SETTING UP LANGUAGE TRANSITION SUPPORT SERVICES

Before deciding on the types of LTSS that should be provided, several factors need to be considered:

- Students in need of LTSS have had 30 months of English language development and content-area instruction even though they did not meet the English mastery standard on the annual assessment.
- Students are still in the process of acquiring English, especially for academic content-learning purposes.
- The aim of LTSS is to *continue* the students' achievement so that they will eventually meet the standard and be able to function successfully in mainstream classes.
- LTSS will have to provide enriched instruction that will accelerate the students' learning.
- The first step is to determine the progress that each student has made in the previous 30 months; that is, what each student knows and can do with respect to the use of English and content-area achievement.
- The second step is to continue their English language development and content learning in ways that are challenging and that will also allow them to experience success while achieving to the same standards as other students.
- Lastly, a word of caution: LTSS students must be given what they need, but must not be isolated from the rest of the student body. There may be times during the day when they will be placed in groups, e.g., ESL classes, but they should be integrated with other students for most of their day and such integration should increase as they advance.

Sheltered content instruction approach. To make continued progress possible, all teachers providing instruction for students in LTSS must make the following types of modifications, as needed:

- Teach the various content areas (math, social studies, science, language arts) using a spoken and written English that is understandable to the students. This is done on the one hand by modifications such as speaking a little more slowly, pausing, emphasizing key words and using a simplified vocabulary and shorter sentences. On the other hand, by using ample clues to the meaning of what is being said or read in English, including the use of visuals (objects, pictures, graphic organizers), body language, hands-on activities, and text that is illustrated and that employs headings and subheadings that make main ideas stand out.
- Teach and model the academic English that emerges in each lesson, e.g., teaching the meaning of math terms such as *addition, plus, minus, sum, remainder*.
- Point out and model the characteristics of academic discourse in English, such as the "if...then" types of sentences commonly found in mathematics and science; or the "first...then...then" types of sequences found in content-area texts;
- Assist students with the literacy demands of each content area, for example, by reading certain texts aloud, interpreting a given written passage along with students,

writing out the answers to several questions before asking the students to do so, and providing students with texts and books with "accessible" content.

- Provide students with training and practice in the use of learning strategies such as previewing what they are going to read by looking at chapter and section headings; consulting dictionaries, glossaries and encyclopedias; using mental or actual images to help in comprehension or memory; and using questions to get clarification or more information.

All of these types of modifications or techniques taken together are referred to as **sheltered content instruction.** They are intended to make content-area instruction in English understandable and achievement possible for ELLs. Many educators might simply characterize these modifications as components of good teaching.

The point here is that for LTSS to continue, accelerate and build upon the progress that students made during their 30 months in the bilingual education program, it is important that the types of modifications described here be provided as needed. Both what is taught (the content) and how it is taught (the method and format) are equally essential considerations for LTSS and for any context in which ELLs are given instruction. Naturally, as students advance over time, the need for such modifications will decrease.

For all of these reasons, is it important that the **availability of LTSS be ensured** for students who need them. Therefore, in cases in which such students are transferred to schools that do not have formal LTSS available to them, they nevertheless should be provided with the services that are part of LTSS that will address their learning and instructional needs.

The remainder of this section will provide guidelines for the following components of LTSS:

- kinds of language transition support services that should be provided;
- identification of key personnel for the districtwide and school-based LTSS teams; and
- a process for determining LTSS on an individual student basis.

Kinds Of Language Transition Support Services That Should Be Provided

In teaching, LTSS consist of what students receiving these services need to know and be able to do using a variety or combination of formats that will facilitate learning. Districts will find considerable variation in the prior achievement of individual students. Decision makers and teaching staff members should exercise great flexibility in designing effective LTSS and consider multiple factors in addition to students' prior learning. These include the student's grade level, the availability of resources and staff expertise in educating ELLs.[21] In this section, LTSS will be described in terms of what needs to be taught (content) and the formats (instructional arrangements and approaches) that will facilitate student achievement.

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[21] For an in-depth discussion of these factors and ways of addressing them programmatically, see Becker, H. (2001). *Teaching ESL K-12: Views from the Classroom.* Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle, chapters 2-4.

What needs to be taught? To provide enriched learning experiences at the elementary, middle and high school levels, LTSS should include, but not be limited to, the following areas according to student need. In addition, these areas should be aligned with the school district's curriculum:

- oral English proficiency for purposes of engaging in higher-order discourse and discussion;
- literacy and proficiency in English, including listening, speaking, reading and writing;
- literacy in all content areas, including acquisition of academic English;
- achievement of grade-level competencies in each content area; and
- competence in the application of effective learning strategies.[22]

Not all LTSS students will need instruction in all of these areas in the same amounts. For example, some students will exhibit well-developed English proficiency and literacy skills. However, they will need to spend most of their time in content classes in which the teacher makes the necessary modifications, including the teaching of the academic language and discourse that appears in the content lessons. Other students will be able to understand and discuss grade-level content well, but will experience difficulty in reading the textbooks or in completing written assignments. Such students may need further literacy development in ESL classes or with reading teachers and specialists in addition to literacy assistance in the content-area classroom. Other students may have well-developed language and content skills but struggle with new content because of poor study and learning skills. Such students may need training in learning strategies within the content classroom and/or with the help of reading and math teachers/specialists.

Instructional formats. A given student may need the benefit of several teaching formats in order to profit from instruction and to make adequate progress. In choosing which combinations of formats to use, it will be important for decision makers and teachers to integrate LTSS students with other students for the greater part of the school day, yet still provide the modifications they need.

For example, **high school LTSS students** could take several subjects (e.g., math and science) in mainstream classes with teachers who use sheltered content strategies to facilitate their learning; attend regular physical education classes; receive reading support in a small class along with native English-speaking students; be grouped in a sheltered social studies class for ELLs only; and attend an English literature class with native English speakers that is co-taught by a mainstream and ESL teacher. On the other hand, it would **not** be good practice to group LTSS students into separate sheltered content classes or periods all day, every day, at any grade level.

The following list of instructional formats is not exhaustive, but does include several of the arrangements and approaches that have facilitated learning for ELLs. Staff members undoubtedly will propose the use of other formats that are beneficial for ELLs, such as

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[22] These are "techniques used by effective learners to help them learn more expediently," such as "self-monitoring and asking questions for clarification." See Becker, H. (2001). *Teaching ESL K-12: Views from the Classroom.* Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle, pp. 13-16.

cooperative learning, or recommend that certain formats or approaches be combined. Technology, for example, can be infused in most of the formats listed below:

- sheltered content class periods organized for ELLs in specific content areas;
- content-area study in the mainstream with sheltered content teaching strategies used for the benefit of ELLs;
- participation in mainstream classes for subjects in which an ELL can succeed without modifications;[23]
- classes for continued English language development, including ESL classes;
- co-teaching by the bilingual/ESL education teachers with mainstream teachers;
- reading/language arts support (e.g., a reading specialist or special materials);
- mathematics/numeracy support (e.g., a math specialist or math resource sessions);
- enhanced academic instruction, including, but not limited to, science and language laboratories, computers and other technology that can enhance instruction; and
- all other services and educational programs offered in the mainstream program, e.g., talented and gifted classes, and guidance and library services.

Some of the instructional formats that may be adopted will differ more than others in how they are implemented at the elementary, middle and high school levels. In contrast to the example for high school LTSS students given on page 9, a **fourth grade mainstream teacher** may have a class of 25 students in which 10 qualify for LTSS. When it comes time to teach math, he or she uses no modifications because the ELLs do not seem to need them. When social studies is taught, the teacher uses sheltered strategies to present materials. These strategies may include visuals, previewing the main ideas, checking out prior knowledge, and reviewing and teaching important vocabulary words that will be used in the lesson. The teacher may choose to use these techniques with the whole class, not just the ELLs, when social studies is taught or co-teach social studies lessons with the ESL or bilingual education teacher. For one of the class periods, the ESL and bilingual education teachers may provide a science lesson using sheltered teaching strategies for the LTSS students.

LTSS Districtwide Team

School districts should assemble a districtwide, broad-based team of professionals, including administrators and teachers, that understand second-language acquisition and its implications for teaching ELLs in the mainstream setting. Such a team is needed to organize and oversee the provision of LTSS in the district. It may include, but not be limited to, one or more individuals who serve in the following roles:

- bilingual/ESL education program directors/supervisors;
- principals or their designees;
- bilingual/ESL curriculum specialists;
- bilingual/ESL education teachers;

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[23] Such placement decisions must be made on an individual student basis relative to a specific content area; e.g., a given student may need sheltered content instruction in social studies but may function very well in a math class in which the teacher uses no sheltered content teaching strategies.

- reading/math specialists;
- mainstream classroom teachers; and
- guidance counselors.

Since bilingual education program administrators are required to organize, monitor, oversee and report to the State Department of Education (SDE) on all students who have not met the state English mastery standard, it is important that they take a leadership role in all aspects of the implementation of LTSS. As such, it would be prudent to have them serve as co-chairpersons of the districtwide LTSS team.

Responsibilities of the LTSS districtwide team would include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- designing ongoing in-service training that LTSS instructional staff members will need for effective implementation of LTSS;
- reviewing districtwide data annually for all students and for those receiving LTSS to determine whether the achievement gap is closing;
- monitoring the effectiveness of LTSS on a districtwide basis and recommending modifications based on the analysis of student data;
- reviewing the individual student placement process as needed;
- providing technical assistance and support to LTSS school-based teams; and
- coordinating and meeting with LTSS school-based teams periodically.

It is recommended that the bilingual education director, or another representative of the LTSS districtwide team, serve on each school-based team. If not, he or she should be available to school-based teams on an as-needed basis.

LTSS School-Based Teams

School districts also should establish school-based teams to monitor the progress of students and the effectiveness of LTSS at the school level. Such teams may include, but not be limited to, one or more individuals who serve in the following roles:

- principal or his or her designee;
- bilingual education, ESL and mainstream teachers;
- reading and math specialists; and
- other school-based specialists, as appropriate.

For purposes of support and coordination, the LTSS school-based teams also should include in its meetings the bilingual education director or other districtwide representative of LTSS. *To avoid duplication and overburdening, LTSS school-based teams should be integrated into the school's current meeting or team structure. For example, LTSS school-based team members could become part of existing grade-level teams.*

Responsibilities of school-based LTSS teams would include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- analyzing the progress and achievement levels of LTSS students in comparison to school and district student outcomes;
- determining individual student learning needs and programs;
- appropriately placing students in LTSS;
- monitoring and reviewing individual student progress;
- recommending needed changes in individual student learning programs; and
- reviewing and recommending needed changes in LTSS at the school level.

LTSS school-based teams should meet at least annually to place entering students who qualify into LTSS. They should meet periodically to review student progress and recommend changes in individual learning programs.

Process For Determining Services For Individual Students

Student Data Analysis. Determining individual learning needs is a prerequisite for matching students to appropriate instructional services. To do so, the following types of student data should be collected and analyzed by the LTSS school-based team and shared with the teaching staff:

- annual assessment data, including scores for the Language Assessment Scales (LAS), Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT);
- records of student attendance, mobility, health, etc.;
- records of schooling in the previous 30 months in bilingual education or bilingual special education program, including overall progress in native and English language development; development of general English literacy and content-area literacy and comprehension; and content mastery through the native language and English;
- reading level as determined by such instruments as the DRA, Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), Individual Reading Inventory (IRI) and others;
- mathematics level;
- teacher comments on student performance; and
- other relevant information.

Determining Learning Needs and Monitoring Student Progress. As mentioned previously, the purpose of LTSS is to enable students to meet the English mastery standard on the annual assessment and to function successfully in the mainstream classroom. To do so, LTSS need to *enrich* and *accelerate* student learning.

Therefore, it is necessary to seek a balance between what students know and can do upon entering LTSS and the further learning that must take place. In an environment that aims to enrich and accelerate learning, students must be challenged without being frustrated and experience success rather than failure. This means that learning experiences must build on observed strengths and not attempt "to make one size fit all." Consequently, the following

factors must be considered when matching student needs to LTSS, recommending services on an individual student basis, and determining whether sufficient progress is being made toward attaining LTSS goals:

- Some older students enter the school system with limited formal schooling.
- As students advance in grade level, the academic and linguistic demands placed on them also increase, and the achievement gap commonly widens.
- Low-level literacy in the native language and a 20 percent mobility factor are commonly found among ELLs.
- Language skills transfer from the native to the second language and students with high fluency in the native language usually acquire English skills at a much faster rate.
- Elementary-level students can be very verbal in conversational English but may have a difficult time with the academic language; for this reason, they may not process effectively the specific language used in content-area classes taught in English.
- Middle and high school students may encounter the same difficulties. Additionally, their content-area demands are much greater.
- Collaboration and planning among teachers enhance student progress.

LTSS have been characterized as a **bridge** to the mainstream program for students leaving a bilingual education program. Also emphasized has been the need for such services to enrich and accelerate student learning in a balanced way. This is so for two reasons. One is that students receiving LTSS face increasing linguistic and academic demands as they advance in grade level. The other is that they will be expected to achieve to the same standards as all other students.

Since ELLs must leave the bilingual education program after 30 months, the responsibility of mainstream teachers for educating them effectively will increase significantly. Therefore, it is critical that mainstream teachers be provided with long-term professional development, administrative supports and resources over time, and with ample opportunities to collaborate and co-teach with bilingual education and ESL teachers. The remainder of these guidelines will address these issues.