatment protocols, critical pathways, best practice guides, or simply practice guides, these documents are systematically developed recommendations about the course of care for frequently encountered problems, ranging from physical conditions such as foot ulcers to psychosocial conditions such as adolescent development.¹

Practice guides are similar to the products of expert consensus panels in reflecting the views of those serving on the panel and the social decisions that come into play as the positions of individual panel members are forged into statements that all are willing to endorse. However, practice guides are generated under three constraints that typically do not apply to consensus panels. The first is that a practice guide consists of a list of discrete recommendations that are intended to be *actionable*. The second is that those recommendations taken together are intended to be a *coherent* approach to a multifaceted problem. The third, which is most important, is that each recommendation is explicitly connected to the *level of evidence* supporting it, with the level represented by a grade (for example, high, moderate, or low).

The levels of evidence, or grades, are usually constructed around the value of particular types of studies for drawing causal conclusions about what works. Thus, one typically finds that the top level of evidence is drawn from a body of randomized controlled trials, the middle level from well designed studies

that do not involve randomization, and the bottom level from the opinions of respected authorities. Levels of evidence can also be constructed around the value of particular types of studies for other goals, such as the reliability and validity of assessments.

Practice guides can also be distinguished from systematic reviews or meta-analyses, which use statistical methods to summarize the results of studies obtained from a rule-based search of the literature. Authors of practice guides seldom conduct the types of systematic literature searches that are the backbone of a meta-analysis, though they take advantage of such work when it is already published. Instead, they use their expertise to identify the most important research with respect to their recommendations, augmented by a search of recent publications to assure that the research citations are up-to-date. Further, the characterization of the quality and direction of the evidence underlying a recommendation in a practice guide relies less on a tight set of rules and statistical algorithms and more on the judgment of the authors than would be the case in a high-quality meta-analysis. Another distinction is that a practice guide, because it aims for a comprehensive and coherent approach, operates with more numerous and more contextualized statements of what works than does a typical meta-analysis.

Thus, practice guides sit somewhere between consensus reports and meta-analyses in the degree to which systematic processes are used for locating relevant research and characterizing its meaning. Practice guides are more like consensus panel reports than meta-analyses in the breadth and complexity of the topics they address. Practice guides are different from both consensus reports and meta-analyses in providing advice at the level of specific action steps along a pathway that represents a more or less coherent and comprehensive approach to a multifaceted problem.

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) publishes practice guides in education to bring the best available evidence and expertise to bear on the types of systemic challenges that cannot currently be addressed by single interventions or programs. Although IES has taken advantage of the history of practice guides in health care to provide models of how to proceed in education, education is different from health care in ways that may require that practice guides in education have somewhat different designs. Even within health care, where practice guides now number in the thousands, there is no single template in use. Rather, one finds descriptions of general design features that permit substantial variation in the realization of practice guides across subspecialties and panels of experts.² Accordingly, the templates for IES practice guides may vary across practice guides and change over time and with experience.

The steps involved in producing an IES-sponsored practice guide are, first, to select a topic, informed by formal surveys of practitioners and requests. Next is to recruit a panel chair who has a national reputation and up-to-date expertise in the topic. Third, the chair, working with IES, selects a small number of panelists to coauthor the practice guide. These are people the chair believes can work well together and have the requisite expertise to be a convincing source of recommendations. IES recommends that at one least one of the panelists be a practitioner with experience relevant to the topic being addressed. The chair and the panelists are provided a general template for a practice guide along the lines of the information provided here. The practice guide panel works under a short deadline of six to nine months to produce a draft document. It interacts with and receives feedback from staff at IES during the development of the practice guide, but its members understand that they are the authors and thus responsible for the final product.

One unique feature of IES-sponsored practice guides is that they are subjected to rigorous external peer review through the same office that is responsible for independent review of other IES publications. A critical task of the peer reviewers of a practice guide is to determine whether the evidence cited in support of particular recommendations is up-to-date and that studies of similar or better quality that point in a different direction have not been ignored. Peer reviewers also are asked to evaluate whether the evidence grades assigned to particular recommendations by the practice guide authors are appropriate. A practice guide is revised as necessary to meet the concerns of external peer reviews and gain the approval of the standards and review staff at IES. The external peer review is carried out independent of the office and staff within IES that instigated the practice guide.

Because practice guides depend on the expertise of their authors and their group decisionmaking, the content of a practice guide is not and should not be viewed as a set of recommendations that in every case depends on and flows inevitably from scientific research. It is not only possible but also likely that two teams of recognized experts working independently to produce a practice guide on the same topic would generate products that differ in important respects. Thus, consumers of practice guides need to understand that they are, in effect, getting the advice of consultants. These consultants should, on average, provide substantially better advice than an individual school district might obtain on its own because the authors are national authorities who have to achieve consensus among themselves, justify their recommendations with supporting evidence, and undergo rigorous independent peer review of their product.

Preface from the authors

The goal of this Practice Guide is to formulate specific and coherent evidence-based recommendations for use by educators addressing a multifaceted challenge that lacks developed or evaluated packaged approaches. The challenge is effective literacy instruction for English learners in the elementary grades. At one level, the target audience is a broad spectrum of school practitioners—administrators, curriculum specialists, coaches, staff development specialists, and teachers. At another level, a more specific objective is to reach district-level administrators with a Practice Guide that will help them develop practice and policy options for their schools. The Guide includes specific recommendations for district administrators and indicates the quality of the evidence that supports these recommendations.

Our expectation is that a superintendent or curriculum director could use this Practice Guide to help make decisions about policy involving literacy instruction for English learners in the elementary grades. For example, we include recommendations on curriculum selection, sensible assessments for monitoring progress, and reasonable expectations for student achievement and growth. The Guide provides practical and coherent information on critical topics related to literacy instruction for English learners.

We, the authors, are a small group with expertise on various dimensions of this topic. Several of us are also experts in research methodology. The range of evidence we considered in developing this document is vast, ranging from expert analyses of curricula and programs, to case studies of seemingly effective classrooms and schools, to trends in the

National Assessment of Educational Progress data, to correlational studies and longitudinal studies of patterns of typical development. For questions about what works best, high-quality experimental and quasi-experimental studies, such as those meeting the criteria of the What Works Clearinghouse, have a privileged position (www.whatworks.ed.gov). In all cases we pay particular attention to patterns of findings that are replicated across studies.

Although we draw on evidence about the effectiveness of specific programs and practices, we use this information to make broader points about improving practice. In this document we have tried to take a finding from research or a practice recommended by experts and describe how the use of this practice or recommendation might actually unfold in school settings. In other words we aim to provide sufficient detail so that a curriculum director would have a clear sense of the steps necessary to make use of the recommendation.

A unique feature of practice guides is the explicit and clear delineation of the quality—as well as quantity—of evidence that supports each claim. To do this, we adapted a semistructured hierarchy suggested by the Institute of Education Sciences. This classification system uses both the quality and quantity of available evidence to help determine the strength of the evidence base in which each recommended practice is grounded. (This system appears in appendix 2.)

Strong refers to consistent and generalizable evidence that an approach or practice causes better outcomes for English learners or that an assessment is reliable and valid. *Moderate* refers either to evidence from studies that allow strong causal conclusions but cannot be generalized with assurance to the population on which a recommendation is focused

(perhaps because the findings have not been sufficiently replicated) or to evidence from studies that are generalizable but have more causal ambiguity than offered by experimental designs (such as statistical models of correlational data or group comparison designs where equivalence of the groups at pretest is uncertain). For the assessments, *moderate* refers to high-quality studies from a small number of samples that are not representative of the whole population. *Low* refers to expert opinion based on reasonable extrapolations from research and theory on other topics and evidence from studies that do not meet the standards for moderate or strong evidence.

In this English Learner Practice Guide we use effect sizes for describing the magnitude of impact of a program or practice reported in a study. This metric is increasingly used in social science research to provide a gauge of the magnitude of the improvement in performance reported in a research study. A common index of effect size is the mean difference between the experimental and comparison conditions expressed in standard deviation units. In accordance with the What Works Clearinghouse criteria we describe an effect size of +0.25 or higher as *substantively important*. This is equivalent to raising performance of a group of students at least 10 percentile points on a valid test.

For each recommendation we include an appendix that provides more technical information about the studies and our decisions regarding level of evidence for the recommendation. To illustrate the types of studies reviewed we describe one study in considerable detail for each recommendation. Our goal in doing this is to provide interested readers with more detail about the research designs, the intervention components, and how impact was measured. By including a particular study, we

do not mean to suggest that it is the best study reviewed for the recommendation or necessarily an exemplary study in any way.

We have not addressed two main areas.

First, we did not address English learners in middle school and high school. Schools face very different issues in designing instruction for students who enter school when they are young (and often have received no education or minimal instruction in another language or educational system) and those who enter in grades 6 to 12 and often are making a transition to another language and another educational system. For that reason we chose to focus on only one of these populations, students in the elementary grades.

Second, we did not address the language of instruction. Our goal is to provide guidance for all English learners, whether they are taught to read in their home language, in English (by far the most prevalent method in the United States), or in both languages simultaneously. The recommendations are relevant for students regardless of their language of reading instruction. The best language to use for initial reading instruction has been the subject of great debate and numerous reviews of the literature.

Some experts conclude that students are best served by having some reading instruction in their native language,³ others that students should be taught to read simultaneously in both English and their native language,⁴ still others that the results are inconclusive.⁵ Many reviews have cited serious methodological flaws in all the studies in terms of internal validity;⁶ others have not addressed the quality of the research design.⁷ Currently, schools operate under an array of divergent policies set by the state and local school district.

In most cases school administrators have little say on issues involving language of initial reading instruction, so we do not take a position on this intricate issue for this Practice Guide.

We would like to thank the following individuals for their helpful feedback and reviews of earlier versions of this Guide: Catherine Snow and Nonie Lesaux of Harvard University; Maria Elena Arguelles, independent consultant; Margaret McKeown of University of Pittsburgh; Michael Coyne of University of Connecticut; Benjamin S. Clarke of University of Oregon and Jeanie Smith of Pacific Institutes for Research;

and Lana Edwards Santoro and Rebecca Newman-Gonchar of RG Research Group. We also wish to acknowledge the exceptional contribution of Elyse Hunt-Heinzen, our research assistant on the project, and we thank Charlene Gatewood of Optimal Solutions and the anonymous reviewers for their contributions to the refinement of this report.

Dr. Russell Gersten
Dr. Scott Baker
Dr. Timothy Shanahan
Dr. Sylvia Linan-Thompson
Dr. Penny Collins
Dr. Robin Scarcella

About the authors

Dr. Russell Gersten is executive director of Instructional Research Group, a nonprofit educational research institute, as well as professor emeritus in the College of Education at the University of Oregon. He currently serves as principal investigator for the What Works Clearinghouse on the topic of instructional research on English language learners. He is currently principal investigator of two large Institute of Education Sciences projects involving randomized trials in the areas of Reading First professional development and reading comprehension research. His main areas of expertise are instructional research on English learners, mathematics instruction, reading comprehension research, and evaluation methodology. In 2002 Dr. Gersten received the Distinguished Special Education Researcher Award from the American Educational Research Association's Special Education Research Division. Dr. Gersten has more than 150 publications in scientific journals, such as *Review of Educational Research*, *American Educational Research Journal*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Educational Leadership*, and *Exceptional Children*.

Dr. Scott Baker is the director of Pacific Institutes for Research in Eugene, Oregon. He specializes in early literacy measurement and instruction in reading and mathematics. Dr. Baker is co-principal investigator on two grants funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, and he is the codirector of the Oregon Reading First Center. Dr. Baker's scholarly contributions include conceptual, qualitative, and quantitative publications on a range of topics related to students at risk for school difficulties and students who are English learners.

Dr. Timothy Shanahan is professor of urban education at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and director of the

UIC Center for Literacy. He was president of the International Reading Association until May 2007. He was executive director of the Chicago Reading Initiative, a public school improvement project serving 437,000 children, in 2001–02. He received the Albert J. Harris Award for outstanding research on reading disability from the International Reading Association. Dr. Shanahan served on the White House Assembly on Reading and the National Reading Panel, a group convened by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at the request of Congress to evaluate research on successful methods of teaching reading. He has written or edited six books, including *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Literacy*, and more than 100 articles and research studies. Dr. Shanahan's research focuses on the relationship of reading and writing, school improvement, the assessment of reading ability, and family literacy. He chaired the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth and the National Early Literacy Panel.

Dr. Sylvia Linan-Thompson is an associate professor, Fellow in the Mollie V. Davis Professorship in Learning Disabilities at The University of Texas at Austin, and director of the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts. She is associate director of the National Research and Development Center on English Language Learners, which is examining the effect of instructional practices that enhance vocabulary and comprehension for middle school English learners in content areas. She has developed and examined reading interventions for struggling readers who are monolingual English speakers, English learners, and bilingual students acquiring Spanish literacy.

Dr. Penny Collins (formerly Chiappe) is an assistant professor in the Department of Education at the University of California, Irvine. Her research examines the

development of reading skills for children from linguistically diverse backgrounds and the early identification of children at risk for reading difficulties. She is involved in projects on effective instructional interventions to promote academic success for English learners in elementary, middle, and secondary schools. Dr. Collins is on the editorial boards of *Journal of Learning Disabilities* and *Educational Psychology*. Her work has appeared in *Applied Psycholinguistics*, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, and *Scientific Studies of Reading*.

Dr. Robin Scarcella is a professor in the School of Humanities at the University of California, Irvine, where she also directs the Program of Academic English/ESL. She has taught English as a second language in California's elementary and secondary schools and colleges. She has written many research articles, appearing in such journals as *The TESOL Quarterly* and *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, as well as in books. Her most recent volume, *Accelerating Academic English*, was published by the University of California.

Disclosure of potential conflicts of interest

Practice guide panels are composed of individuals who are nationally recognized experts on the topics about which they are rendering recommendations. IES expects that such experts will be involved professionally in a variety of matters that relate to their work as a panel. Panel members are asked to disclose their professional involvements and to institute deliberative processes that encourage critical examination the views of panel members as they relate to the content of the practice guide. The potential influence of panel members' professional engagements is further muted by the requirement that they ground their recommendations in evidence that is documented in the practice guide. In addition, the practice guide is subjected to independent external peer review prior to publication, with particular focus on whether the evidence related to the recommendations in the practice guide has been has been appropriately presented.

The professional engagements reported by each panel members that appear most closely associated with the panel recommendations are noted below.

Dr. Gersten, the panel chair, is a co-author of a forthcoming Houghton Mifflin K-6 reading series that includes material related to English learners. The reading

series is not referenced in the practice guide.

Dr. Baker has an author agreement with Cambium Learning to produce an instructional module for English learners. This module is not written and is not referenced in the practice guide.

Dr. Linan-Thompson was one of the primary researchers on intervention studies that used Proactive Reading curriculum, and she developed the ESL adaptations for the intervention. Linan-Thompson co-authored the research reports that are described in the Guide.

Dr. Shanahan receives royalties on various curricula designed for elementary and middle school reading instruction, including Harcourt Achieve Elements of Reading Fluency (Grades 1-3); Macmillan McGraw-Hill Treasures (Grades K-6); and AGS Glove-Pearson AMP (Grades 6-8). None of these products, though widely used, are aimed specifically at the English learner instructional market (the focus of this practice guide). Macmillan publishes a separate program aimed at the English learner population. Shanahan is not involved in that program.

Dr. Scarcella provides on-going teacher professional development services on academic vocabulary through the University of California Professional Development Institutes that are authorized by the California State Board of Education.

Overview

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has tracked the achievement of Hispanic students since 1975. Although many English learners are in the Hispanic designation, English learners as a group have only recently been disaggregated in the NAEP analyses. Recent analysis of long-term trends⁸ reveals that the achievement gap between Hispanics and Whites in reading has been significantly reduced over the past 30 years for 9-year-olds and 17-year-olds (although not for 13-year-olds).⁹

Despite apparent progress in the earlier grades, major problems persist. For instance, the 2005 achievement gap of 35 points in reading between fourth-grade English learners and non-English learners was greater than the Black-White achievement gap.¹⁰ And the body of scientific research on effective instructional strategies is limited for teaching English learners.¹¹

There have been some significant recent advances. Of particular note is the increase in rigorous instructional research with English learners. Districts and states have increasingly assessed progress of English learners in academic areas and in English language development. Several examples in the literature illustrate success stories among English learners—both for individual students and for schools. These students, despite having to learn English while mastering a typical school curriculum, have “beaten the odds” in academic achievement.¹²

How can we increase the chances that more English learners will achieve these successes? To answer, we must turn first to research. Unfortunately, there has not

been sufficient research aimed at understanding how to improve the quality of literacy instruction for English learners. Only about a dozen studies reach the level of rigor necessary to determine that specific instructional practices or programs do, in fact, produce significantly better academic outcomes with English learners. This work has been analyzed and reviewed by the What Works Clearinghouse (the work of the Clearinghouse is integrated into our text when relevant; new studies will be added periodically).

Despite the paucity of rigorous experimental research, we believe that the available evidence allows us to provide practical recommendations about aspects of instruction on which research has cast the sharpest light. This research suggests—as opposed to demonstrates—the practices most likely to improve learning for English learners.

Over the years many terms have been used to refer to children who enter school using a language other than English: limited English proficiency (LEP), English as a second language (ESL), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), second language learners, language minority students, and so on. In this Practice Guide we use “English learners” because we feel it is the most descriptive and accurate term for the largest number of children. This term says nothing about children’s language proficiency or how many other languages they may use—it simply recognizes that they are learning English.

This Practice Guide provides five recommendations, integrated into a coherent and comprehensive approach for improving the reading achievement and English language development of English learners in the elementary grades.

Recommendations

1. Conduct formative assessments with English learners using English language measures of phonological processing, letter knowledge, and word and text reading. Use these data to identify English learners who require additional instructional support and to monitor their reading progress over time **(Level of Evidence: Strong)**.
2. Provide focused, intensive small-group interventions for English learners determined to be at risk for reading problems. Although the amount of time in small-group instruction and the intensity of this instruction should reflect the degree of risk, determined by reading assessment data and other indicators, the interventions should include the five core reading elements (phonological awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Explicit, direct instruction should be the primary means of instructional delivery **(Level of Evidence: Strong)**.
3. Provide high-quality vocabulary instruction throughout the day. Teach essential content words in depth. In addition, use instructional time to address the meanings of common words, phrases, and expressions not yet learned **(Level of Evidence: Strong)**.
4. Ensure that the development of formal or academic English is a key instructional goal for English learners, beginning in the primary grades. Provide curricula and supplemental curricula to accompany core reading and mathematics series to support this goal. Accompany with relevant training and professional development **(Level of Evidence: Low)**.
5. Ensure that teachers of English learners devote approximately 90 minutes a week to instructional activities in which pairs of students at different ability levels or different English language proficiencies work together on academic tasks in a structured fashion. These activities should practice and extend material already taught **(Level of Evidence: Strong)**.

One major theme in our recommendations is the importance of intensive, interactive English language development instruction for all English learners. This instruction needs to focus on developing academic language (the decontextualized language of the schools, the language of academic discourse, of texts, and of formal argument). This area, which researchers and practitioners feel has been neglected, is one of the key targets in this Guide.

Checklist for carrying out the recommendations

Recommendation 1. Screen for reading problems and monitor progress

✔ Districts should establish procedures for—and provide training for—schools to screen English learners for reading problems. The same measures and assessment approaches can be used with English learners and native English speakers.

✔ Depending on resources, districts should consider collecting progress monitoring data more than three times a year for English learners at risk for reading problems. The severity of the problem should dictate how often progress is monitored—weekly or bi-weekly for students at high risk of reading problems.

✔ Data from screening and progress monitoring assessments should be used to make decisions about the instructional support English learners need to learn to read.

✔ Schools with performance benchmarks in reading in the early grades can use the same standards for English learners and for native English speakers to make adjustments in instruction when progress is not sufficient. It is the opinion of the panel that schools should not consider below-grade-level performance in reading as “normal” or something that will resolve itself when oral language proficiency in English improves.

✔ Provide training on how teachers are to use formative assessment data to guide instruction.

Recommendation 2. Provide intensive small-group reading interventions

✔ Use an intervention program with students who enter the first grade with weak reading and prereading skills, or with older elementary students with reading problems.

✔ Ensure that the program is implemented daily for at least 30 minutes in small, homogeneous groups of three to six students.

✔ Provide training and ongoing support for the teachers and interventionists (reading coaches, Title I personnel, or paraeducators) who provide the small-group instruction.

✔ Training for teachers and other school personnel who provide the small-group interventions should also focus on how to deliver instruction effectively, independent of the particular program emphasized. It is important that this training include the use of the specific program materials the teachers will use during the school year. But the training should also explicitly emphasize that these instructional techniques can be used in other programs and across other subject areas.

Recommendation 3. Provide extensive and varied vocabulary instruction

✔ Adopt an evidence-based approach to vocabulary instruction.

✔ Develop districtwide lists of essential words for vocabulary instruction. These words should be drawn from the core reading program and from the textbooks used in key content areas, such as science and history.

- ✓ Vocabulary instruction for English learners should also emphasize the acquisition of meanings of everyday words that native speakers know and that are not necessarily part of the academic curriculum.

**Recommendation 4.
Develop academic English**

- ✓ Adopt a plan that focuses on ways and means to help teachers understand that instruction to English learners must include time devoted to development of academic English. Daily academic English instruction should also be integrated into the core curriculum.
- ✓ Teach academic English in the earliest grades.

- ✓ Provide teachers with appropriate professional development to help them learn how to teach academic English.

- ✓ Consider asking teachers to devote a specific block (or blocks) of time each day to building English learners' academic English.

**Recommendation 5.
Schedule regular peer-assisted
learning opportunities**

- ✓ Develop plans that encourage teachers to schedule about 90 minutes a week with activities in reading and language arts that entail students working in structured pair activities.
- ✓ Also consider the use of partnering for English language development instruction.