



ESL RESEARCH GROUP

BACKGROUND

In a typical school year BSD enrolls around 5,000 students who qualify for English language learner services, which represents around 13% of the total population. These students have unique language, social and emotional, as well as academic needs that districts are required to address. Providing ELLs with equitable access to academic content and supporting their development of English proficiency are legal and ethical obligations of all local school districts. There are three key actions for meeting these obligations as outlined by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit more than 30 years ago in *Castañeda vs. Pickard*:

- (1) The educational theory underlying the language assistance program is recognized as sound by some experts in the field or is considered a legitimate experimental strategy;
- (2) The program and practices used by the school system are reasonably calculated to implement effectively the educational theory adopted by the school; and
- (3) The program succeeds after a legitimate trial, in producing results indicating that students' language barriers are actually being overcome within a reasonable period of time.

PHASE ONE: 2014-2015 ELL RESEARCH GROUP

To ensure these students are provided with consistent, high-quality support across all schools and grade levels and to comply with federal and state mandates, the district developed an English Language Learner Action Plan. The plan established an ELL Research Group in the 2014-2015 school year, which was charged with examining research not only on best instructional practices for English learners, but also on program models that have shown positive academic outcomes for these students.

The ELL Research Group comprised of 43 general education teachers, ELL teachers, counselors, specialists, and administrators. The group was split into two subgroups—one to look at the research on instructional practices and one to look at the research on program models. After an initial kickoff meeting, each group met in four two-hour work sessions from January to February 2015 and developed a series of recommendations for the district.

District Goal: All students will show continuous progress toward their personal learning goals, developed in collaboration with teachers and parents, and will be prepared for post-secondary education and career success.

The Beaverton School District recognizes the diversity and worth of all individuals and groups. It is the policy of the Beaverton School District that there will be no discrimination or harassment of individuals or groups based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, marital status, age, veterans' status, genetic information or disability in any educational programs, activities or employment.

Recommendations for delivering core content included a combination of two-way immersion, sheltered instruction, and newcomer programs. For English language development (ELD), the group recommended the flexible use of push-in and pull-out strategies at the elementary level and specific class periods in middle school and high school, combined with special ELD programs for newcomers at all levels. Instructional recommendations were differentiated between the elementary and secondary levels but also included some common elements, such as providing students with necessary background knowledge, providing appropriate visual and graphic supports (including the use of technology), and setting clear content objectives.

At the close of the project, BSD participants expressed how much they appreciated learning how to distinguish between research designs that support causal inference and those that don't. They also appreciated the guided discussions, which gave staff members the opportunity to examine the implications of the research findings for specific BSD programs.

PHASE TWO: 2015-2016 ELL IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

The next phase of this work is to provide guidance on the implementation of the program models, both those that were most highly recommended and others that schools might choose to adopt for their individual context. This will be the focus of the ELL Implementation Group. Over the course of the 2015-2016 school year, the ELL Implementation Group will be developing seven "road maps" for implementing seven possible models for delivering language services to English Language Learners (ELLs) in the 2016-2017 school year. This work is critical to the success of our ELL programs and to the success of our students district-wide.

At the same time our ELL Implementation Group is completing the "road map" work, School Administrators and their designated ELL teacher leader will be receiving on-going monthly professional development during leadership meetings to ensure common understanding of laws that govern the ELL program and the effective instructional practices that help our students reach proficiency in English in order to make informed decisions around program models. School leaders will receive guidance throughout the year as well as next year as they choose their program model as well as guidance for implementation.

A timeline of dates and activities for the year is outlined below:

Date	Activity
September 18, 2015	Defining and Refining the Implementation Team Vision
September 24, 2015	School Administrator Leadership Meeting "ELL/TWI/Migrant/Translation & Interpretation 101"
September 25, 2015 &	Designing the Road Map Structure

October 14, 2015	
October 22, 2015	School Administrator Leadership Meeting “What ELLs Need”
October 28, 2015, November 3, 2015, & November 17, 2015	Developing the Road Map Content - Work Group Sessions
November 19, 2015	School Administrator Leadership Meeting “Program Model Analysis Part I”
December 9, 2015 & December 16, 2015	Work Group Presentations
December 17, 2015	School Administrator Leadership Meeting “Program Model Analysis Part II”
January 12, 2016	Feedback Sessions
January 27, 2016	Final Presentation to the Implementation Team
January 28, 2016	School Administrator Leadership Meeting “Sneak Preview of the Seven Road Maps” *Gather feedback from Principals on road maps!
February 18, 2016	School Administrator Leadership Meeting “Which Road/Path Should I Take” *Principals make decisions on their road maps!
March 17, 2016	School Administrator Leadership Meeting “Budget Implications of Road Map Implementation and Guidance”
April 21, 2016	School Administrator Leadership Meeting “What Can I Expect for the 2016-2017 School Year?”

The other two major studies we are working on in collaboration with EDNW and in addition to the ELL Implementation Group, we will be analyzing how the number of instructional minutes of English language development at the elementary level impacts the English proficiency of our ELLs or progress towards proficiency. Currently, there is no valid and reliable research or meta analysis completed on the specific number of minutes needed of explicit English instruction in order to move the needle on our ELLs meeting English proficiency. For a district this large, we have critical mass to conduct our own research in house to inform the field and possibly other districts across the state. This work with EDNW will begin January 2016 and may possibly help inform the “road maps” the ELL Implementation Group will be creating.

The final project we are working on with EDNW is to document the Meadow Park pilot in how their case management of ELLs is benefitting the students and staff. Meadow Park is currently staffed with three full time ELL teachers, one dedicated for each grade level (6th-8th). Each ELL teacher is responsible for a group of students of their respective grade level. The idea is for

each “case manager” to manage individual language acquisition plans for their students to help inform other teachers on where they are at on reaching English proficiency. With a dedicated professional managing every ELL in the school, case managers will be able to advocate for the students and will be able to provide clear data on what language interventions are needed in order to fill some of the language gaps students have which may, in turn, help prevent them from becoming Long Term English Language Learners (LTELLs). This work will begin in January 2016 and will hopefully inform the field and will help us determine as a district how valuable language acquisition plans are for the success of our students.

PHASE THREE: 2016-2018 ELL EVALUATION GROUP

The last phase of this work as outlined above through *Castañeda vs. Pickard* is to evaluate the effectiveness of the program models schools have implemented. It is the responsibility of the school district to determine when and how to evaluate the effectiveness of program models. To prepare for the evaluation phase, BSD will work with the same third-party consulting company, Education Northwest, to create the metrics and to design how we will evaluate the programs. To give schools almost two years of implementation before evaluating, we will convene another work group to help us collect the data and to analyze/interpret the data in order to determine effectiveness. The evaluation process will be done in collaboration with school leaders and school teacher teams.

The TENTATIVE evaluation timeline is outlined below:

Date	Activity
2015-2016	At the conclusion of our work with the ELL Implementation Group, BSD will work with EDNW to create the contract for the next phase, The ELL Evaluation Group.
2016-2017	BSD will work with EDNW to plan for the ELL Evaluation Group.
Spring 2018	The ELL Evaluation Group will convene and begin their work on the evaluation process.
June 2018	EDNW and BSD will create a plan for sharing the information gathered from the evaluation study.



Informed Decisions

Recommendations from Beaverton School District's
Review of Program Models and Instructional
Strategies for English Language Learners

April 2015

Informed Decisions

Recommendations from Beaverton School District's
Review of Program Models and Instructional
Strategies for English Language Learners

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April 2015



About Education Northwest

Founded as a nonprofit corporation in 1966, Education Northwest builds capacity in schools, families, and communities through applied research and development.

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Introduction

Providing English language learners (ELLs) with equitable access to academic content and supporting their development of English language proficiency are fundamental legal and ethical obligations of all school districts. Two essential actions for meeting those obligations are 1) providing appropriate program models and 2) using effective instructional practices. The Beaverton School District (BSD) decided to base decisions in these areas on a thorough understanding of research on program models and instructional practices for ELLs. In winter 2015, BSD created the ELL Research Group, consisting of 43 staff members, including district administrators, principals, ELL specialists, special education teachers, general education teachers, and counselors. The district asked the ELL Research Group to:

- Review research on program models and instructional practices that have positive academic outcomes for ELLs
- Recommend a plan for effective professional development for administrators, classroom teachers, and classified staff who work with ELLs

Beaverton entered into a contract with Education Northwest to facilitate the work of the ELL Research Group by providing relevant research on program models and instructional practices, helping the group to understand the implications of the research, and supporting the development of research-based recommendations. This report presents recommendations from the ELL Research Group concerning program models and instructional strategies for ELL students appropriate to the BSD.

The key recommendations are:

- *Program models in elementary schools:* Provide two-way immersion and sheltered instruction for core-content instruction, and English language development (ELD) pull-out or push-in for ELD
- *Program models in middle and high schools:* Provide two-way immersion, sheltered instruction, and newcomer-core for core-content instruction, and ELD class periods and newcomer ELD for ELD
- *Instructional strategies:*
 1. Set clear goals and objectives
 2. Provide students with necessary background knowledge
 3. Provide students with informative feedback
 4. Use visual supports
 5. Emphasize academic, as well as conversational, language
 6. Consider the unique needs of newcomers

At the elementary level, additional recommendations for effective instruction emphasize differentiation, scaffolding student participation, and use of formative assessments to guide instruction. At the secondary levels, there is greater emphasis on maximizing students' use of English during instruction and on explicitly teaching English forms and usage.

This report begins with a description of the structure and focus of the ELL Research Group. After that, we present the core beliefs identified by the group concerning the education of ELLs. Next, we describe the research-based recommendations for instructional programs and strategies. The report concludes with a discussion of considerations for implementation.

Structure and Work of the ELL Research Group

Forty-three BSD staff members participated in the ELL Research Group. Participants included general education teachers, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, special education teachers, counselors, assistant principals, and principals.

The group was divided into two subgroups: one examined instructional programs for ELLs and the other addressed instructional practices relevant to these students. Meetings of the program models subgroup were organized around developing research-based answers to the question, *What are effective ways of organizing instruction for teaching core content to English language learners and for developing ELLs' English language proficiency?* Meetings of the instructional practices subgroup were organized to develop research-based answers to the question, *What teaching strategies work well for providing access to core content and for developing ELLs' English language proficiency?*

After an initial kickoff meeting involving the whole group, the subgroups met separately for four, two-hour sessions every other week. BSD staff members Wei-Wei Lou and Danielle Sheldrake attended all meetings. The first meetings of the ELL Research Group took place during the week of January 5, 2015, and the final meetings were held during the week of February 16, 2015. Key topics discussed by the ELL Research Group included:

- Foundations of education research (both subgroups)
- Definitions of program models used by the Oregon Department of Education (both subgroups)
- Research on models for core content and ELD for ELLs (program models subgroup)
- Research on instructional practices for ELLs (instructional practices subgroup)¹

Meetings and activities. Topics covered in each meeting of the two subgroups are identified in table 1.

¹ The subgroup examined both individual research studies and summaries of research.

Table 1. Topics for each subgroup meeting

Program Models Subgroup	
Date	Topics
January 7	Overview of work for program models subgroup Refresher on education research Terms related to teaching ELLs Research on program models for ELLs Discussion Homework #1
January 21	Review homework #1 Research on program models for ELLs Discussion Homework #2
February 4	Review homework #2 Review terms for program models Review of research studies Discuss core beliefs Discuss findings and implications of research on program models Discuss preliminary recommendations for program models
February 18	Identify core beliefs and recommendations for program models
Instructional Practices Subgroup	
January 8	Overview of work for instructional practices subgroup Refresher on education research Terms related to teaching ELLs Research on instructional practices for ELLs Discussion Homework #1
January 22	Review homework #1 Instructional best practices for ELLs in sheltered instruction and ELD Discussion Homework #2
February 5	Review homework #2 ODE terms for program models Core beliefs Research on instructional practices IES Practice Guide Additional research related to teaching content to ELLs Discuss findings and implications of research on instructional practices What instructional practices do you recommend?
February 19	Identify core beliefs and recommendations for instructional strategies

In general, meetings began with a presentation by Education Northwest staff members addressing research design and key themes from research on program models and instructional strategies for ELLs, followed by activities that engaged participants with specific studies and summaries of research.² Education Northwest facilitators also brought discussion questions for the ELL Research Group to discuss in table groups. The activities required participants to critically examine current research on ELL program models and instruction; consider how it

² Education Northwest delivered materials used with the ELL Research Group to BSD, including slides, copies of studies and published summaries of research, as well as summaries, discussion materials, and homework assignments constructed by Education Northwest.

applied to their schools and district; and engage in small group discussion of the implications for the recommendations they would later develop.

Following the small group activity, participants shared their findings with the whole group, leading to active and thoughtful discussions among all colleagues. The first two meetings of each subgroup concluded with homework assignments that asked participants to apply what they had learned to developing preliminary recommendations. The homework assignments were reviewed and discussed during the third meeting of each subgroup. Also during these sessions participants reviewed and discussed the research and individually generated core beliefs, which they reviewed together and grouped thematically. The data from this activity provided the foundation for the core beliefs in this report.

How the final recommendations were developed. During the final meeting of each subgroup, participants reviewed the presentations by Education Northwest staff members, individual research studies, summaries of research, and homework assignments to arrive at final recommendations by group consensus. The program models subgroup developed recommendations for models for core content and for ELD; the instructional strategies subgroup identified recommendations for instructional strategies appropriate for each school level.

Core Beliefs

The ELL Research Group identified a set of core beliefs (below) that frame how they think the district should organize resources and prioritize efforts to ensure success for all ELL students in Beaverton schools.

As educators in the Beaverton School District, we believe that:

- **With proper learning conditions, English language learners will learn core content and develop English language proficiency to high levels in the Beaverton School District.**
We commit to providing English language learners with appropriate program models and instructional practices; to supporting teachers, administrators, and others involved in teaching ELLs; and to holding ourselves accountable for maintaining a high-quality instructional program for ELLs.
- **Communicating in several languages and understanding different cultures are essential goals of education.**
We commit to building a culture that embraces and cultivates multilingualism, multiliteracy, and multiculturalism.
- **English language learners must have access to high-level academic content, regardless of their English language proficiency.**
We will provide access to higher level content for English language learners by not tracking ELLs into lower level content, by providing students with high-level content materials and resources, and by supporting teachers in conveying high-level academic content and promoting English language acquisition for all ELLs.
- **English language learners are diverse and may require different supports—both to become proficient in English and to access high-level content.**
We commit to understanding English language learners as individuals possessing both unique strengths and challenges related to succeeding in our educational system and we commit to providing them the support they need to be successful.
- **The district and the community share responsibility for ensuring the success of English language learners.**
We commit to helping all teachers—ESL and content-area teachers—develop the knowledge and skills they need to support English language learners' English language and content acquisition. We must provide all administrative leaders and staff members, including counselors, psychologists, special education teachers, and school leaders, with appropriate professional learning opportunities aimed at supporting ELLs. Finally, the district and the Beaverton community should work in partnership to support the success of English language learners.

Recommendations for Program Models

Program models refer to the way instruction is organized to provide ELLs with access to academic content and to support the acquisition of the English language. The program models set forth by the Oregon Department of Education are categorized into two types: Core-Content Models and ELD Models. The descriptions of the models below are summarized from guidance by the Oregon Department of Education. Readers should consult the latest Oregon Department of Education guidance for a full description of the models.

Models aimed at ensuring that ELLs access core-content knowledge. Core content refers to instruction in academic subjects such as language arts, mathematics, and science.

Core-Content Models

- **Two-way immersion** program models seek to develop biliteracy and bilingualism in English and a partner language. Students study academic subjects in both languages. Students in these programs are native speakers of English and native speakers of the partner language. Two-way immersion programs are also referred to as dual-language immersion.
- **Developmental bilingual** program models instruct students in both English and an ELL student's primary language and typically only enroll English language learners. Developmental bilingual programs are also referred to as maintenance bilingual and late-exit bilingual.
- **Transitional bilingual** program models facilitate ELLs' transition to an all-English instructional program while providing instruction in the students' native language. Transition to English-only instruction typically occurs in mid- to late elementary school. Transitional bilingual programs enroll only ELLs and are also referred to as early-exit bilingual education.
- **Sheltered instruction** program models focus on teaching academic content using specialized techniques to meet ELLs' language needs. Sheltered instruction classes can be designed for only ELLs or a mix of both ELLs and non-ELLs.
- **Newcomer program–core-content instruction** is a program model specifically designed to meet the core-content educational and transitional needs of newly arrived immigrant ELLs. ELLs typically participate in these programs for no more than two years. Newcomer classes are composed entirely of ELLs.

Models aimed at developing ELLs' proficiency in the English language. These models, referred to as "English Language Development (ELD)" models, characterize instruction designed to develop the English language proficiency of ELLs.

ELD Models

- **ELD push-in** is a model where ELLs receive ELD instruction within their mainstream or content-area classroom.
- **ELD pull-out** is a model where ELLs receive content instruction in a mainstream classroom and are "pulled out" for ELD instruction. This model is more common in elementary school.
- **ELD class period** is a model where ELLs receive ELD instruction during a regular class period that carries course credit. This model is more common in secondary schools.
- **Newcomer program-ELD** describes ELD instruction specifically designed to develop the English language skills of newly arrived immigrant ELLs. Students are typically in a newcomer ELD program for no more than two years. These classes serve only ELLs.

The ELL Research Group recommends two-way immersion and sheltered instruction for core-content instruction in elementary schools (see core-content model descriptions). The group also encourages elementary schools that serve substantial numbers of newcomer students to consider providing a newcomer-core program.

For English language development, the group recommends that elementary schools utilize ELD pull-out and ELD push-in. ELD push-in, however, should be a designated instructional block offered within the regular classroom setting with the specified aim of increasing English language proficiency. Note that ELD push-in refers only to instruction specifically focused on developing proficiency in English. This means that push-in support (even if the support is from ESL specialists) during, for example, instruction aimed at increasing proficiency in math cannot be considered ELD push-in.

For core-content instruction in middle and high schools, the ELL Research Group recommends two-way immersion, sheltered instruction, and newcomer-core. For English language development, the group recommends ELD class period and newcomer-ELD. These recommendations are summarized in figure 1.

Figure 1: Recommended Program Models

Core Content	Elementary	Middle	High
Two-way immersion	X	X	X
Sheltered instruction	X	X	X
Newcomer -core	a	X	X
English Language Development	Elementary	Middle	High
ELD push-In	b		
ELD pull-Out	X		
ELD class period		X	X
Newcomer -ELD		X	X

Notes:

- a. Newcomer – Core may be considered for elementary schools that serve a large number of newcomer students.
- b. ELD push-In – A designated language instructional block offered within the general education setting focused on increasing English language proficiency.

Recommendations for Instructional Practices

Instructional practices refer to the strategies and activities that teachers use in day-to-day classroom instruction with ELLs. Unless identified as specific to ELD, the instructional practices below are recommended for both core content and ELD. The recommendations should not be taken as implying that no other instructional practices are effective with ELL students. On-going research may increase (or reduce) the number of instructional practices shown to be effective. Also, it should be noted that many of the recommended practices can be used across all program models and are not limited to sheltered instruction. Recommendations are presented separately for instructional practices in elementary school and in middle and high school.

Elementary School Recommendations for Instructional Practices

1. Set clear goals and content objectives
2. Provide students with informative feedback
3. Assess learning frequently and re-teach when needed
4. Provide students with necessary background knowledge
5. Differentiate instruction based on English language proficiency
6. Use home language support in core-content instruction
7. Use visual supports
8. Use well-designed instruction to strategically scaffold student participation, engagement, and interactions with peers
9. Emphasize academic, as well as conversational, language in ELD instruction
10. Use strategies that take into consideration the unique needs of newcomer students. For example, newcomers and their families may need an introduction to the American schooling system and classroom norms and expectations in addition to content and English language support.

Middle and High School Recommendations for Instructional Practices

1. Model skills, strategies, and procedures
2. Provide students with necessary background knowledge
3. Use graphic organizers to clarify concepts and organize information
4. Use clear language and set content objectives
5. Provide additional supports such as:
 - Use of pictures (e.g., picture cards), demonstrations, and real-life objects
 - Use of illustrative text and picture books
 - Use of technology such as Smart Boards, tablets, and computers
 - Provide information in multiple ways (e.g., gestures, visual cues, technology)

- Use of sentence frames to help ELLs talk about content
 - Differentiate instruction based on English language proficiency
6. Emphasize academic, as well as conversational, language
 7. Maximize use of English during content instruction in sheltered instruction classes; the primary language should be used strategically. For example, the primary language can be used by:
 - Using cognates
 - Providing brief explanations in students' home language
 - Previewing and reviewing lessons in the home language
 - Teaching strategies in the home language
 8. Provide opportunities for students to practice academic English conversations
 9. Utilize strategies that take into consideration the unique needs of newcomer students
 10. Explicitly teach forms of English during ELD instruction (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, morphology, functions, and conventions)
 11. Maximize use of English during ELD instruction; use the primary language strategically
 12. Provide students with corrective feedback on form, and model the use of correct grammatical forms in ELD instruction

Limitations to the recommendations

The challenge facing the ELL Research Group in developing recommendations was enormous for several reasons. First, the group undertook a daunting task on a very limited time frame. Secondly, while there is a considerable amount of research on ELLs, there are very few studies with the designs needed to support strong conclusions about the effectiveness of program models or instructional practices. In fact, a recent review by the U.S. Department of Education on the research concluded that “the current scope and scale of the research base on instructing ELs³ is small and insufficient to support strong conclusions” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Participants in the ELL Research Group wrestled with the limitations of and ambiguities in the research base and did so in a constructive and collegial way. Limitations in the research base imply that the district must carefully monitor the way it implements the recommendations, develop a principled approach for identifying what is and isn’t working well, and disseminate knowledge about what is known to be working well gained from experience within the district and from sources outside the district. Finally, program models and instructional practices don’t constitute all of what ELLs need—they also need access to accelerated courses and support to be successful in those courses, opportunities to participate in extra-curricular programs, a welcoming environment in their schools, outreach to their families, and additional resources and support that the district might provide.

Considerations for Implementation

As the ELL Research Group began to formulate recommendations, participants raised questions about how the recommendations would be implemented. It must be noted that the group was not charged with developing a plan for implementing the recommendations. As a result, Education Northwest did not discuss implementation with the group in detail. However, based on our analysis of research and experience with programs for ELLs, Education Northwest suggests that the implementation plan should consider the following steps:

Develop common understanding of the recommendations within the district

- The district should inform all schools of the ELL Research Group’s recommendations.
- Principals should clearly communicate what their schools’ program models are and how they work to staff, students, and families.

³ The Department of Education has recently adopted the term “English learners” in place of English language learners.

Provide staff members with appropriate professional development

- Principals, specialists, and teachers should receive ongoing professional development to deliver the program model(s) implemented in their schools and to use the recommended instructional practices.

Allocate time for teachers to collaborate

- Principals should protect time in the schedule for general education teachers and ESL teachers to collaborate to ensure successful ELD push-in and sheltered instruction.

Provide appropriate materials and resources

- The district should ensure that each school has appropriate materials to be able to deliver their program models. These might include bilingual books and computer programs, ELD curricula, and visuals to support content instruction.

Review and adjust the district approach on a regular basis

- Conduct a periodic evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations and outcomes for ELLs and adjust the recommendations and/or implementation as needed.
- Periodically conduct an updated review of recent research to ensure the recommendations align to current research findings.
- Commit to continuous improvement of services for ELLs at the district, school, and classroom levels.

Reference

- Faulkner-Bond, M., & Waring, S., Forte, E., Crenshaw, R. L., Tindle, K., & Belknap, B. (2012). *Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs): A review of the foundational literature*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service.
<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED531981>