



Research Brief

English Language Learners' Programs

Question: What are programs for ELL?

Summary of Findings:

The United States is made up of immigrants and each group has had to face the challenges of learning the culture and/or the English language. There are many stories about immigrants who came to this country and learned English through the “sink or swim” method and went on to become quite successful. The stories that are not told are the ones about the high number of people who never learned English and were unable to find a satisfactory life in America because of it. Some interesting facts about the current secondary English Language Learners (ELL) population in the United States are: 7% of the population in the nation’s middle and high schools are ELL; 1 out of 7 (14%) sophomores is from a language minority group, primarily Asian, Pacific Islander or Latino; 81% of ELL students in middle and high schools are Spanish speakers; and 10.6% of the ELL secondary population who are newcomers to America have a high likelihood of a history of interrupted schooling (*Resources about secondary English Language Learners*). Research has found that students who come from high socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds do better academically than those from low SES and that fluent English students do better academically than ELL’s, none of which is a surprise. However, those ELL’s who come from high SES do better academically than those who are fluent English proficient who are from low SES (*The ameliorating effects of high socioeconomic status: A secondary analysis*).

There has been a huge backlash in this country against bilingual education. A common sentiment about it has been that if a person lives in America they should speak English and bilingual education does not teach them to do that. Krashen, one of the foremost authorities in this field stated, “We need to better get out the message that bilingual educators are deeply concerned about English language development and that properly organized bilingual education programs are very helpful for English language development” (*Bilingual education works*). According to a vast amount of research in this area, education in the primary language helps secondary language development because it provides students knowledge in the various content areas and helps them develop literacy in the primary language, which is a short cut to literacy in the secondary language. It takes about two years for a student to be able to speak English but four to five years to have the language for academic literacy. The primary goal of bilingual education has been and continues to be to provide the skills for students to become proficient in English and have the appropriate grade/content skills and literacy.

There is no one program that will meet the needs of all of the ELL’s. When a program is decided upon and implemented, it should be able to meet the needs of the given student population. Prior to program implementation, the following should be examined and explored:

1. What are the school’s goals?
2. What are the school’s language acquisition goals?
3. How do the current programs meet the school’s goals?
4. What are available resources?
5. What are the needs and special characteristics of the school’s ELL population?
6. What are some program models and how will they help meet the students’ needs?



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Standard program models:

English Second Language (ESL) is part of every program.

- **Transitional bilingual**

Initially, there is some instruction in the primary language (i.e. reading) but it is phased out quickly and the student is put into an English only setting within two-three years.

- **Developmental bilingual**

Students remain in this program throughout elementary school, where 40% of the instruction is done in the primary language even after students are English proficient.

- **2 way bilingual or dual language 50/50**

Students who speak one foreign language (i.e. Spanish) and native English speakers are in the same class. Some of the content is taught in one language (i.e. Spanish) and other content is taught in English. Reinforcement is done in the student's primary language, only if needed. The goals are for all students to become bilingual and literate in both languages.

- **1 way immersion**

All students speak one foreign language and content is taught in the primary language of the students.

ESL programs:

- **Push In**

ESL teacher goes into mainstream classes and works with ELL students.

- **Self-contained**

Students attend a specific leveled ESL class (i.e. beginning, intermediate, advanced).

- **Resource center**

Students from several classes are brought together for a specific purpose and/or lesson.

- **Sheltered English/Content**

Students take content specific courses taught in English, however, the teacher uses appropriate realia, gestures and visual aids. Students may speak a variety of different languages in this structure.

- **Structured Immersion**

Content is taught using only English, but the teacher knows the students' primary language and only uses it for clarification. Students are usually moved into the traditional English only classrooms within two-three years.

- **Newcomer Center**

Newly arrived immigrants are in a center designed specifically to meet their needs. They get the content and ESL.



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Online Resources:

- Bilingual education works
The author of this article, Krashen, discusses two myths surrounding bilingual education.
http://www.rethinkingschools.org/special_reports/bilingual/Bi152.shtml
- Dual language education: A promising 50-50 model
This is an extensive article on different models of 50-50 bilingual programs.
http://brj.asu.edu/content/vol29_no1/art8.pdf
- Educating English Language Learners: Implementing instructional practices
This is a thorough and comprehensive descriptive book about the variety of programs for ELL students.
http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/nclr/edells_impinstprct.pdf
- English language learners
This article provides an overview of ELL programs.
<http://www2.edweek.org/rc/issues/english-language-learners/>
- English language learners in a comprehensive high school
A study conducted with eight ELL high school students and their experiences of fitting into a comprehensive educational setting are described in this piece.
http://brj.asu.edu/vol30_no2/art4.pdf
- Hispanic high schoolers and mathematics: Follow-up of students who had participated in two-way bilingual elementary programs
This is a description of research on achievement in high school math courses by three groups of students who were in 2 way bilingual programs in elementary school.
http://brj.asu.edu/content/vol29_no1/art10.pdf
- Hispanic students falling through the cracks: High school drop out prevention
In NABE July/August 2005, p. 3
Four reasons that Hispanic students have higher dropout rates are explored in this article.
http://www.nabe.org/publications/magazine/NABENews_July05_FINAL.pdf
- National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs
Home page for this organization complete with resources and information on this topic.
<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/>
- National Association for Bilingual Education
Home page for this association with information on resources, conferences and limited amount of research.



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<http://www.nabe.org/about.html>

- Psychological well-being of adolescent immigrant students: Recommendations for school practice
In NABE magazine January/February 2005 p. 18
This article describes issues that immigrants students face and what schools can do to help them.
http://www.nabe.org/publications/magazine/NABENews_Jan05_FINAL.pdf
- Resources about secondary English language learners bibliography and webliography
An extensive annotated list of resources on ELL.
<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/resabout/ells/biblio/>
- Strategies and resources for mainstream teachers of English language learners
A full explanation of the various ELL and ESL programs are provided along with several schools
specific program descriptions are described in this piece.
<http://www.nwrel.org/request/2003may/ell.pdf>
- Successful bilingual education programs: Development and the dissemination of criteria to identify
promising and exemplary practices in bilingual education at the national level
Characteristics of ten successful bilingual programs are presented in this article.
http://brj.asu.edu/content/vol26_no1/pdf/ar2.pdf
- The ameliorating effects of high socioeconomic status: A secondary analysis
This is a synthesis and analysis of research on the relationship of SES and English to achievement.
http://brj.asu.edu/content/vol29_no1/art10.pdf
- Ten common fallacies about bilingual education
A brief description of ten fallacies about bilingual education is presented in this piece.
<http://www.ericdigests.org/1999-3/ten.htm>
- What is bilingual education?
A brief definition of bilingual education is provided in this article.
<http://www.nabe.org/education/index.html>
- Why bilingual education?
An overview of the key components of effective bilingual programs is briefly described in this piece.
<http://www.ericdigests.org/1997-3/bilingual.html>



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