

# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

*A Presentation of the National Reading  
Technical Assistance Center*



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Anaheim, CA***

# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

Session Outline

- I. Overview of the Study
- II. Context of the Study and Review of Research
- III. Mountain View Elementary School District, El Monte, CA
- IV. Orange County Public Schools, Orlando, FL
- V. Cross-case Findings
- VI. Implications for Practice



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**Section I:  
Overview of the Study**



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Section I: Overview of the Study

- Study Purpose
- What is a *Case Study*?
- Research Questions
- Selection of Districts
- Data Sources
- Focus Group Methodology and Procedures
- Study Limitations



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# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

Study Purpose

- The purpose of the case study was to explore the practices of two Reading First districts in addressing the learning needs of their ELLs
- The researchers set about, to explain or clarify key features of the Reading First program that led to achievement gains for ELLs



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What is a *Case Study*?

Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.

(Stake, 1995)

The general advantage of the case study approach as a form of qualitative research is to get an insider's view of a phenomenon and give voice to participants in that phenomenon.

(Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005)



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Research Questions

- 1) What are the expectations for ELLs as perceived by the district, schools, parents, and community?
- 2) What are the patterns of instruction for ELLs that differ from the English only students (instructional materials, duration of instruction, grouping, and goals)?
- 3) What role does professional development play in preparing teachers to address the needs of ELLs?
- 4) What are the trends of reading achievement in Reading First selected schools with high percentages of ELLs?



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# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

District Selection Criteria

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- Participation in Reading First for  $\geq 4$  years
- At least 3 schools identified as *highly effective implementers* of Reading First
- Demonstrated success in reading (as defined by state standards), particularly for the *English Language Learner (ELL)* population
- Willingness to fully participate in the study



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Data Sources

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- 1) Perception data collected via interviews with district RF directors and focus groups of principals, coaches, teachers, and parents
- 2) Contextual data collected through meetings with district Reading First coordinators
- 3) Primary and secondary source documents made available to the researchers for review
- 4) Brief, informal visits to each school



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Description of Focus Groups

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- District-level staff focus group - representatives of district administration
- Principal focus group - principals of the participating schools
- Reading coach focus group - reading coaches from the participating schools
- Teacher focus group - teachers who taught grades K-3 in the participating schools
- Parent focus groups - volunteer parents from the participating schools. (A translator was provided.)



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## Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

Sample Day 1 Schedule of Focus Groups and School Visits

Time	Event
8:30am – 10:00am	Orientation Meeting with District Reading First Coordinator
10:00am – 11:30am	Conduct Focus Group of District-Level Team
11:45am – 1:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm – 3:00pm	Debriefing
3:00pm – 4:30pm	Conduct Focus Group of Reading First Principals



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Focus Group Questions for Coaches

In order to provide a means of cross-validating the findings, discussion topics were similar across the various focus groups. Please take a moment to peruse Handout 1, *Coach Focus Group Questions*, which has been provided as an example of one of the focus group protocols used.



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Limitations of the Study

- The study used quantitative data only for factoring the selection of the Reading First districts and their schools based up reading achievement data.
- The selection of districts, schools, and focus group participants was not random – the findings may not necessarily be generalizable to other populations
- However, the findings are based upon multiple data sources and a considerable range of perspectives with convergent data



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# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

**Section II:  
Context of the Study and  
Review of Research**



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Context of the Study

- Purpose of Reading First:  
*To ensure that all children in America learn to read well by the end of third grade.*  
(U.S. Department of Education, 2002)
- From 1996 to 2006, the nation's K-12 ELL population rose by over 60 percent while the size of the overall student population remained essentially unchanged.  
(Batalova, Fix, & Murraray, 2006)



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Achievement of ELLs

- The achievement of elementary school ELLs has been unremarkable compared to their English-speaking peers.
- The results of national testing conducted in 2007 show that only 7% of fourth grade ELL students scored at or above the proficient level in reading in English compared with 36% of English speakers  
(NCES, 2007)



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## Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

### What Factors Affect Achievement of ELLs?

- Critical factors studied by researchers that make a significant difference in ELLs' academic performance:
  - Educational history
  - Cultural and social background
  - Length of exposure to the English language
  - Access to appropriate and effective instruction to support second language development

(Francis, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006)



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### Instructional Practices Impacting Achievement of ELLs

- Learning to read in the home language promotes reading achievement in the second language
- What we know about good instruction and curriculum in general holds true for ELLs

(National Literacy Panel, 2006)



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### Instructional Practices Impacting Achievement of ELLs (cont'd)

- *Just like English speakers learning to read in English, ELLs benefit from explicit teaching of the components of literacy, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing*

(Goldenberg, 2008)



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# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

**Section III:  
Mountain View  
Elementary School District  
El Monte, CA**



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Mountain View, CA School District

- Medium sized, K–8 urban district of 8,600 students
- Serves the greater El Monte community in LA County.
- All 10 elementary schools were eligible to participate in RF, of which eight, or 75%, entered the program in 2003–04.
- 99% of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch
- 69% of students are classified as ELLs\*
- 91% of students are classified as Hispanic or Latino
- The district's 8 RF schools outperformed other RF districts' schools in the same cohort, as well as those schools considered to be high implementers



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Mountain View, CA School District:  
Instructional Delivery Model

- Core instruction is delivered in English.
- Whole-group instruction includes both English-speaking students and ELLs.
- Primary language support is often provided as needed
- In addition to the one hour in kindergarten and the two-and-a-half-hour-block of core reading/language arts instruction, ELLs received 30 to 40 minutes daily of English Language Development tailored to their levels of language proficiency.
- Strong emphasis on structured language development.



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## Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

### Turn and Talk

- How do the elements of Mountain View's delivery model compare to yours?
- What is similar--different?



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### Findings: Mountain View School District

1. High expectations are matched with enabling actions.
2. Reading First instructional design serves all students, especially ELLs, well.
3. Special attention is paid to the language needs of ELLs.
4. Common professional development provides coherence and support for district efforts to improve instruction.
5. Data are used for real and constructive instructional purposes.
6. Collaboration among all stakeholders is crucial to meet district and school academic goals.



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### Mountain View Finding #1

1. High expectations are matched with enabling actions

*The district's expectation for the success of English learners is communicated more strongly than ever before, and the supports are also more evident than ever.*

(RF Principal)



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# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

## Finding #1 (cont'd)

- Adequate funds for materials
- Parents and other stakeholders are closely involved
- Districtwide scheduling of ELD time
- Careful monitoring of student progress
- Consistent routines in program and across grade levels
- Explicit instruction in standards-aligned materials with high levels of modeling the learning expectations for students
- Grade-level planning and Professional Learning Communities
- Ownership of the responsibility for all students to meet benchmarks
- Collaboration among district leaders, principals, coaches, and teachers in order to respond appropriately to student needs
- Explicit needs of ELLs are kept front and center at the district and school levels



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## Mountain View Finding #2

2. Reading First instructional design serves all students, especially ELLs, well.

*Seven years ago we were all doing our 'own thing.' We now willingly teach a common core and have common material to plan lessons together.*

(RF Coach)



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## Finding #2 (cont'd)

- Materials adopted in 2002
- Adherence to time allocations and protection of instructional time
- Differentiated instruction
- Competence in using core and ancillary materials
- Collegial development of highly structured lessons



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## Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

### Mountain View Finding #3

#### 3. Special attention is paid to the language needs of ELLs.

- Well-orchestrated lessons focus on oral language production.
- Focus is on sounds and syntax of English as well as vocabulary development.
- Heavy use of visual support, language patterning, choral response, and guided opportunities to produce language and write in English.



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### Finding #3 (cont'd)

- Additional supports are offered, such as before school instruction to pre-teach the week's lessons.
- Components of the core program are used for support – sound spelling cards, ELL handbook.
- Lessons include modeling, graduated levels of practice, and application.
- Strategies are used to scaffold new learning and language
- Instruction is data-driven



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### Mountain View Finding #4

#### 4. Common professional development provides coherence and support for district efforts to improve instruction.

*There's so much to know to teach here. It helps that we have so much in common and can learn from each other.*  
(RF Teacher)

*Our professional development is so much more effective when we learn side-by-side with principals and teachers.*  
(RF Coach)



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## Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

### Finding #4 (cont'd)

- Substantial PD in reading/language arts is closely related to the adopted core program.
- Virtually all teachers and coaches attend annually a 40-hour summer institute on the core program.
- Many participate in follow-up PD
- Most attend PD specific to the needs of ELLs
- Principals and other leads also participate in PD
- District offers support and regular PD



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### Mountain View Finding #5

5. Data are used for real and constructive instructional purposes.

*We now collect less data, but we do something with it.*  
(District Administrator)



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### Finding #5 (cont'd)

- Data is a key feature in the success of ELLs.
- State-level summative assessment results (CST and CELDT) drive policy decisions and are examined to measure growth toward district goals.
- The CELDT data determine the language proficiency levels of ELLs and are part of the criteria for groupings for ELD instruction.
- Curriculum-embedded data are derived from six- to eight-week skills assessments (progress monitoring) aligned to the core program.



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# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners


Mountain View Finding #6

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6. Collaboration among all stakeholders is crucial to meet district and school academic goals.

*Leadership requires participation of more than just administration ... leadership teams and committees are formed to make major decisions and consist of the principal, assistant principals, teachers, community members, and parents.*

(Mountain View District Document)



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Finding #6 (cont'd)

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- Collaboration at all levels is emphasized
- District leaders acknowledge their work in removing silos and improving collaboration.
- District leaders are well known at school sites.
- School walk-throughs with district administrators and principals were cited as ways of keeping in touch with classroom-level efforts.
- The district content literacy expert bridges the district office/coaches, and coaches/teachers.
- Teachers have opportunity to visit other schools



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Summary of Mountain View School District

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1. High expectations are matched with enabling actions.
2. Reading First instructional design serves all students, especially ELLs, well.
3. Special attention is paid to the language needs of ELLs.
4. Common professional development provides coherence and support for district efforts to improve instruction.
5. Data are used for real and constructive instructional purposes.
6. Collaboration among all stakeholders is crucial to meet district and school academic goals.



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## Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

Consider the Comments

- With a partner, look back over the quotes on slides 25, 27, 31, 33, and 35
- Do any of these voices resonate with what you might hear in your district?
- Share your thoughts with colleagues around you



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**Section IV:  
Orange County School District  
Greater Orlando Area, FL**



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Orange County, FL School District

- Very large, K-12 urban district of 175,000 students
- Serves the greater Orlando area in Central Florida
- Of the district's 127 elementary schools, 37 participate in RF initiative, 70% of these entered the program in 2004–05.
- 56% of elementary level students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch
- 30% of elementary level students are classified as ELLs
- 32% of elementary level students are White, 32% Hispanic, and 28% Black
- The district was graded an A district by Florida DOE, 1 of only 3 large districts in Florida
- ELLs outscored the state average on the state reading test (gr. 3-9)



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## Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

### Orange County, FL School District Instructional Delivery Model

- *Sheltered English Classroom*: A class of all ELLs is taught in English by a teacher who does not speak the language(s) of the students.
- *General Education Classroom*: ELLs are taught in a class of ELLs and non-ELLs in English by a teacher who does not speak the language(s) of the English-learning students.



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### Orange County, FL School District Instructional Delivery Model (cont'd)

- *Bilingual Classroom*: Students receive LA instruction in their native language while ESOL time allows for instruction in the second language. As students progress through the grade levels, a greater percentage of instruction in the subject areas occurs in the second language.
  - The *One-Way Developmental Bilingual Program* includes students who are acquiring English as their second language.
  - The *Two-Way Developmental Bilingual Program* includes students who are native speakers of English and students who speak another language. Spanish as a Second Language (SSL) is offered for the native speakers of English.



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### Turn and Talk: Instructional Delivery Models

- How do these delivery models compare to your organizational design for ELL instruction?
- What is the strength of offering distinct models?



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# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

Findings: Orange County School District

1. The district focuses on and supports the individual needs of its RF ELLs.
2. There is an intense focus on data.
3. Staff members receive the necessary PD and support to be confident and competent in literacy instruction.
4. Purposefully chosen instructional materials and resources are provided.
5. Staff members work collaboratively.
6. Instructional time is respected and protected.
7. There is true involvement of parents and the community.



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Orange County Finding #1

1. The district focuses on and supports the individual needs of its RF ELLs.

*At this school, the teachers and principal are attentive to the students. Bilingual education is super because of how it will help the kids in the future. The Bilingual Program gives kids more opportunity when they grow up, and my child is making good progress in it.*

(RF Parent)



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Finding #1 (cont'd)

- Success is viewed as being able to deliver different models of ELL instruction to meet the individual needs of students.
- Emphasis is placed upon fidelity to the chosen model.
- Participants across all of the focus groups expressed enthusiasm with the variety of instructional models available.



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# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners


Orange County Finding #2

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2. There is an intense focus on data.

*Reading First has contributed to an emphasis on consistent, steady growth of students, rather than on absolute level of achievement. We've learned strategies and tools and we understand data and how all children can learn. People really embrace the data.*

(RF Coach)



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Finding #2 (cont'd)

- The core program includes assessments that monitor student progress regularly. These assessments are closely aligned to the instructional program and lessons. Regular review and discussion of student reading assessment data at the school level.
- The district has an easy-to-use system for collecting, reporting, and using data.
- The district's strategic plan, featuring its *Intense Focus on Student Achievement: Eleven Essential Outcomes* emphasizes high achievement for all students.
- All, including students, are aware of the importance of data.



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Orange County Finding #3

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3. Staff members receive the necessary PD and support to be confident and competent in literacy instruction.

*What has been most helpful for me is participating in a lesson study. We will observe other teachers or the coach modeling a lesson, and then we will discuss how it went. It's really helpful to get together with colleagues after the lesson and share ideas. The coach at my school does a great job of facilitating our discussions.*

(RF Teacher)



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## Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

### Finding #3 (cont'd)

- Professional learning is emphasized at all staff levels (Superintendent to paraprofessionals).
- Opportunities are abundant and are delivered in a variety of modes year-round.
- Trend toward increasing Professional Learning Communities and Book Studies.
- Full-time school-based coaches Strong emphasis on instructing ELLs (ESOL for Administrators – intensive week-long course, *Best Practices Presentations*).



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### Orange County Finding #4

4. Purposefully chosen instructional materials and resources are provided.

*Reading First has given us great access to the latest research and materials to affect teacher and student learning. A key component of Reading First is providing whatever resources teachers need, and in terms of classroom libraries and literacy activities, every teacher needs something different for their classroom.*

(Reading First Coach)



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### Finding #4 (cont'd)

- Two well-regarded core reading programs were chosen from a state-approved list. Individual schools chose from the two.
- Strengths of the programs:
  - Comprehensive
  - Available in English and Spanish
  - Have ELL support guide
  - Publisher consultants provide support
  - Offer structure and routine
  - High quality ancillary materials



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# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

Orange County Finding #5


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5. Staff members work collaboratively.

*Teachers trust enough to allow others into their classrooms and they not only accept feedback, they really want feedback on their teaching.*

*I look within my own faculty for knowledge and expertise in certain areas. Teachers model instruction for each other all the time. This builds morale and serves as a means of validating the staff.*

(Reading First Principals)



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Finding #5 (cont'd)

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- Collegial and collaborative relationships are keys to effective ELL instruction.
- Fostered at all levels.
- Coaches are uniquely able to foster these relationships among teachers through PLCs and sharing via the district's intranet website.
- Time is reserved for collaboration.



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Orange County Finding #6

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6. Instructional time is respected and protected.

- District-wide protected 90 minute reading block, plus 30 minute intervention time and additional ESOL time in some cases
- All are aware of its importance
- Additional help is widely available before and after school
- All hands on deck approach to intervention time



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# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

## Orange County Finding #7

7. There is true involvement of parents and the community.

*In recent years, most of my ESOL students come to me reading above grade level. I attribute this to the level of involvement of the parents and their support, as well as all of the opportunities the school offers for adult English language classes.*

(Reading First Teacher)



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## Summary of Orange County District

1. High expectations are matched with enabling actions.
2. Reading First instructional design serves all students, especially ELLs, well.
3. Special attention is paid to the language needs of ELLs.
4. Common professional development provides coherence and support for district efforts to improve instruction.
5. Data are used for real and constructive instructional purposes.
6. Collaboration among all stakeholders is crucial to meet district and school academic goals.



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## Save the Last Word for Me

- Choose one big idea you will take away from this case study.
- Write that idea on the front of your index card.
- Write your rationale for the idea you chose on the back of the card.
- Group with two to three colleagues seated near you.
- Read your idea—elicit comments from each of your colleagues.
- When others have responded, have the last word—share your rationale.
- Continue until each person has had a turn.



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# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

**Section V:  
Cross-Case Findings**



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Cross-Case Findings

- **Overarching Finding:**  
*Priority support is given to instruction based on reading research and delivered through a variety of instructional models, with results of increased achievement for ELLs. Decisions are data driven.*



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Cross-Case Findings (cont'd)

1. District leadership and collaborative school cultures help to drive accountability for ensuring that ELLs achieve.
2. Professional learning and professional development are key to changing classroom practice.
3. A non-negotiable common mission: All students, especially ELLs, can achieve high standards given sufficient time and support.
4. The academic achievement of ELLs is improving incrementally to meet the States' Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) in 2008.



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## Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

### Divergent Ideas—Mixed Messages?

- Consider Handout 2. The table represents just a few of the divergent ideas educators have about educating English Language learners. There are implications for practice rooted in each of these ideas.
- With a partner, discuss how experience with this case study has impacted your thinking on any of these ideas. Has the case study given you any ideas for modifying your own practice?



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### Divergent Ideas—Mixed Messages? Handout 2

Good instruction for any student is good instruction for ELLs	←→	ELLs have special learning needs and require accommodations in their instruction
Primary Language instruction for early literacy is the best approach for ELLs	←→	Instruction should be delivered in English with primary language support if possible
English reading instruction for ELLs should begin as soon as the students enter school	←→	English reading instruction should be delayed until students have reached an intermediate level of English proficiency
ELLs can develop reading competency using the same core materials as English only students	←→	ELLs need materials specifically designed to accommodate their levels of English proficiency



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*Handouts*

# Two Elementary School Districts' Promising Practices for Success with Elementary School English Language Learners

A Presentation of the National Reading Technical Assistance Center

**Presented by:**

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**Presented at:**

U.S. Department of Education Reading Institute  
Anaheim, CA  
July 2010



## Coach Focus Group Questions

### 1. School-Level Efforts for Instructing ELLs

- a. What are some of your success stories about your role as a coach supporting ELLs?
- b. Do you support teachers in ELD as well as in reading? If so, how do you differentiate support?

### 2. District and School Leadership Support for Instructing ELLs

- a. How is your instructional leadership, especially in meeting the needs of ELLs, supported by your district?
- b. What opportunities have you had to build your own knowledge base about best practices in instructing ELLs? Has your own professional learning kept pace with the growing knowledge level of your teachers?
- c. How are district policies communicated to you? To parents?

### 3. Instructional Materials

- a. What are the strengths of your reading program?
- b. How do you support full implementation of the reading program?
- c. Does your school use a supplementary program for English Language development? If so, how was it chosen?
- d. How well do you think the ELD program supports continuous development of English for your students?
- e. How well equipped do you feel in supporting both the reading and the ELD programs?

### 4. Instructional Supports

- a. How do you interact with teachers in collegial groups specific to the instruction of English Language Learners?
  - Grade level meetings
  - Professional learning
  - Study groups
  - Other
- b. What is your perception of the impact collegial interaction has had on the success of ELLs in your school?
- c. How do you feel about your role as a leader and/or member of these groups?

### 5. Student Achievement

- a. What are your expectations for academic success for English Learners in your school?
- b. Have your expectations changed over the last several years? If so, in what ways have they changed?
- c. Is there a structure in place for you to collaborate with the principal specifically around issues of student achievement? If there is, how well is it working?
- d. If you could identify some factors to explain the success of your ELLs, what might they be?

**6. Assessment and Use of Data**

- a. How does your school monitor the success of your ELLs in reading? In ELD?
- b. What is your role in data collection and use?
- c. How do you rate data use as a factor in the success of your ELLs?

**7. Belief and Results Statements**

If you were to make a general statement about how the needs of English Learners are valued and addressed in your school or district, what might it be?

**8. Concluding Statements**

(One last chance to add something not specifically addressed in the other questions)

## Divergent Ideas – Mixed Messages?

Good instruction for any student is good instruction for ELLs



ELLs have special learning needs and require accommodations in their instruction

Primary Language instruction for early literacy is the best approach for ELLs



Instruction should be delivered in English with primary language support if possible

English reading instruction for ELLs should begin as soon as the students enter school



English reading instruction should be delayed until students have reached an intermediate level of English proficiency

ELLs can develop reading competency using the same core materials as English only students



ELLs need materials specifically designed to accommodate their levels of English proficiency

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