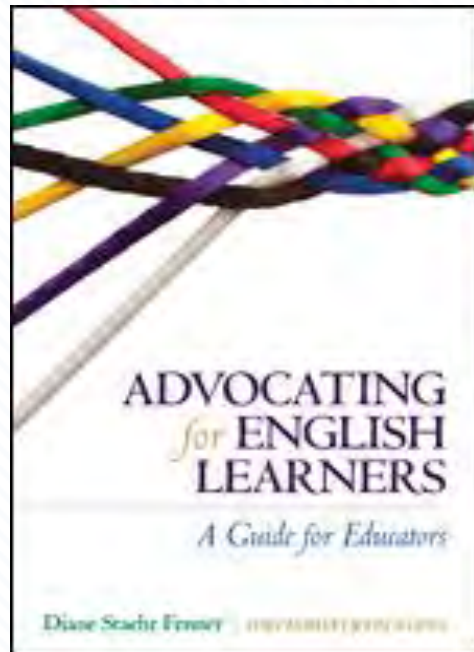# Advocacy for English Learners: An Overview

Diane Staehr Fenner, Ph.D. | 9.26.13

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Advocating for English Learners

1. Need for Advocacy
2. Creating a Shared Sense of Responsibility
3. How Teachers Can Collaborate
4. Advocacy Overview for Administrators
5. Increasing EL Families' Involvement as Advocates
6. Advocacy Through Effective Instruction
7. Advocating for ELs in Assessment
8. Advocacy for ELs' Success Beyond Grade 12

Overview

- Why advocate for English learners: Urgency

- Defining advocacy

- Sharing the responsibility and joy

- Advocacy for administrators

- Framework for equitable EL instruction

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WHY ADVOCATE FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS: URGENCY
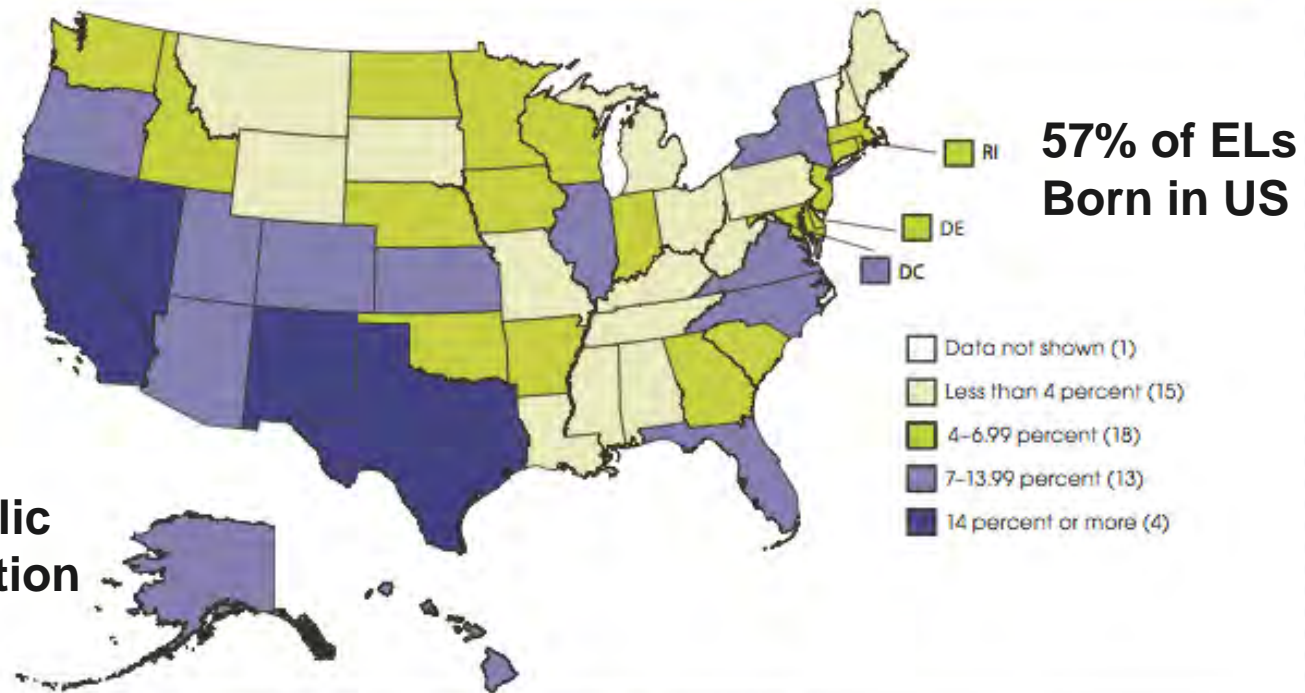
My Entrance into Advocacy

EL Demographics

Figure 8-1. Percentage of public school students who are English language learners (ELLs), by state: School year 2009–10

52% ages 5-9
24% ages 10-13
24% ages 14-17

57% of ELs Born in US

Approximately 10% of US Public School Population

RI
DE
DC

Data not shown (1)
Less than 4 percent (15)
4–6.99 percent (18)
7–13.99 percent (13)
14 percent or more (4)

NOTE: For more information on the Common Core of Data, please see Appendix B – *Guide to Sources*.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 2000–01 (version 1a), 2005–06 (version 1a), 2008–09 (version 1a), and 2009–10 (version 1a).

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EL Research

- EL/non-EL achievement gap

- EL graduation rates

- ELs' attainment of postsecondary degrees

- Teacher & administrator preparation to work with ELs

EL Advocacy Issues

- EL parents' voice

- EL deficit paradigm

- Common Core

- Assessment

- Teacher Evaluation

- Immigration

- Federal & state compliance

TESOL and NBPTS Standards

TESOL P-12 Professional Teaching Standards

Candidates take advantage of professional growth opportunities and demonstrate the ability to build partnerships with colleagues and students' families, serve as community resources, and advocate for ELLs

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards' English as a New Language Standards

Accomplished teachers of English language learners contribute to the professional learning of their colleagues and the advancement of knowledge in their field in order to advocate for their students.

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NEA and Advocacy

- EL Advocacy Summit
- EL Advocacy Summit report
- EL Advocacy manual
- EL Advocacy professional development

ESL Teachers' Quotes

- I'm the biggest supporter of ELs' education in my school. My advocacy for them sometimes gets me in trouble; administration gets tired of hearing me.

- I help ELs navigate the school environment.

- I am the advocate who goes to bat for the ELs with their content teachers.

- I am the anchor for my ELs.
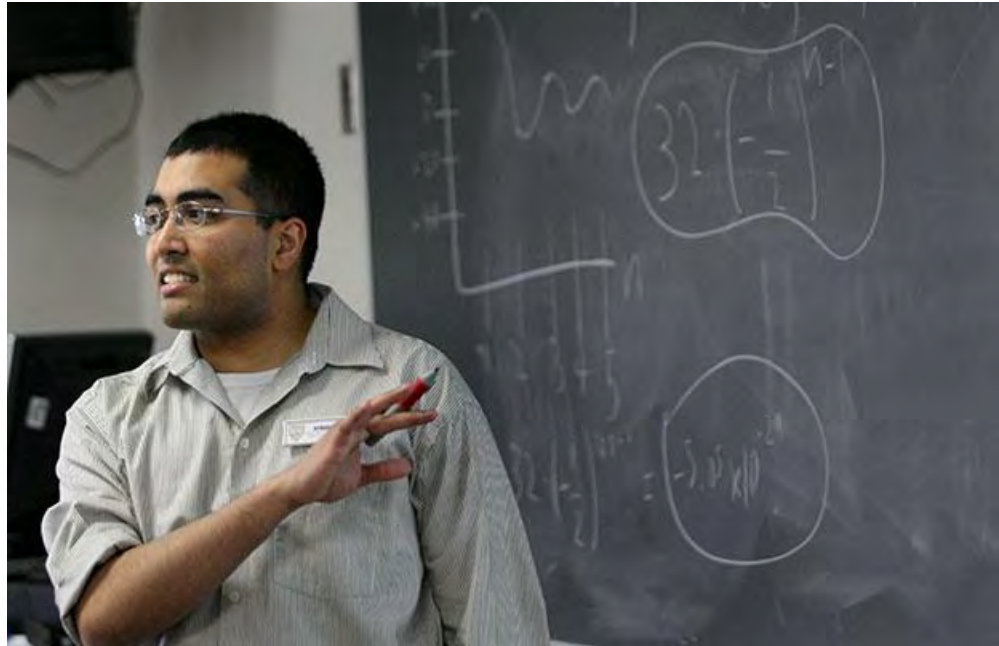
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DEFINING ADVOCACY

Definitions

- Advocacy

  - Comes from the Latin *advocatus*, meaning "one called to aid"

  - Speaking or acting on behalf of another

- Cognates: *abogado, advogado, avocet*

My EL Advocacy Definition

- Working for ELs' equitable and excellent education by taking appropriate actions on their behalf

- Stepping in and providing a voice for those students—and their families—who have not yet developed their own strong voice in their education

- Knowing about each EL students' and families' backgrounds to be able to know which appropriate action to take on each person's behalf

Scaffolded Advocacy

- Advocacy needed dependent upon ELs' background variables
- Gradually removing advocacy support
- Goals - all educators advocate for ELs
- ELs & families learn to advocate for themselves

Scaffolded Advocacy

EL and Family Needs

Amount of Advocacy
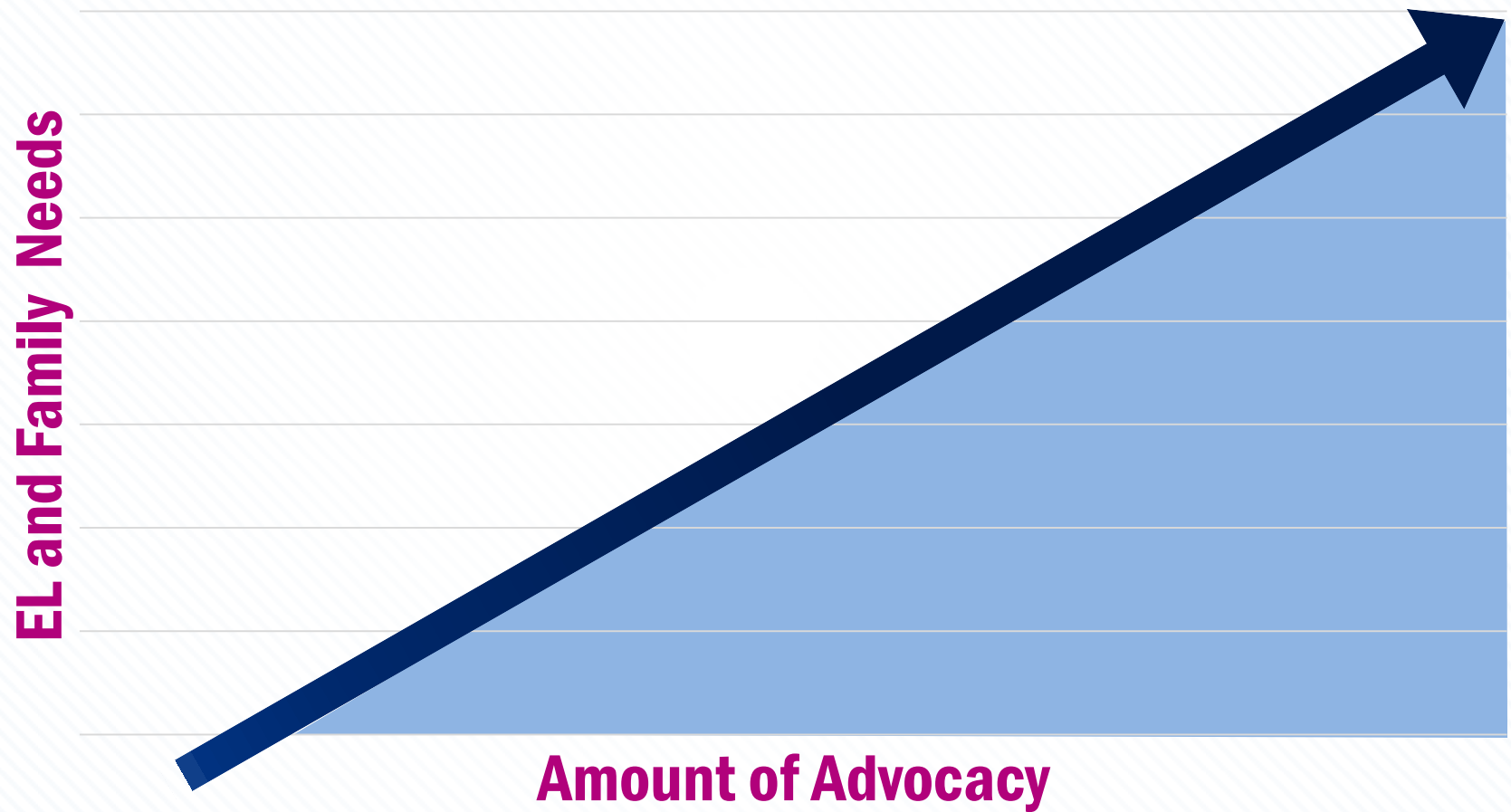
ELs Who Require More Advocacy

- Lower levels of English language proficiency

- Newly arrived

- Lower socioeconomic groups

- Low rates of EL achievement and/or graduation

- Families unfamiliar with their children's educational rights and community resources

- Families with interrupted educational backgrounds

- Trauma

- Special needs

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SHARING THE RESPONSIBILITY AND JOY

Creating a Shared Sense of Responsibility

- Mind-set:
  - all educators as equal stakeholders
  - must strive to positively influence the education of ELs in the classroom and outside of school
- My kids vs. your kids
- Asset paradigm
- Common Core State Standards
- Role of ESL/bilingual teacher

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Sharing Responsibility

Educators' beliefs and expectations about language and working with ELs

Educators' reflection on their own culture and its impact on their teaching

Sharing responsibility for ELs' education

Collaboration among ESL teachers, content teachers, and administrators

Empathy for ELs and their families

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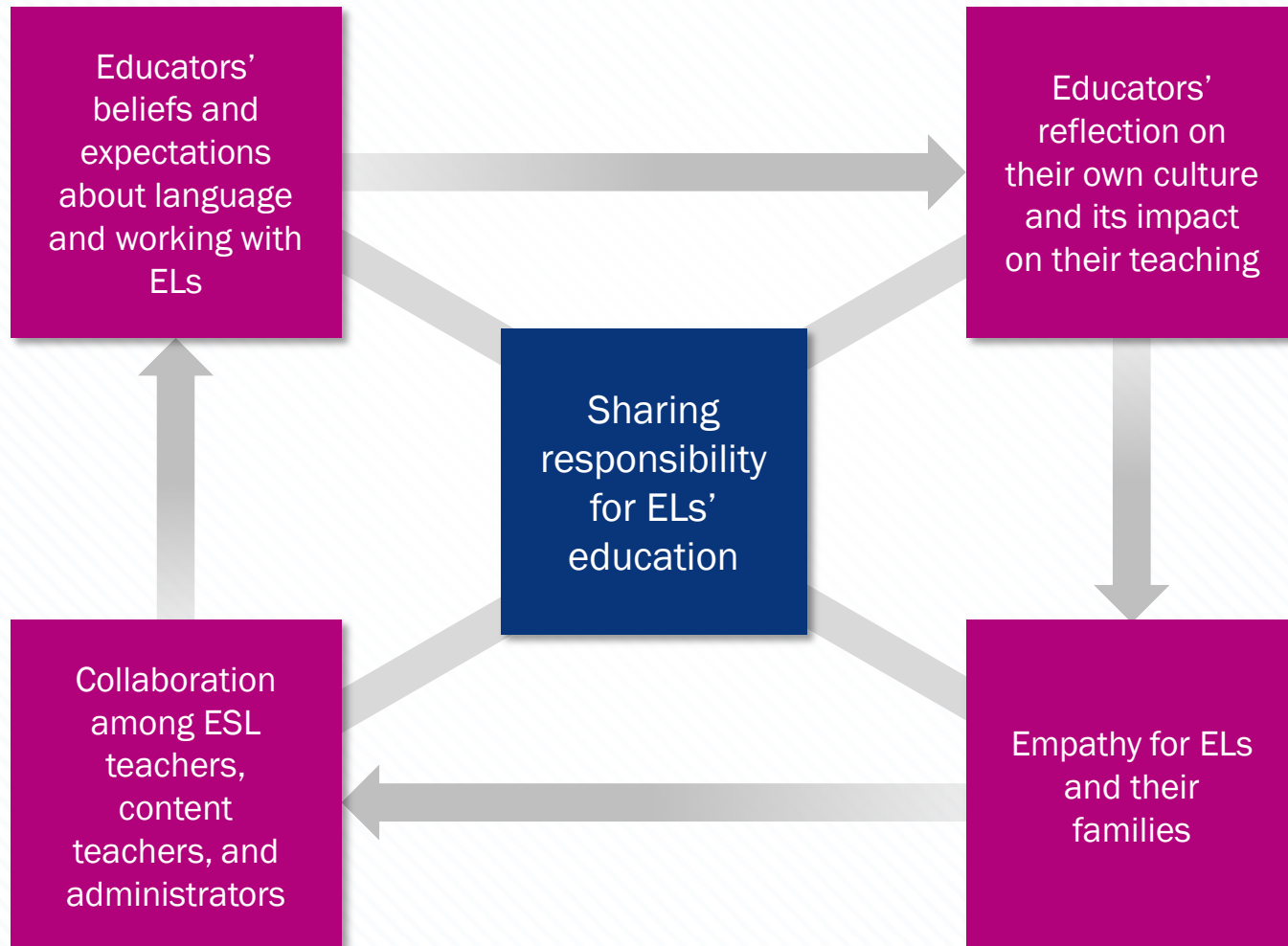
Ahmed

Mojtaba

Fill Out This Form as Ahmed and/or Mojtaba

Collaboration for EL Achievement

Advocacy

ESL Teacher

Collaboration

Sphere of Influence

- What do I have control over in my environment?

- What do I not have control over in my environment?

Gorski, P. (2012)

Advocacy Ripple Effect

Group of teachers advocating for ELs in the district

Group of teachers advocating for ELs in the school

Same teacher advocating for ELs and teachers outside his or her classroom

One teacher advocating for ELs in his or her classroom

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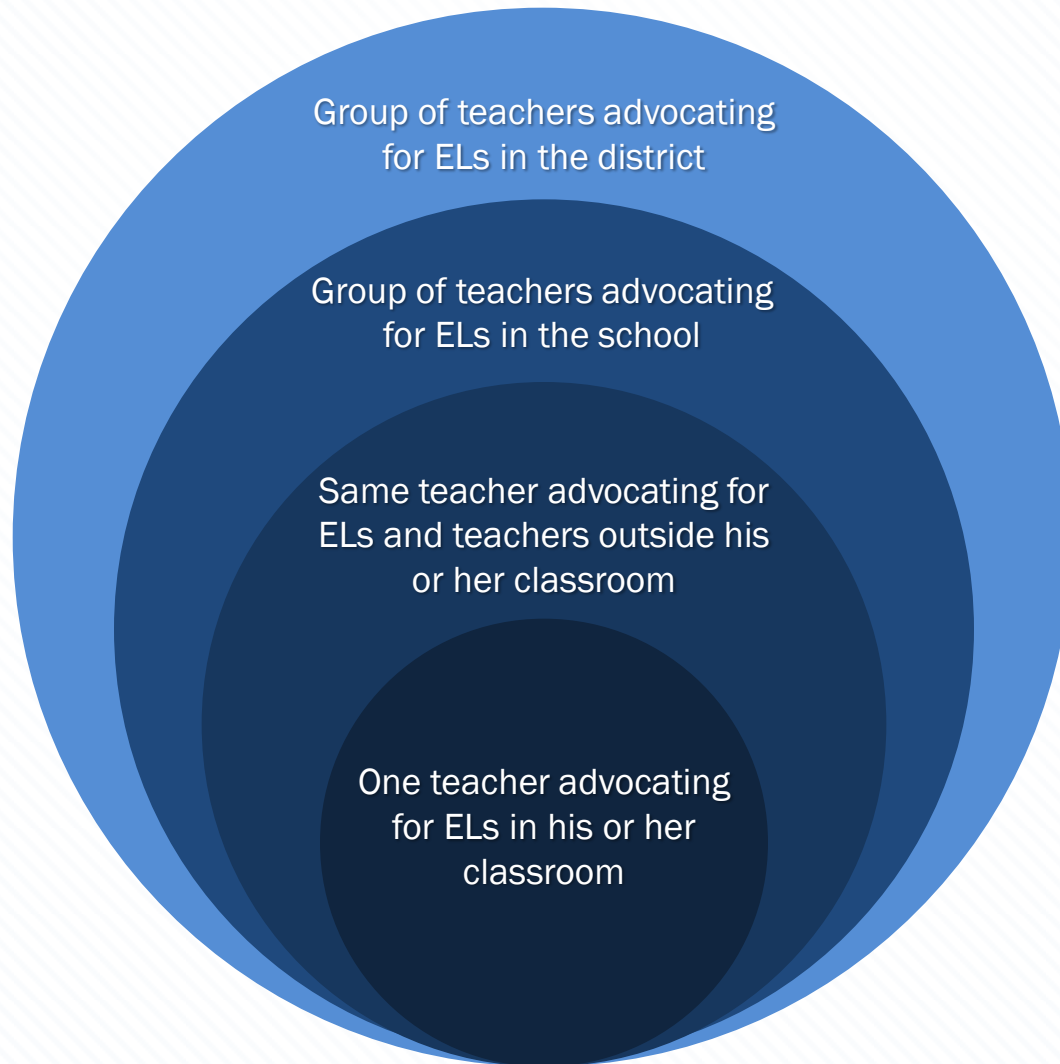
Building on Soft Skills

- Respect content / general education teachers' expertise

- Use PR skills to model respect for ELs

- Showcase EL student achievement

- Begin slowly and "gently"

- Demonstrate empathy first

- Offer support

Role of the ESL Teacher as Advocate in CCSS

1. What are ESL teachers' current roles in implementing the CCSS for ELs?

2. What should ESL teachers' most effective roles be so that ELs achieve with the CCSS?

3. What are the most promising strategies to support ESL teachers as they teach the CCSS?

TESOL International Association (2013). Implementing the Common Core State Standards for English Learners: The Changing Role of the ESL Teacher

ESL Teachers' Current Roles

- Varying roles and status of ESL teachers

- Lack of recognition and uniformity in TESOL field

- Content area teacher preparation

- ESL teachers' degree of involvement in policy

- Importance of academic language

- Expertise of ESL educators

TESOL International Association (2013). Implementing the Common Core State Standards for English Learners: The Changing Role of the ESL Teacher

A Vision for ESL Teachers' Most Effective Roles

- Need to redefine ESL teachers' roles

- ESL teachers as experts, advocates, and consultants

- Role of the principal or administrator

TESOL International Association (2013). Implementing the Common Core State Standards for English Learners: The Changing Role of the ESL Teacher

EL ADVOCACY FOR ADMINISTRATORS

EL Advocacy Through Teacher Evaluation

Look-fors of effective teaching for ELs adapted from the Danielson Framework (2013)

Effective Teaching of ELs Look-Fors

1: Planning & Preparation (Pre-Conference)

2: Classroom Environment (Pre-Conference)

3: Instruction (Observation)

4: Professional Responsibilities (Post-Conference)

Staehr Fenner, 2013
Adapted from Danielson, 2013

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1: Planning and Preparation (Pre-Observation Conference)

- Articulating an understanding of the federal definition of ELs

- Articulating an understanding ELs' educational rights

- Knowing ELs' home language(s) & levels of ELP

- Articulating an understanding of ELs' cultures and backgrounds

- Articulating ways in which ELs receive instruction in ESL or language support services

- Articulating ELs' desired instructional outcomes based on content standards and ELD standards

1: Planning and Preparation (Pre-Observation Conference)

- Adapting instructional materials for ELs at different levels of ELP; including materials in ELs' home languages if appropriate

- Thoughtfully planned groupings of ELs

- Design of student assessment for ELs based on instructional outcomes, content and ELD standards, and ELP

- Formative assessments that allow ELs to demonstrate what they know and can do in content and language

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2: The Classroom Environment (Pre-Observation Conference)

- Articulating how ELs' culture and previous educational experiences can impact how they interact with students and teachers

- Awareness that appropriate scaffolding needs to be provided in instruction so that ELs can interact with challenging content

- Articulation of high expectations for ELs that demonstrates an understanding of what they can do with language at their English language proficiency level

- Modeling expectations of classroom routines for ELs who are not familiar with cultural expectations

- Understanding how ELs' culture may influence their behavior and conduct

- Explanation of how class physical space impacts ELs' opportunities to participate in the classroom and supports their acquisition of English

3: Instruction (Observation)

- Use of content and academic language objectives (either integrated or separate)

- Use of clear directions presented orally and in writing; use of clear language for directions; checking for ELs' understanding of directions

- Use of visuals, graphic organizers to support ELs at different levels of ELP to engage with challenging content

- Questions (including higher-order questions) scaffolded for ELs at different levels of ELP

- Supports so that ELs can participate in discussions in pairs, small groups, and/or with the entire class

3: Instruction (Observation)

- Appropriate supports so that ELs can explain their thinking

- Grouping of students so that ELs are positioned to interact with others and use academic language

- Use of supplementary materials to support ELs at different levels of ELP

- Performance-based rubrics written in student-friendly language that ELs understand

- Feedback provided to students in a form they understand

- Models of expectations for student work

- Incorporation of ELs' culture, questions, and interests in instruction

4: Professional Responsibilities (Post-Observation Conference)

- Reflections of teaching that include an accurate reflection of the degree of success working with ELs at different levels of ELP

- System for maintaining information on ELs' progress with content and academic language

- Communication with families of ELs in a language they understand

- Use of different modes to communicate with families of ELs according to the family's background (e.g., notes, emails, phone calls, home visits)

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4: Professional Responsibilities (Post-Observation Conference)

- Engagement by families of ELs that allows them to share their language and/or culture

- Attempts to address factors which may impair EL families to participate in school events (e.g., child care, work schedules, language barriers)

- Demonstrating a sense of shared responsibility to teach ELs by sharing EL resources, teaching methods, etc. with colleagues and/or community

- Advocacy for ELs in the classroom and beyond

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ADVOCACY FOR EQUITABLE EL INSTRUCTION

CCSS for ELs Resources @ Colorín Colorado

Common Core for ELLs: Resource Roundup

September 11, 2013 by Diane Staehr Fenner | Edit

With the beginning of the new school year, this week I'll share some recently developed Common Core materials for English language learners that have been updated or that I have recently become aware of. If you know of others or would like to share your feedback on these materials, we'd love to hear from you!

Recommended Resources

☐ **The Northeast Comprehensive Center:** The NCC, in conjunction with the Connecticut Department of Education's Bilingual and English Language Learner Department, developed a series of short videos and resources to support the implementation of the CCSS for ELA/Literacy for ELLs. The video series provides instructional strategies for teachers working with middle school ELLs and focuses in on the topic of Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. The ELL videos contain an introductory module, a video on previewing vocabulary, one on a double entry journal strategy, and a video on informational writing for ELLs. The Northeast Comprehensive Center was formerly called the New England Comprehensive Center.

☐ **New Jersey:** I first mentioned New Jersey's resources for ELLs back in one my first blog posts about a year ago. NJ has developed five model six-week-long ELA units in Kindergarten through 12th grade that include student learning objectives, scaffolding for ELLs, and formative assessments. The state has been updating its resources and is accepting comments on the materials from NJ educators.

Framework for Equitable EL Instruction

Knowing ELs

Planning for Instruction

Designing Effective Instruction

Teaching Academic Language

Creating Content and Language Objectives

Creating Assessment Tools

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EL Background Variables

Background Variable	Student Strengths	Building on Strengths	Challenges	Addressing Challenges
Language(s) spoken				
Proficiency in each language				
Nature of immigration				
Educational background				
Cultural background				
Family situation				
Personal interests				
Resiliency				

Duy Kim

- 8 years old/3rd grade

- Born in US to Vietnamese parents

- Speaks only Vietnamese at home

- Parents read to him in Vietnamese

- Intermediate level of English language proficiency

- Loves going to the library and using computers

- Attends Vietnamese school on Saturdays

Grendy Perez

- 17 years old/9th grade

- Moved from Mexico at age 13

- Attended school in Mexico until 4th grade

- Lives with aunt and uncle in US

- Works in grocery store after school

- Low literacy skills in Spanish

- Beginning level of ELP

- Worries about graduating

Checklist for Equitable EL Instruction

Element of EL Lesson Design	Yes	No	Comments
Have I created content and language objective(s)?			
Have I analyzed the language demands of the text?			
Have I determined ELs' background knowledge of the topic?			
Have I provided scaffolds for ELs to access the text?			
Have I incorporated instruction of each language domain?			
Have I provided frequent opportunities for ELs to interact with each other and the teacher?			
Have I provided support for ELs to use academic language?			
Have I designed a formative assessment?			

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EL Advocacy

Thank you!

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