

## Professional Learning Communities Facilitator's Guide

for the What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide: Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School

### VIDEO

5:51 minutes

Full Details and Transcript

## Introduction to Recommendation 4

July 2015

## Video Details

<b>Facilitator's Guide Session:</b>	Recommendation 4, Session 4A Handout 4A.3: Video Viewing Guide – Introduction to Recommendation 4
<b>Description:</b>	In this video, Joan Morris, a retired teacher specialist and a panel member for the English learner practice guide, presents a brief overview of Recommendation 4, including a description of the five <i>How-to</i> steps for carrying out the recommendation.

## Full Transcript

**Joan Morris:** Recommendation 4. The first three recommendations we addressed previously discussed guidelines for enhancing classroom instruction. This final recommendation, Recommendation 4—provide small-group instructional intervention to students struggling in areas of literacy and English language development—stresses the need to provide additional high-quality small-group intervention to your students who are struggling in literacy, English language development, or both. There is moderate evidence in research to support this recommendation.

Let's consider three big ideas here. First, small-group instruction should be provided on a daily basis. Second, small-group instruction should be teacher-directed, with ample scaffolds to make learning easier. And third, there should be plenty of opportunities for students to practice what is being taught. So how does the panel suggest we carry this out? *How-to* Step 1 under the recommendation addresses assessment, while *How-to* Steps 2, 3, and 4 discuss small-group instruction. Let's talk first about assessment.

## Video Transcript: Introduction to Recommendation 4

*How-to Step 1*—use available assessment information to identify students who demonstrate persistent struggles with aspects of language and literacy development—suggests that you use available assessment information to identify which of your students demonstrate persistent struggles with literacy and language development. The panel suggests that you use standardized tests, district benchmark tests, as well as English language assessments for both screening and diagnostic purposes.

Now, for *How-to Steps 2, 3, and 4*, which address small-group instruction, let's take each of the *How-to* steps separately. *How-to Step 2*—design the content of small-group instruction to target students' identified needs—this *How-to* step discusses the importance of targeting the students' instructional needs, keeping in mind that some English learners struggle with foundational skills, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, while others struggle to comprehend what they are reading.

*How-to Step 3* addresses the importance of providing additional instruction in small groups consisting of three to five students to students struggling with both language and literacy. The recommendation suggests that it is useful to formulate homogeneous groups for students with similar needs and foundational skills. At the same time, the panel also considers it effective to form heterogeneous groups, especially when working with students in content areas or when introducing and discussing a piece of text. This is because students will benefit from listening to the thoughts and opinions of their peers related to the new concepts they are learning. The panel also recommends that the small-group instruction within a 30-minute period include several brief, targeted, and engaging activities, six to eight or so.

*How-to Step 4*, for students who struggle with basic foundational reading skills, suggests spending time not only on these skills but also on vocabulary development and listening and reading comprehension strategies. The panel makes it a special point to mention that whenever possible to make more productive use of time, plan instructional activities that address literacy and language needs simultaneously.

Exhibit 4.1 shows how Ms. Santos provides small-group instruction for her second graders that addresses skills her students need in both foundational skills, such as phonemic awareness, word recognition, fluency, but then also addresses important skills related to comprehension. Mr. Parker's lesson in Exhibit 4.2 shows how he teaches a central vocabulary while integrating it with instruction on writing, an important expressive language exercise.

The last, *How-to Step 5*—provide scaffolded instruction that includes frequent opportunities for students to practice and review newly learned skills and concepts in various contexts over several lessons to ensure retention—identifies and describes the beneficial instructional practices of explicit, systematic instruction, which include dividing instruction into small, manageable units; providing ample modeling and think-alouds—an example of a think-aloud is provided in Exhibit 4.4—frequently checking for student understanding; providing immediate corrective feedback; reviewing previously taught material; and providing frequent practice opportunities.

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If you're wondering about the many challenges you might face in providing small-group instruction within your classroom, please take a look at the "Roadblocks and Solutions" section at the end of this recommendation.

Thank you.

**– End of Transcript –**

Disclaimer: This video, produced by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest is part of a series developed for the *Professional Learning Communities Facilitator's Guide for the What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide: Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School*.

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