

Connecticut State Board of Education
Hartford

Position Statement on the Education of Students Who Are English Language Learners

Adopted July 7, 2010

The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that high-quality, comprehensive and effective English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education programs are essential to acquire English language proficiency and academic proficiency for students who are English language learners (ELLs). The Board believes that research-based instructional practices that support ELLs in general education classrooms are essential while they are acquiring English and well after they have exited the intensive programs. Our state, districts and schools are mandated by the United States Civil Rights Act of 1964, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Connecticut Bilingual Statute to ensure that ELLs receive specialized services to meet their language and academic needs. The Board affirms the importance of all students becoming socially and academically prepared to be successful.

ESL programs, taught exclusively in English, strive to help ELLs to acquire a level of English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing that will allow them to master the same content and meet the same academic performance standards expected of students whose first language is English. ESL program models vary among districts. The type of program and amount of services students receive are determined by considering the language proficiency levels of the students. These programs recognize native languages as assets that enrich lives and may be used to support academic instruction. Students must also be given opportunities to interact socially with their English speaking peers in sports, clubs and other school activities. Acceptance within the school community and a climate that promotes social and emotional well-being will enhance the school experience and student learning.

The Connecticut Bilingual Statute requires bilingual education programs to be provided in schools that have 20 or more speakers of the same native language who are identified as ELLs. These programs enable students to become proficient in English and academic content areas through the instructional use of both English and the student's native language. The Board believes that bilingual instruction can provide a foundation to enhance students' native languages and academic achievement while developing proficiency in English. These programs allow students to receive culturally responsive instructional curriculum and pedagogy and to develop English language skills while using their native languages to succeed academically.

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1. "No state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin, by the failure of an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs."-- excerpt from the United States Code § 1703
 2. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) requires that all children, including English language learners (ELLs), reach high standards by demonstrating proficiency in English language arts and mathematics by 2014. Schools and districts must help ELL students, among other subgroups, make continuous progress toward this goal, as measured by performance on state tests, or risk serious consequences.
 3. Bilingual Education Statute: Section 10-17a-j, inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes, <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=321156>

The Board values Connecticut's diverse ethnic and linguistic populations and affirms that our educational system must respect the uniqueness of all students and the languages they speak. In Connecticut, 133 languages are spoken among the thousands of ELLs in our schools. To close the achievement gaps that have historically separated ELLs from native speakers of English, rigorous programs and services must be provided to every student who needs them. ELLs in general education classrooms must receive the differentiated instruction and ongoing support that will enable them to acquire content, academic vocabulary and English language skills simultaneously. A student's level of English language proficiency must be taken into consideration and, when necessary, students will need extended learning time. Despite the exceptional rates at which young students can learn to speak a second language, the rate of acquiring cognitive academic proficiency in reading and writing differs among language learners. All certified and pre-service teachers, administrators and staff need professional development to become more effective when teaching ELLs. Strong partnerships with parents, community organizations, businesses and universities that respect and celebrate cultural and language differences can provide additional support for these students.

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Components of High Quality English as a Second Language (ESL) and Bilingual Education Programs

Guidelines for Policymakers

July 12, 2010

The Connecticut State Board of Education (CSDE) provides the following guidelines to support collaboration among the state's various stakeholders to build high quality, comprehensive, coordinated English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual education for English language learners (ELLs) programming in the state.

Connecticut State Department of Education's Responsibilities:

- assist and support local and regional boards of education to institute high quality ESL and bilingual education programs for identified ELLs from kindergarten through Grade 12 in accordance with federal and state requirement;
- ensure all Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and bilingual education teachers, kindergarten through Grade 12, hold the appropriate certificate for their assignment;
- provide ongoing, systematic, job-embedded ESL professional development opportunities for all Connecticut educators;
- provide guidance to educators in aligning Common Core State Standards with CSDE ELL Frameworks, curriculum models, instructional strategies and sample lesson plans, which clearly identify a comprehensive, aligned progression of key ESL knowledge, concepts and abilities, all Connecticut public school ELL students must attain;
- collect ELL data from districts and report to the federal government per No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act; and
- partner with higher education institutions, businesses and industry to provide programs and services that strengthen reading, writing, listening and speaking for Connecticut's ELL students.

School Districts' Responsibilities Kindergarten - 12:

- implement a plan detailing specific procedures that includes a Home Language Survey to ensure that all students entering the district, whose primary language is other than English, are tested for English language proficiency and language dominance;
- ensure that all ELL students are identified, placed and served in accordance with state and federal requirements;
- provide appropriate planned instructional ESL and/or bilingual education programs for identified students, whose dominant language is not English;
- ensure high-quality instruction and alignment with Common Core State Standards and CSDE ELL Framework in ESL and/or bilingual education programs;
- ensure that all ELL students are taught by certified TESOL and/or bilingual educators;

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- classify and report to the CSDE identified ELL students according to their dominant language, program code and LAS Links scores;
- provide a bilingual education program for eligible students in any public school within a local or regional school district where there are 20 or more eligible students classified as dominant in any one native language other than English per the Bilingual Education Statute;
- assess the linguistic and academic progress of students in ESL and/or bilingual education programs in meeting the state standards and conduct an annual review of program effectiveness;
- provide additional English language support services for ELLs who are not making progress toward meeting the state standards and exit students from ELL status when they meet the state standards;
- develop a partnership between the district and the parents of ELL students that provides for two-way communication that fosters educational support for these students and their parents;
- provide sufficient instructional materials and supporting technology at all grade levels to implement ESL and/or bilingual education programs effectively. Native language materials and resources should be available for bilingual education program students;
- provide administrators, teachers and staff with ongoing research-based professional development including instructional practices for ELLs in second language acquisition, sheltered content instruction and culturally responsive instruction;
- provide Language Transition Support Services (LTSS) to those students who have not met state exit criteria after completing 30 months in a bilingual program (only for districts with bilingual education programs, refer to CSDE *Guidelines for Implementing Language Transition Support Services*);
- ensure that all ELL students are administered the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) Links annually to assess language proficiency and progress in English language acquisition, maintain accurate record keeping and documentation, and report results to the CSDE;
- ensure that all ELL high school students have access to advanced ESL and content area courses adjusting instruction according to the ELL student's English language acquisition level and provide them the opportunities to interact with college-level curriculum; and
- submit the Title III Annual Evaluation Report (*Title III districts only*) and the Bilingual Program Annual Evaluation Report (*Districts with Bilingual Education Programs only*) to the CSDE.

Schools' Responsibilities

Administrators' Responsibilities:

- ensure that all students entering the school whose primary home language is a language other than English are tested for English language proficiency and language dominance and are placed accordingly;
- implement and provide appropriate planned instructional ESL and/or bilingual education program for identified students whose dominant language is not English per federal and state requirements;

- provide time for TESOL and/or bilingual teachers and general education teachers to evaluate, analyze and use resulting data to inform instruction for ELLs;
- ensure that all ELL students are administered the LAS Links to assess language proficiency and progress in English language acquisition and provide time and appropriate space for TESOL and/or bilingual teachers to administer yearly LAS Links to all ELLs, in accordance with federal and state requirements;
- implement a system of support for all ELL students that includes supplemental and intensive ESL interventions;
- develop a partnership between the district and the parents of ELL students that provides for two-way communication that fosters educational support for these students and their parents;
- implement LTSS for those ELL students who completed 30 months in a mandated bilingual education program and did not meet state standards. (For districts with Bilingual Education Programs only refer to the CSDE *Guidelines for Implementing Language Transition Support Services*);
- plan and implement high quality professional development programs on second language acquisition research and effective strategies that will enable teachers to plan purposefully so all ELL students achieve high standards of learning and development;
- encourage parent and community participation in cultural, academic and other school events during and beyond the school day to promote the importance of recognizing the value of students' culture and language; and
- ensure that all ELL high school students have access to advanced ESL and content area courses adjusting instruction according to the ELL student's English language acquisition level.

Teachers/Staff's Responsibilities

English as a Second Language Teachers' Responsibilities:

- provide ESL instruction to ELL students. The ELL teacher also shares responsibility with general education teachers for ensuring that the ELL students receive content instruction with modifications while learning English;
- align Common Core State Standards with *CSDE ELL Framework*, K-12;
- provide frequent and varied opportunities for ELL students to have extended interaction with teachers and peers to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing;
- meet the needs of each ELL student according to level of English language proficiency using modifications for ELLs, to support learning the English language as well as mastering content in all academic areas;
- foster more systematic and appropriate use of technological tools to enhance ESL and content area language instruction for ELL students;
- provide ongoing support and time to meet regularly with general education teachers to develop modified content area strategies to help ensure the linguistic and academic success of ELL students enrolled in their classes;
- serve as a liaison with the parents/guardians of ELL students, their community and the school; and
- administer LAS Links annually to assess language proficiency and progress in English language acquisition of ELL students.

Bilingual Teachers' Responsibilities:

- assume the primary responsibility for the instruction of ELL students in the class, in partnership with the TESOL and other resource staff;
- teach ESL skills embedded in the content area with appropriate modifications for ELL students aligning content with CSDE ELL Frameworks;
- align Common Core State Standards with *CSDE ELL Framework*, K-12;
- plan and implement lessons for each content area, either using the student's native language and/or sheltered instruction strategies according to the level of English language proficiency of ELL students in the class;
- provide ongoing support to the ESL and/or general education teachers and collaborate to develop strategies to help ensure the academic success of ELL students;
- foster more systematic and appropriate use of technological tools to enhance ESL and content area language instruction for ELL students;
- provide frequent and varied opportunities for ELL students to have extended interaction with teachers and peers to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing, in their native language where applicable, and/or in English;
- utilize staff development opportunities to increase understanding of ELL students' needs and provide updates in effective second language acquisition strategies;
- provide families with orientation and information about program choices and students' progress in English and content areas;
- engage and support ELL students' families in fostering students English language development and seek input from families to make meaningful connections to students' lives;
- encourage parents to read to their children in English or in their native language, to develop comprehension skills and provide a literacy-rich environment; and
- administer LAS Links annually to assess language proficiency and progress in English language acquisition.

General Education Teachers with ELL Students Responsibilities:

- assume the primary responsibility for the instruction of the ELL students in the class, in partnership with the TESOL and other resource staff;
- align Common Core State Standards with *CSDE ELL Framework*, K-12;
- plan and implement lessons for each content area using sheltered instruction strategies according to the level of English language proficiency of ELL students in the class;
- provide ongoing support to the ESL teacher and together, collaborate to develop strategies to help ensure academic success in making content areas comprehensible for all ELL students in their class;
- teach ESL skills embedded in the content area with appropriate modifications for ELL students aligning content with CSDE ELL Frameworks;
- utilize staff development opportunities to increase understanding of ELL students' needs and to learn effective second language acquisition strategies;
- modify tests and assignments giving consideration to the student's level of English language proficiency;

- recognize that students exhibit varying levels of readiness based on age, home environment and experiences;
- set high expectations for all ELL students to ensure earlier and more equitable opportunities to learn to speak, read and write English through extended interactions with teachers and peers;
- encourage parents to read to their children in English or in their native language, where applicable, to develop comprehension skills and provide a literacy-rich environment; and
- value and understand the cultural background of the ELL students and families to make them feel more connected to their classroom and engage families in fostering students English language development.

Higher Education Responsibilities:

- ensure general education teachers are provided with course work in ESL acquisition and culturally responsive instructional practices;
- research and develop programs to increase the number of candidates for TESOL and bilingual education teacher certifications and provide pre-service teachers with rigorous coursework in ESL and literacy across the content areas;
- partner with CSDE and school districts in providing professional development in research-based strategies for second language acquisition;
- provide rigorous ESL and bilingual teacher education programs, linked to national and state standards, with depth and breadth of scientifically-based content and pedagogy, including cultural diversity and cognitive learning style theory and research; and
- develop ongoing, systematic partnerships with schools to support and enhance the ESL and bilingual education programming.

Family and Community Responsibilities:

- stimulate student's oral language skills by involving them in language-rich activities in English or in their native language, where applicable, (e.g., conversations, songs, stories, responding to questions);
- encourage student's interest in language by engaging them in speaking about what they are learning at school and how it relates to daily life, especially promoting listening, speaking, reading and writing;
- use community resources to support student's literacy development; and
- work with teachers to support student's literacy learning in ESL and across content areas.

ELL Students Responsibilities:

- utilize all opportunities to learn and practice English while maintaining their native language;
- work diligently to increase English language skills and apply to academic content areas; and
- seek additional help and support from teachers and parents to ensure linguistic and academic success.