Facilitating Professional Learning Communities That Support Struggling Readers Who Are English Learners in the Southwest

Purpose
The Professional Learning Communities (PLC) Facilitator’s Guide assists PLCs in applying evidence-based strategies to support struggling readers who are English learners.

Research Base
The PLC Facilitator’s Guide aligns with the Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School educator’s practice guide, produced by the What Works Clearinghouse, Institute of Education Sciences.

The practice guide presents four evidence-based recommendations:

1. **Academic vocabulary**: Teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities
2. **Content-area instruction**: Integrate oral and written English language instruction into content-area teaching
3. **Structured writing instruction**: Provide regular, structured opportunities to develop written language skills
4. **Small-group intervention**: Provide small-group instructional intervention to students struggling in areas of literacy and English language development

Benefits for Educators
- Evidence-based strategies to help K–8 English learners acquire academic language and literacy skills
- Collaborative professional learning experience for reading, discussing, sharing, and applying the practice guide’s key ideas and strategies
- Activities and content for eight 75-minute PLC sessions
- Systematic five-step cycle that encourages PLCs to debrief, define, explore, experiment, and reflect and plan

Activities and content for 8 PLC sessions
- 31 handouts
- 23 videos

Testimonials From PLC Facilitators:
- “Resources are invaluable . . . videos are super”
- “The recommendations, the videos, and the graphic organizers . . . refocused my thinking and clarified the best methods for helping ELLs”
- “Excellent resources for creative, effective PLCs”
- “The resources and research base was most effective”
- “The presentation of research evidence, including the degree of evidence for each of the focus recommendations” (about what was most helpful)

Video Series
- **4 introductory videos** cover the practice guide recommendations
- **19 classroom videos** show actual instruction at three grade levels: 2–3 (combination), 4, and 6–8 (newcomers)
  - Pre-Teaching Vocabulary*
  - Activities to Promote Word Learning
  - Providing Review
  - Word Parts and Cognates
  - Using Videos to Anchor Instruction
  - Completing a Graphic Organizer
  - Using Graphic Organizers in Writing*

Success
- Series titles account for the top 5 most watched videos on the Institute of Education Sciences’s YouTube channel.

Conclusion/Scholarly Significance
The PLC Facilitator’s Guide, along with the companion educator’s practice guide, is intended to foster a deeper understanding of how scientifically based research on educating English learners may be applied to classroom practice. The research on effective instruction for English learners provides the basis for the guide’s content, while the PLC format provides teachers with a structure for shared learning and improvement as they apply evidence-based concepts to classroom practice.

This PLC model is a key component of coherent and high-quality professional development (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). Through this evidence-based and collaborative approach, the PLC Facilitator’s Guide helps educators align the needs and learning goals of English learners with school curriculum and school- and districtwide change efforts.
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<th>Professional Learning Communities Facilitator’s Guide: Reference List</th>
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