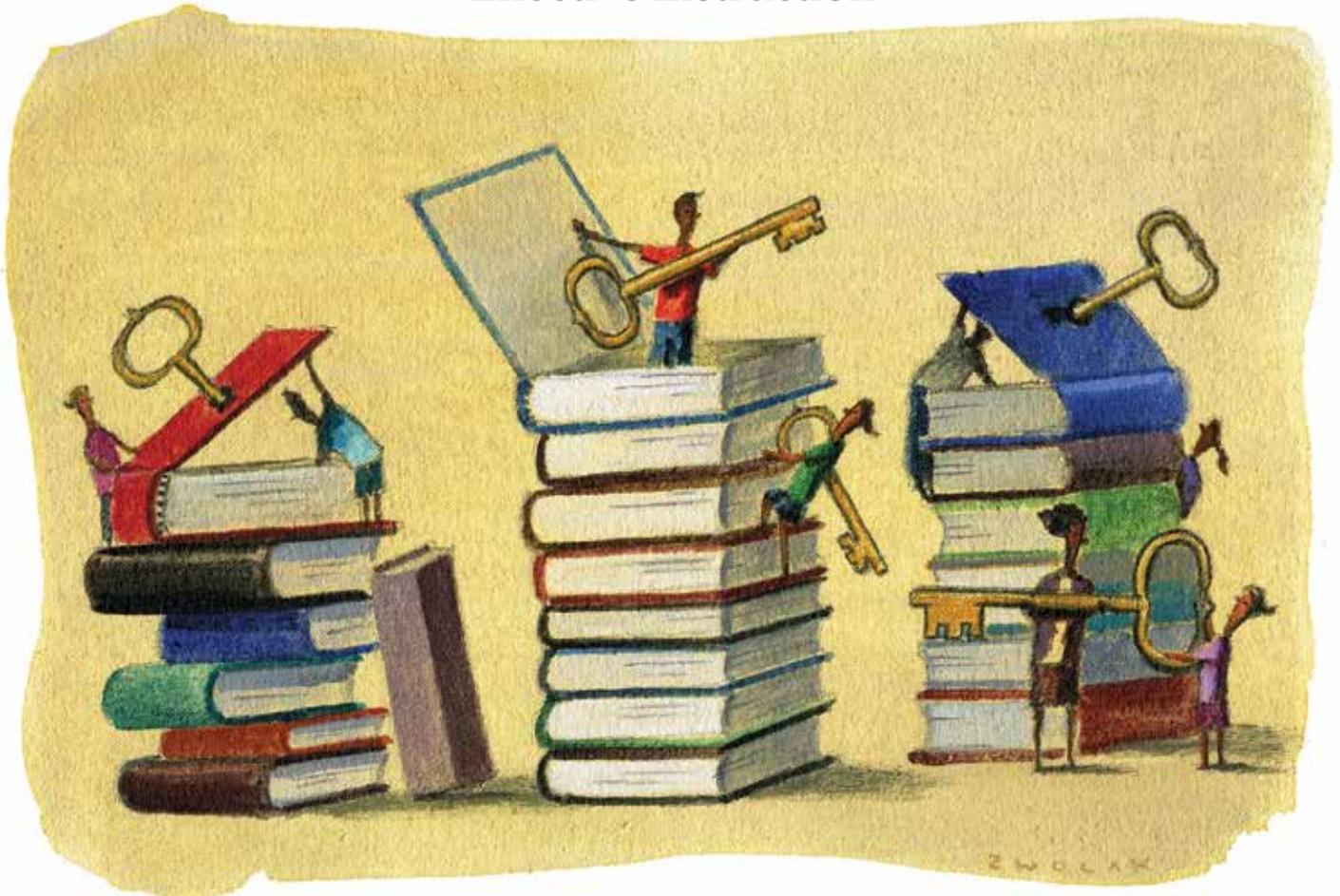


# Unlocking the Research on English Learners

What We Know—and Don't Yet Know—about Effective Instruction



BY CLAUDE GOLDENBERG

**T**he number of professional publications aimed at improving instruction for English learners has exploded since the early 2000s. Dozens of books, articles, and reports were published in the space of a few years following the appearance of two major research reviews in 2006.<sup>1</sup> According to

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one count, nearly 15 books on the topic of English learners were published in 2010 alone,<sup>2</sup> most aimed at professional audiences. Since then, the pace has only accelerated, with new and specialized books on assessment, literacy, English language development, and content instruction for English learners (ELs) seeming to appear continuously.

Yet there is surprisingly little research on common practices or recommendations for practice with the more than 5 million ELs in our nation's schools, many of whom come from families in poverty and attend lower-resourced schools. This absence of adequate research applies to all areas, including promoting English language development and instruction in content areas such as math and history. One of the 2006 research reviews noted "a dearth of empirical research on instructional strategies or approaches to teaching content" for ELs.<sup>3</sup> A subsequent review of research on content area instruction for ELs echoed the same theme.<sup>4</sup> Rather than providing a list of instructional practices specifically validated by research as effective with ELs—which

would be a short list—I instead identify three important principles based in the research. These are:

- I. Generally effective practices are likely to be effective with ELs.
- II. ELs require additional instructional supports.
- III. The home language can be used to promote academic development.

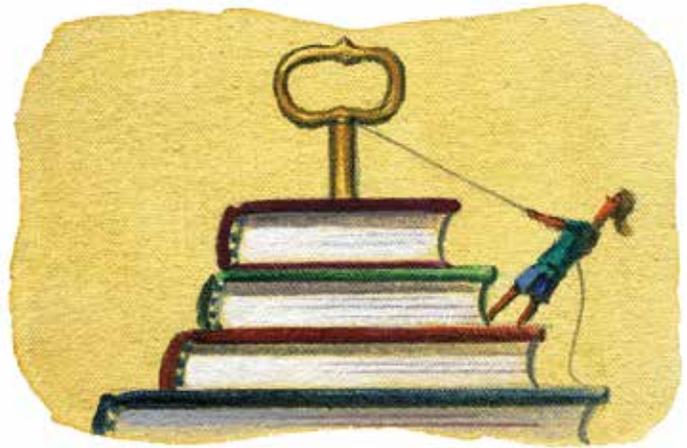
There is also a fourth principle: ELs need early and ample opportunities to develop proficiency in English (see page 13 for an article devoted to that topic). For each of the three principles listed above, I provide specific examples from research on ELs.

This serious look at the research comes at an opportune time. The new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, which have been adopted by the vast majority

- Clear instructions and supportive guidance as learners engage with new skills;
- Effective modeling of skills, strategies, and procedures;
- Active student engagement and participation;
- Informative feedback to learners;
- Application of new learning and transfer to new situations;
- Practice and periodic review;
- Structured, focused interactions with other students;
- Frequent assessments, with reteaching as needed; and
- Well-established classroom routines and behavior norms.

All published studies with which I am familiar that have demonstrated positive effects on ELs' achievement incorporate at least several of these features into the instructional procedures. For example, one found that structured writing instruction—including teacher instruction, error correction and feedback, and a focus

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of states and the District of Columbia, are now in the process of being implemented. In calling for students to study and understand complex texts in English language arts and other academic subjects, these new standards place an even greater emphasis on content knowledge and language and literacy skills than the previous standards of many states. Indeed, large numbers of ELs had difficulty meeting states' prior standards. In California, for example, data from the past several years indicate that approximately 40–50 percent of originally classified ELs performed well below criteria established for the previous English language arts standards.<sup>5</sup> To meet the demands of the CCSS, ELs clearly need additional help, and teachers need a great deal of support. Meeting the Common Core standards constitutes an enormous challenge we should not underestimate.<sup>6</sup>

### **I. Generally Effective Practices Are Likely to Be Effective with ELs**

There is a vast literature on effective teaching practices. Educational research over more than a half century has yielded a number of reasonably consistent findings about the features of teaching likely to result in improved student learning. These include:

- Clear goals and objectives;
- Appropriate and challenging material;
- Well-designed instruction and instructional routines;

on building writing skills—had more positive effects on fifth-grade ELs' writing than did a free writing approach with no explicit instruction or error correction.<sup>7</sup> Both groups were allowed to write in either Spanish or English. Another writing study with native Cantonese speakers in Hong Kong reported similar findings—explicit teaching of revision strategies helped improve the quality of student writing and helped students learn to write so that readers could understand them.<sup>8</sup>

Many other studies illustrate the value of well-known elements of effective instruction to promote the learning of ELs, whether in vocabulary instruction,<sup>9</sup> early reading interventions,<sup>10</sup> English language development,<sup>11</sup> or science education.<sup>12</sup> In fact, several studies have shown similar effects on both ELs and non-ELs,<sup>13</sup> again suggesting that there is considerable overlap between what is effective instruction for ELs and what is effective for students already proficient in English.

Two researchers<sup>14</sup> reviewed many of the same studies as the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth\* and concluded that “the programs with the strongest evidence of effectiveness in this review are all programs that have also been found to be effective with students in general” and modified for ELs (see the next section on instructional supports and modifications). These programs include various versions of

\*To learn about this panel and read a summary of a subsequent report edited by Diane August and Timothy Shanahan, visit [www.cal.org/projects/archive/natlitpanel.html](http://www.cal.org/projects/archive/natlitpanel.html).

Success for All (a school-wide program that involves far more than classroom instruction), Direct Instruction,\* and phonics instruction programs. Other programs with at least some evidence of effectiveness include vocabulary instruction programs,<sup>15</sup> a comprehensive language arts program† combining direct teaching and literature study,<sup>16</sup> a program that promotes reading between parents and kindergarten children,<sup>17</sup> a Spanish version of Reading Recovery,<sup>18</sup> an English tutoring program,<sup>19</sup> and programs that incorporate cooperative learning.<sup>20</sup>

The key message is that what we know about effective instruction in general is the foundation of effective instruction for ELs. However, as we'll see in the next section, although "generic" effective instruction is almost certainly a necessary base, it is probably not sufficient to promote accelerated learning among ELs.

## II. ELs Require Additional Instructional Supports

ELs in an English instructional environment will almost certainly need additional supports so that instruction is meaningful and productive. Aside from the pedagogical need, there is also the legal requirement mandated by the Supreme Court's decision in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) that classroom instruction must be meaningful to students even if their English language proficiency is limited. The need for additional supports is particularly true for instruction aimed at higher-level content and comprehension of academic texts. Because the Common Core standards focus more on academic literacy skills than do prior state standards, teachers will certainly need to bolster ELs' efforts to understand more challenging content in English language arts and all academic subjects. One of the most important findings of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth<sup>21</sup> was that the effects of reading instruction on ELs' reading comprehension were uneven and often nonexistent even when comprehension skills were taught directly. This is in contrast to studies with English-proficient students, for whom reading instruction helps improve reading comprehension.<sup>22</sup>

Why does improving reading comprehension for English learners instructed in English appear so elusive? A likely explanation is that lower levels of English proficiency interfere with comprehension and can blunt the effects of otherwise sound instruction. William Saunders and I conducted a study that suggests this possibility.<sup>23</sup> We randomly assigned a group of ELs either to an instructional conversation group (interactive teacher-led discussions designed to promote better understanding of what students read) or to a control condition, where the teacher used comprehension questions in the teacher's guide. We found that instructional conversations had no overall effect on ELs' story comprehension—students in both groups understood the story about equally. We did find that instructional conversations produced deeper understandings of a complex concept at the heart of a story the students read, but this is different from story comprehension.

\*To learn about Success for All, see [www.successforall.org](http://www.successforall.org); for information about Direct Instruction, see [www.nifdi.org](http://www.nifdi.org).

†To learn more about this program, Opportunities through Language Arts, go to <https://people.stanford.edu/claudeg/video/opportunities-through-language-arts>.

However, when we looked at the results for students with different English proficiency levels, we found something striking: for the students with the highest English proficiency, participation in instructional conversations did have an impact on story comprehension—91 percent accuracy versus 73 percent accuracy for students in the comparison group. The middle-level students also did better with instructional conversations, but the results were not statistically significant. The lowest-level English speakers did worse with instructional conversations, although also not to a statistically significant degree. These results suggest that instruction aimed at improving ELs' comprehension is likely to be more effective when ELs have relatively higher English skills, but less effective, ineffective, or even possibly counterproductive when their English skills are lower.

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One obvious implication is that we need to focus on English language development for ELs, particularly those least proficient in English. (Along with William Saunders and David Marcelletti, I address that topic in a companion article that begins on page 13.) But what can teachers do to help ELs who are developing their English skills as they simultaneously learn advanced academic content and skills in English?

### Sheltered Instruction

To meet this challenge, educators and researchers have proposed a set of instructional supports or modifications that are sometimes referred to as *sheltered instruction*.<sup>24</sup> The goal of sheltered strategies is to facilitate the learning of grade-level academic content and skills for students being instructed in English but who have limited proficiency in the language. Sheltered instruction can be expected to contribute to English language development, but its real focus is academic content and skills.

Some of the supports and modifications<sup>‡</sup> that have been proposed for instructing ELs include:

- Building on student experiences and familiar content (then adding on material that will broaden and deepen students' knowledge);
- Providing students with necessary background knowledge;
- Using graphic organizers (tables, web diagrams, Venn diagrams)

‡For a comprehensive list of "sheltered" strategies, definitions, and video illustrations, go to <https://people.stanford.edu/claudeg/cqell/about>.

to organize information and clarify concepts;

- Making instruction and learning tasks extremely clear;
- Using pictures, demonstrations, and real-life objects;
- Providing hands-on, interactive learning activities;
- Providing redundant information (gestures, visual cues);
- Giving additional practice and time for discussion of key concepts;
- Designating language *and* content objectives for each lesson;
- Using sentence frames and models to help students talk about academic content; and
- Providing instruction differentiated by students' English language proficiency.



proficiency levels, there are no published data at all about their effects on ELs' learning.

Even the most popular sheltered model in existence and one that brings together many disparate elements into a useful and coherent instructional model—the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)<sup>25</sup>—has yet to demonstrate more than a very modest effect on student learning.<sup>26</sup> A recent study showed stronger effects than did prior research,<sup>27</sup> but unfortunately researchers excluded from the analysis classrooms with lower implementation levels.<sup>28</sup> The most recent study<sup>29</sup> found modest effects that were *not* statistically significant. Another professional development model designed to help teachers of ELs accomplish high-level language and content goals with students, Quality Teaching for English Learners,<sup>§</sup> produced no significant

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There are also sheltered strategies that involve strategic use of students' home language—for example, cognates and other home language support. These will be discussed in the third section on use of the home language for classroom instruction.

The problem, however, is that there is not much evidence that these strategies actually help English learners overcome the challenges they face in learning advanced academic content and skills, as they will be required to do with the implementation of the CCSS for English language arts. There are virtually no data to suggest that sheltered instruction or any of these modifications and supports help ELs keep up with non-ELs or help close the achievement gap between them. For some of the items on the list, such as the use of content and language objectives, sentence frames, and differentiating instruction by English

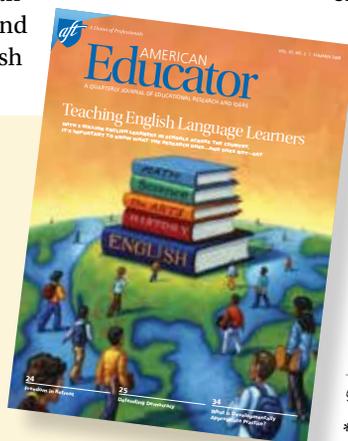
effects on student achievement in language arts or English language proficiency and no effects on teacher attitudes, knowledge, or classroom practice.<sup>30</sup> Other popular programs, such as Project GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design),\*\* have never even been evaluated.

We also have compelling portraits of teachers who incorporate many of the supports included in the SIOP into their teaching in order to make instruction more meaningful for English learners and to promote academic language skills. One researcher,<sup>31</sup> for example, describes high school biology teachers who integrate language and content instruction; use hands-on activities, pictures, and diagrams; build on student background and experiences; and provide opportunities and time for discussion and language use. But we do not know the extent to which these supports actually compensate for students' lack of proficiency in English, particularly in the sort of English language skills required for academic success.

### Some Evidence of Benefits

There is some evidence that these supports and modifications do benefit ELs. For example, studies reviewed by the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth<sup>32</sup> find that building on students' experiences and using

These three articles on English learners provide a comprehensive update of "Teaching English Language Learners: What the Research Does—and Does Not—Say," by Claude Goldenberg, in the Summer 2008 issue of *American Educator*, which is available for free at <http://go.aft.org/goldenberg>.



§To learn more about Quality Teaching for English Learners, see <http://qtel.wested.org>.

\*\*To learn more about Project GLAD, see [www.projectglad.com](http://www.projectglad.com).

material with familiar content can facilitate ELs' literacy development and reading comprehension. One ethnographic study found that young English learners' writing development is helped when the teacher incorporates literacy activities and materials from home and the community into classroom activities.<sup>33</sup> Another set of studies showed that second-language learners' reading comprehension improves when they read material with familiar content.<sup>34</sup>

It is generally true that what we know and are already familiar with can influence new learning and the comprehension of what we read.<sup>35</sup> Teachers should therefore use materials with some degree of familiarity to students. If students are expected to read material with unfamiliar content, it is important to help them acquire the necessary background knowledge. Building back-

and cultural knowledge into the instruction. Another team<sup>41</sup> built its intervention around the topic of immigration, which presumably had considerable resonance for the ELs, who were themselves immigrants or whose parents were immigrants from Latin America or the Caribbean. This team also used supports in the home language. While both programs showed positive effects on student learning, neither study found any difference in learning outcomes for ELs and non-ELs.

One recent study<sup>42</sup> represents a new development. The researchers found that "multimedia-enhanced instruction" (videos used as part of lessons) helped make read-aloud vocabulary instruction more effective for ELs in preschool to second grade but had no effect on the learning of non-ELs. Teachers used videos related to the topics in books they read aloud to their students as

**We have many promising leads but not a very good understanding of how to help ELs learn high-level academic content and skills.**



ground knowledge or building on prior experience and familiar content might be especially important for ELs, since they face the double challenge of learning academic content and skills as they learn the language of instruction. However, like all students, ELs must learn to read and comprehend unfamiliar material—important objectives of the CCSS for English language arts.

There is also a substantial literature on graphic displays and organizers, which facilitate and support learning by clarifying content and making explicit the relationships among concepts.<sup>36</sup> One study<sup>37</sup> found that graphic representations helped improve seventh-grade Canadian ESL (English as a second language) students' comprehension and academic language, but this appears to be the only study of its kind with second-language learners.<sup>38</sup> Another researcher<sup>39</sup> also described the use of graphic organizers to help sixth-grade ELs write a historical argument, although he concluded that students would have benefited from additional explicit instruction in historical writing.

Perhaps these and other instructional supports, which are applicable to learners generally, are especially important or helpful for ELs. That certainly makes intuitive sense, but we have scant evidence either way. In fact, there is some evidence that these supports are equally effective for ELs and non-ELs. One team of researchers<sup>40</sup> taught students explicitly about the science inquiry method by using pictures to illustrate the process, employing multiple modes of representation (for example, verbal, gestural, graphic, or written), and incorporating students' prior linguistic

part of the science curriculum on habitats (for example, coral reefs or deserts). The ELs who saw the videos as part of the vocabulary instruction learned more of the target words and made greater gains on a general vocabulary measure than those who did not. The videos helped either greatly diminish or eliminate the gap between ELs and non-ELs on the target words. This suggests a potentially very effective strategy that improves ELs' vocabulary learning while not compromising the learning of students already proficient in English.

In short, we have many promising leads but not a very good understanding of how to help ELs learn high-level academic content and skills despite limited English proficiency. What one researcher<sup>43</sup> wrote about instruction focusing on language in addition to academic content—"the published research is at an early stage"—is equally true for other supports intended to help ELs achieve at high academic levels.

### **III. The Home Language Can Be Used to Promote Academic Development**

We turn, finally, to the most controversial topic in instructing ELs—the role of the home language. There are two aspects to the issue: teaching academic content and skills, such as reading and mathematics, in the home language, and using the home language as support in an otherwise all-English instructional environment—for example, providing definitions or brief explanations in the home language, but keeping instruction overwhelmingly in English.

Teaching academic skills in the home language is at the core of the great “bilingual education” debate. Proponents of bilingual education have long argued that students should be taught in their home language (although certainly not exclusively) and that doing so strengthens the home language and creates a more solid foundation for acquiring academic skills in English. Opponents of bilingual education argue that instruction in a student’s home language is a waste of time, depresses achievement in English, and simply delays an EL’s entrance into the academic (and social) mainstream.\*

These debates over bilingual education are typically framed in terms of outcomes in English. English outcomes are without a doubt important, but there is an additional reason to consider primary language instruction for English learners, and that is the inherent advantage of knowing and being literate in two lan-

**There is no controversy over the positive effects of home language instruction on home language skills. This is important given the possible advantages of bilingualism and biliteracy.**

guages. No one should be surprised to learn that all studies of bilingual education have found that teaching children in their primary language promotes achievement in the primary language. This should be seen as a value in and of itself. Of course, if primary language achievement comes at the expense of achievement in English, this might not be a worthwhile tradeoff. As we will see, however, bilingual education tends to produce better outcomes in English; at worst, it produces outcomes in English equivalent to those produced by English immersion. In other words, bilingual education helps students become bilingual—something that is valuable for anyone, not just ELs.<sup>44</sup> This should not be lost amid the controversy over bilingual education and English immersion.

### **What the Research Tells Us**

Although bilingual education continues to be a politically charged issue,<sup>45</sup> we can draw some conclusions from the research.

#### *Reading Instruction in the Home Language Can Be Beneficial*

Numerous experimental studies have been conducted over the past 40 years, and the consensus—although it is by no means unanimous—is that learning to read in their home language helps ELs boost reading skills in English. Learning to read in the home

language also maintains home language literacy skills; there is no controversy over this. To date, there have been five meta-analyses conducted since 1985 by researchers from different perspectives. All five reached the same conclusion—namely, that bilingual education produced superior reading outcomes in English compared with English immersion.

A more recent study, and probably the strongest methodologically, reached a different conclusion. Researchers<sup>46</sup> randomly assigned Spanish-speaking ELs to either transitional bilingual education or English immersion. All students were in the Success for All program. This is very important, since previous studies of bilingual education had not controlled for instruction, curriculum, or other factors that could have compromised the findings. The authors found that in first grade, children in English immersion did significantly better on English achievement measures than did children in bilingual education. By fourth grade, English immersion students’ scores were somewhat higher than that of the bilingual education students, but the differences were not significant. The researchers contend that these results support neither side in the bilingual education controversy. Instead, they argue, quality of instruction and curriculum and the school supports needed to support them are more important determinants of ELs’ achievement than language of instruction.

#### *Effects Are Small to Moderate*

The effects of home language instruction on English achievement are fairly modest, even if we disregard the findings of the recent study just discussed. The five meta-analyses mentioned in the previous section found that, on average, teaching reading in the home language could boost children’s English literacy scores by approximately 12 to 15 percentile points in comparison with children in the control conditions. This is not a trivial effect, but neither is it as large as many proponents of bilingual education suggest. Of course, if we add in the results of the new study, the average effect would be reduced. But we should keep in mind that there is no controversy over the positive effects of home language instruction on home language skills. This should be seen as an important outcome in itself, given the many possible advantages—intellectual, cultural, and economic—of bilingualism and biliteracy.<sup>47</sup>

#### *Insufficient Data on Length of Time in Primary Language Instruction*

The soundest studies methodologically focus on relatively short-term transitional bilingual education. In transitional programs, children generally receive instruction in the home language from one to three years and then transition to all-English instruction. Among this group of studies, there is no evidence that more or less time spent in bilingual education is related to higher or lower student achievement.<sup>48</sup>

Another type of bilingual education<sup>49</sup> is two-way or dual-language.<sup>†</sup> The goal of two-way bilingual education is bilingualism and biliteracy, in contrast to transitional bilingual education, which uses the home language only to help students transition to

\*For an excellent history of the political and ideological debates around bilingual education, see *Educating English Learners: Language Diversity in the Classroom*, by James Crawford.

†To learn more about two-way immersion education, see [www.cal.org/twi/index.htm](http://www.cal.org/twi/index.htm).

all-English instruction and then stops instruction in the home language. Two-way programs use the home language for far longer, at least through elementary school and often into middle school and beyond (K-12 two-way programs are rare). Two-way programs were virtually excluded from the five meta-analyses. The reason is that these longer-term studies do not meet the methodological requirements set by the meta-analyses. For example, they do not control for possible differences in the types of students in different programs, who vary considerably in terms of language, literacy, and parents' education levels.<sup>50</sup> If we don't control for these factors, we are likely to get misleading results.

Our knowledge about the effects of two-way programs is unfortunately very limited. Nonetheless, two-way bilingual education offers a promising model for the education of ELs. It also offers a

students' home language to provide some degree of familiarity when the lesson is taught; following the lesson, there is a review in the home language to solidify and check for understanding); and

- Strategies taught in the home language (reading, writing, and study strategies are taught in the home language but then applied to academic content in English).

Cognates have been used with a number of vocabulary and reading programs.<sup>52</sup> No study has ever isolated the specific effects of cognate instruction, but more successful second-language learners do use cognates when trying to understand material in the second language.<sup>53</sup>

In one study, teachers previewed difficult vocabulary in Span-

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way to promote bilingualism and biliteracy for non-English learners, since two-way programs include English-speaking students as well as students from language-minority backgrounds (for example, Spanish speakers). This is an area in great need of additional research and rigorous evaluation.

#### *Virtually No Data Exist on Bilingual Education in Other Curriculum Areas*

Reading is by far the curriculum area that has received the most attention in studies of bilingual education. A small number have found positive effects in math.<sup>51</sup> We know very little about the effects of bilingual education in other areas of the curriculum.

#### **Instructional Support in the Home Language**

Students' home language can play a role even in an all-English instructional program. This is referred to as home (or primary) language support. There is no teaching of content and academic skills in the home language; instead, the home language is used to help facilitate learning content and skills in English. The home language can be used to support learning in an English instructional environment in the following ways:

- Cognates (words with shared meanings that have common etymological roots, such as *geography* and *geografía*);
- Brief explanations in the home language (not direct concurrent translations, which can cause students to "tune out" while English is being spoken);
- Lesson preview and review (lesson content is previewed in

ish before reading a book in English; the teachers then reviewed the material in Spanish afterward. This produced better comprehension and recall than either reading the book in English or doing a simultaneous Spanish translation while reading.<sup>54</sup> The program described above that was based on the topic of immigration<sup>55</sup> made use of a similar technique. Before the class read a written passage, Spanish speakers were given written and audio-taped versions to preview in Spanish.

We also have evidence that reading strategies can be taught in students' home language, then applied in English. One study<sup>56</sup> found that teaching comprehension strategies in students' primary language improved reading comprehension when students afterward read in English.

**I**t should be clear that despite progress in understanding how to improve teaching and learning for the millions of ELs in our schools, many gaps remain. The challenges posed by the Common Core State Standards make those gaps glaring. Two Berkeley researchers put it squarely:<sup>57</sup>

What will the more demanding complex texts implied by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) mean for those students who are already having trouble with existing standards? This group includes English learners (ELs), and also the language minority students (LMs) who speak English only, but not the variety that is valued and promoted in the society's schools. What will the CCSS mean for the educators who work with these students? ... [Teachers] are worried. How can they

be expected to help their students handle materials that are more demanding than what already seems difficult enough?

This worry is justified.

The researchers then outline an approach to studying complex texts that holds promise for helping ELs meet the Common Core challenge but for which, they acknowledge, there is no real supporting evidence. As we've seen over the course of this article, this is a familiar refrain. And even when there is evidence of effects, they are modest—far too modest to make major inroads on the very large achievement gaps ELs face. It is an inconvenient truth: we lack the knowledge base to fully prepare teachers to help many of their English learner and language-minority students overcome this gap.

So what is to be done? Clearly, educators cannot wait until

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researchers have adequately solidified our understanding of how to help ELs meet the content and language challenges they face. They'll be waiting a long time. Maybe forever. But if policymakers and the public wish to create a high-stakes environment where teachers and students are expected to do what we do not fully know how to do, at the very least we must provide all possible supports. A good place to begin in thinking about these supports is with famed psychology professor Seymour Sarason's admonition from more than 20 years ago: “Teachers cannot create and sustain the conditions for the productive development of children if those conditions do not exist for teachers.”<sup>58</sup> What this means in practice is that we must create settings in schools where teachers have the time and space to:

- Systematically study with colleagues the CCSS or whatever standards or learning goals teachers are expected to follow;
- Specify and articulate what these standards and goals mean for curriculum and instruction *in their classrooms*;
- Implement curriculum, and plan and carry out instruction, based on these understandings;
- Systematically collect student work indicating student progress toward desired outcomes;
- Analyze and evaluate student work with colleagues to help determine what is working and what is not; and
- Repeat the above continuously and systematically, throughout and across school years.

Putting the above in place is no simple matter. It will require

school-wide, concerted, and coherent efforts made possible by leadership, accountability, support, and assistance.\* Even with all this in place, there are no guarantees that we can accomplish the very ambitious and worthwhile goals we have set for ourselves and our students. However, without creating these conditions in schools, these goals will remain a pipe dream.

I am cautiously optimistic. The current interest in developing, studying, and evaluating effective practices for ELs promises increased understanding of how to help these students succeed, even thrive, in our schools. But evaluating effective practices will not suffice. Schools must become places, in Sarason's words, for teachers' “productive development.” In the end, progress will require creating these conditions in schools, continued research, and thoughtful practice to see what works in classrooms. Practitioners have an extraordinary opportunity to contribute to our knowledge base for educating ELs. We should put aside the ideological debates that have defined this field for too long and work as a profession to seek approaches that will enable all students to succeed in school and beyond. The millions of EL children and youth represent a vast and largely untapped source of social, economic, cultural, and linguistic vitality. Our job is to make sure this vitality is not squandered. □

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\*For research on the school and district roles in creating conditions for improving EL achievement, see chapter 6 of *Promoting Academic Achievement among English Learners: A Guide to the Research*, by Claude Goldenberg and Rhoda Coleman. See also the Talking Teaching Network ([www.talkingteaching.org](http://www.talkingteaching.org)) for a current effort to engage teachers in substantive, systematic work to improve teaching and learning framed by the CCSS.

# Recommended Resources

While any teacher with an Internet connection is awash in resources, finding the right resource is still difficult. The following websites, in addition to those cited in the related articles, may help.

## 1. Instructional Materials

**Colorín Colorado:** [www.colorincolorado.org](http://www.colorincolorado.org)

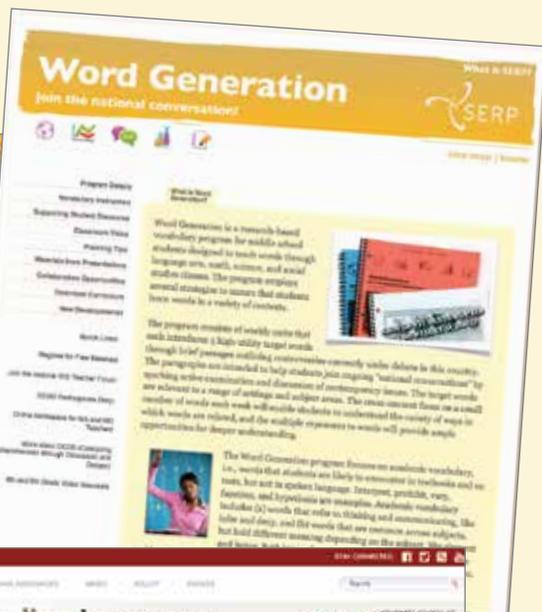
Colorín Colorado offers free teacher tip sheets on reading instruction, professional development videos, and tools for effective outreach to Hispanic parents, among other resources, to help English learners in preK–12th grade.

**Word Generation:** [www.wg.serpmedia.org](http://www.wg.serpmedia.org)

Word Generation provides free curricular materials, classroom videos, and other supports to help ELs in middle school learn important academic vocabulary in the core disciplines: language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

**Understanding Language:** <http://ell.stanford.edu>

Understanding Language has a wide array of papers to keep educators up-to-date on the latest thinking about educating ELs, particularly in a Common Core environment. It also provides free teaching resources aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English language arts and mathematics as well as the Next Generation Science Standards. While a handful of these resources are currently available, many more will be added to the site throughout 2013.



## 2. Research and Evaluation

**What Works Clearinghouse:** [www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/topic.aspx?sid=6](http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/topic.aspx?sid=6)

What Works Clearinghouse, which has particularly high standards for evidence of effectiveness, has devoted a section of its free website to research publications and program evaluations for ELs.

**Best Evidence Encyclopedia:** [www.bestevidence.org/reading/ell/ell\\_read.htm](http://www.bestevidence.org/reading/ell/ell_read.htm)

Two reviews of reading programs for ELs are available for free on the Best Evidence Encyclopedia website.

## 3. National and State Statistics

**National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs:** [www.ncela.gwu.edu](http://www.ncela.gwu.edu)

This free website provides a variety of demographic information about ELs, as well as reports, webinars, and other resources on EL education.

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(Continued from page 11)

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