



The Right Fit: Selecting an English Learning Program for Your Students

One of the biggest challenges in English learner education is choosing the right program for your students and your local context. This tool walks you through some important items to think about—what the law says, types of English learners, questions to ask when choosing a program, and the models most commonly used in Oregon.

Getting to know your language learner students Important terminology



Simultaneous bilingual learner

A student who is acquiring two languages in the home (a caregiver or sibling speaks one language while the other caregiver or sibling speaks a different language).



Sequential bilingual learner

A student who has developed one language and is adding a second language in school (i.e., the student's home language differs from the language of the school system). Sequential bilingual learners include newcomer and immigrant students, who may have been schooled outside of the United States.



Heritage speaker

A student who speaks a language other than English at home but who has not had explicit literacy instruction in that language.

It's the right thing to do



English learner students must learn the same math, science, and social studies content as native English speakers. Simultaneously, they must develop the disciplinary language associated with the content they learn, in addition to social language to connect with peers. *Lau vs. Nichols* established that all schools must ensure that “students of a particular race, color, or national origin are not denied the same opportunities to obtain an education generally obtained by other students in the same school system.” Further, Title III under ESSA details that students, families, and guardians have specific rights, including:

Access English learner students have a civil right to learn English and grade-level content without being segregated from their classmates.

Notification Schools are required to give the families of English learner students an annual update of their child’s progress with learning English.

Choice Families have the right to refuse/waive English learner instruction or to choose another method of instruction, if it is available (such as bilingual education).

Communication Schools are required to ensure meaningful communication in a language caregivers understand, and caregivers or guardians have the right to request translation of materials and an interpreter for meetings.

Special Programs English learner students have the same access to special programs, such as advanced courses, talented and gifted programs, and special education classes.

English learners at a glance



It's important to learn as much as possible about language learner students as they adjust to school. Factors such as home language literacy, prior schooling, and migration history can all influence how students adjust and progress in school. The descriptions below provide a clear, yet general picture of the assets students bring and the challenges they may encounter.

Newly arrived with adequate schooling

- recent arrivals (<5 years in U.S.)
- typically in grades 2-12
- adequate schooling in home country
- may score low on standardized tests given in English
- social and economic factors can influence positively and negatively

Newly arrived with limited formal schooling

- recent arrivals (<5 years in U.S.)
- typically in grades 2-12
- interrupted or limited schooling in home country
- limited home language literacy
- below grade level in math
- poor academic achievement
- social and economic factors can influence positively and negatively

Long-term English learner

- >7+ years in the U.S.
- typically grades 6-12
- limited literacy in home language and English
- some may achieve adequate grades but score low on standardized tests
- struggle in content
- often retained and are at risk of dropping out
- inconsistent/subtractive schooling
- have had ELD or bilingual education, but inconsistently

Potential long-term English learner

- recent arrivals in grades K-1
- students in grades K-5 who have lived in the United States most of their lives and begin their schooling speaking a language other than English
- parents with low levels of education
- parents struggling financially and or socially

Adapted from Freeman and Freeman (2002); Menken and Kleyn (2009); Olsen and Jaramillo (1999)

Questions to consider when choosing an English learning program:



Deciding what will work best for your school context

- 1** How important is biliteracy to our school, district, and community?
- 2** How will our school or district ensure that all students—regardless of their language proficiency—have access to grade-level content area skills and standards?
- 3** How many recently arrived (newcomer) students does our school/district have? Do teachers and staff members have the training and capacity to support them? Do we need a newcomer program?
- 4** Does our school have experience with co-teaching (for example, with special education)? Would teachers be willing to co-teach?
- 5** What is the distribution of English learner students by grade and proficiency level at our school? When and where do most English learners enter the district—in kindergarten or in later grades?
- 6** What languages do our English learners speak? Do most speak one language, two languages, or more? Do they enter with some literacy in their home language? What about their families?
- 7** How does English language development (ELD) instruction connect to content area instruction?

English learner program models

PROGRAM MODEL	DEFINITION	DESCRIPTION & STRUCTURE	GOAL
One-Way Dual Language	Seeks to develop literacy in English and another language. Students study academic subjects in both languages.	Classes are for students with limited English proficiency. Students share a common home language.	Develop biliteracy in English and the partner language, as well as an appreciation for multiculturalism.
Dual Language <i>Also called two-way bilingual immersion</i>	Seeks to develop literacy in English and another language. Students study academic subjects in both languages.	Classes ideally include both native speakers of English and native speakers of the partner language.	Develop biliteracy in English and the partner language, as well as an appreciation for cultural exchange.
Transitional Bilingual Education “Early Exit” <i>Also known as early-exit or late-exit bilingual programs</i>	Provides instruction in students’ primary language and transitions over time to English. This program is often found in elementary schools.	Classes typically include only students with limited English proficiency.	Develop basic literacy in the student’s home language to transfer skills to English.

English learner program models

PROGRAM MODEL	DEFINITION	DESCRIPTION & STRUCTURE	GOAL
Developmental Bilingual Education “Late Exit”	Provides instruction in both English and a student’s primary language. As a student’s English improves, time spent learning in English increases and time spent learning in the home language decreases.	Classes typically include only English learner students who are native speakers of the partner language.	Develop biliteracy and use students’ knowledge of the home language as an asset to learn English and specific content.
Sheltered Instruction	Provides an inclusive environment for English learner students to learn grade-level content and academic language skills in the same classroom as non-English learner students. Teachers focus on content standards but attend to language demands to support English learner students.	May include only English learner students or a combination of English learner students and non-English learner students.	Use specialized teaching to ensure English learner students have access to content area standards and skills.
Newcomer Programs	Provides both ELD and content area instruction in a student’s home language and outside the mainstream classroom. These programs are specifically designed to meet the educational and transitional needs of newly arrived immigrants. A student is typically in a newcomer program for two years or less and then transitions into the mainstream classroom.	Classes consist only of newcomer English learner students. Over time, students transition from newcomer services to mainstream classroom and may continue to receive ELD services.	Develop students’ English skills, while teaching academic content. Newcomer programs also assist students as they adjust to life in the United States.

English learner program models

PROGRAM MODEL	DEFINITION	DESCRIPTION & STRUCTURE	GOAL
<p>ELD Push-In</p> <p><i>Also known as co-teaching</i></p>	<p>Provides ELD instruction in the student’s content area classroom.</p>	<p>ELD push-in typically happens in the student’s content area classroom. Push-in ELD teachers usually support the classroom teacher, often working only with English learner students.</p>	<p>Provide ELD through content area instruction; push-in ELD provides integrated academic language support directly linked to content area studies.</p>
<p>ELD Pull-Out</p>	<p>Provides ELD instruction outside the mainstream classroom and for a specific block of time. In this model, an English learner student spends part of the day in the mainstream classroom and is “pulled out” for ELD instruction. The model is more common in elementary schools with a low concentration of English learners.</p>	<p>English learner students are pulled out of their classroom to attend a daily block of time that is devoted to targeted, intensive ELD. Pull-out ELD must occur at a time when core instruction is not taking place in students’ regularly scheduled classes.</p>	<p>Provide ELD in homogeneous groups, typically by grade and language proficiency level. Students miss some part of the school day to receive services.</p>
<p>ELD Class Period</p>	<p>Provides ELD instruction during a designated class period that may carry course credit. This arrangement is more common in middle schools and high schools and is occasionally used in elementary schools that have block scheduling.</p>	<p>English learner students attend a dedicated class period for ELD.</p>	<p>Provide ELD, usually by grouping students by grade and language proficiency level.</p>

Resources

Every state has an office that supports English learner students, their families, and the school personnel who work with them. The websites for these offices may include content that is translated into different languages. The links to state offices in the Northwest region are listed below.

Alaska: <https://education.alaska.gov/ESEA/TitleIII-A/>

Idaho: <http://www.sde.idaho.gov/el-migrant/el/>

Montana: <https://opi.mt.gov/Families-Students/Family-Student-Support/English-Language-Learners>

Oregon: <http://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/EngLearners/Pages/default.aspx>

Washington: <http://www.k12.wa.us/MigrantBilingual/Parents.aspx>

Other resources

Bardack, S. (2010). *Common ELL terms and definitions*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. Retrieved June 5, 2018, from <https://www.air.org/resource/common-ell-terms-and-definitions>

Council of Chief State School Officers. (2014). *English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards with correspondences to K–12 practices and Common Core State Standards*. Retrieved June 5, 2018, from http://www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/nclb/title_iii/final-4_30-elpa21-standards.pdf

Freeman, Y. S., & Freeman, D. E. (2002). *Closing the achievement gap: How to reach limited-formal-schooling and long-term English learners*. Westport, CT: Heinemann. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED463658>

Menken, K., & Kleyn, T. (2009). The difficult road for long-term English learners [Online-only content]. *Educational Leadership*, 66(7).

Olsen, L., & Jaramillo, A. (1999). *Turning the tides of exclusion: A guide for educators and advocates for immigrant students*. Oakland, CA: California Tomorrow.

U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, National Center for English Language Acquisition. (2017). *English Learner Tool Kit for state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) (2nd Rev. ed.)*. Retrieved June 5, 2018, from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html>

**For more information and additional resources, contact Tim Blackburn:
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