



University
of
California

The IES Practice Guide On Effective Literacy Instruction For English Learners: A practitioner perspective

Robin Scarcella, UC Irvine
rcscarce@uci.edu

February 23, 2009
Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast
and Islands (REL-NEI)



University
of
California

Effective Literacy And English Language Instruction For English Learners in the Elementary Grades

**A What Works Clearinghouse Practice
Guide**

Dec. 2007



University
of
California

Authors

Russell Gersten
Scott K. Baker
Timothy Shanahan
Sylvia Linan Thompson
Penny Chiappe
Robin Scarcella

This presentation utilizes the material posted on
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/>

Some Important Background Information

- In general, English learners lag behind their peers in reading.
- Without strong reading skills, English learners will not reach challenging standards.
- Many English learners are not taught to read in English until they can speak in English.





University
of
California

The Good News

English learners *can* learn to read at a rate *comparable to native English speakers*:

- *when* they are given additional instructional supports, and
- *when* they are taught to read, with or without instruction in their first language.

This is what the panelists of the Practice Guide found.

Effective instructional practices make a difference.



University
of
California





University
of
California

The Practice Guide

- The Practice Guide was developed by an expert panel convened by the Institute of Education Sciences.
- It offers a set of five research-based recommendations.
- A summary of the research evidence and a *level of evidence* rating are provided for each recommendation.



University
of
California

The Target Audience



- A broad spectrum of school practitioners such as administrators, curriculum specialists, coaches, staff development specialists and teachers
- District-level administrators who develop practice and policy options for their schools.



University
of
California

Scope of the Practice Guide

Topics:

The topics addressed in the Practice Guide are not the only ones that matter in the teaching of English learners. Sufficient evidence resulted in the panel's recommending the topics.



*University
of
California*

The Recommendations

1. Screen and monitor progress
2. Provide reading interventions
3. Teach vocabulary
4. Develop academic English
5. Schedule peer learning

Screen and monitor progress.

To determine which learners need support and what kind of support they need, use English language measures of phonological processing, letter knowledge, and word and text reading.



University
of
California



University
of
California

Measures

A set of eleven studies have demonstrated that there are three types of measures that are valid:

1. Measures of phonological awareness;
2. Measures of letter knowledge, especially of speed;
3. Measures of word and text reading.

English language measures of these early reading skills have been shown to be valid with English learners.



University
of
California

Screen and monitor progress.

- By the middle of kindergarten, after students have received some instruction, formative assessments (of phonological awareness, letter knowledge and word and text knowledge) are a valid indicator of whether or not a student is at risk for reading problems.



University
of
California

Screen and monitor progress.

- Students at higher risk for reading difficulty will require frequent monitoring, *as often as several times per month.*





University
of
California

Recommendation 1: Screen and monitor progress.

- Use screening assessments in kindergarten and first grade
- Identify English learners who require additional instructional support.



Recommendation 1: Screen and monitor progress.

Monitor reading progress systematically and frequently.

- The reading progress of English learners should be monitored multiple times during the academic year.
- When students' progress is not sufficient, instructional adjustments should be made in an effort to increase it.



Recommendation 1: Screen and monitor progress.

What the evidence suggests:

1. English learners can learn to read in English as quickly as their peers, given a research based reading program.
2. Progress monitoring measures are reasonable predictors of end of year performance on standardized tests.



University
of
California

Example: A first grade teacher can conduct a formative assessment on all students at the beginning of the year to learn which students can:

- Segment the sounds in individual words (Say the separate sounds in the word trap. : /t/ /r/ /a/ /p/);
- Blend sounds to form words (What word is this? /t/ /a/ /p/ /s/); and
- Associate letters and sounds (Tell me the letter name for this sound: /m/).



University
of
California

Example (cont.)

- The teacher can then use assessment results to group students who need practice and formally check their progress every few weeks.



University
of
California

Suggestions

1. Districts should establish policies and training for schools to monitor the reading progress of all students, including English Learners, at least three times per year.
2. Districts should develop guidelines that help schools determine if students are making adequate progress.
3. It is important to monitor students' progress in learning to read.



University
of
California

Related Research Finding

Do not wait until students have developed strong oral English proficiency before teaching reading...





University
of
California

Key Actions

1. Identify or develop valid assessments and develop an assessment administration plan.
2. Use data from assessments to make decisions about extra support and interventions.
3. Provide teachers professional development and other support to help interpret and take action on assessment results.



University
of
California

Important

- Most teachers were not trained in the systematic analysis of assessment data. With support from reading coaches, principals, or ESL teachers, teachers can better utilize assessment results to find students with skill deficits, group students with similar needs, and organize particular types of interventions.



University
of
California

What the research has shown

- The expert panel reviewed 21 studies that addressed the validity of assessment measures to screen English learners and monitor their reading progress.





University
of
California

What the research has shown

- Studies examined screening and criterion assessments with English learners at different points in time. The panel concluded that three types of measures (phonological processing, letter knowledge, and word and text reading) are valid for determining which English learners are likely to benefit from extra reading support.



University
of
California

What the research has shown

- The set of screening measures demonstrates moderate predictive validity for English learners from homes speaking a variety of languages: Spanish, Punjabi, Tamil, Mandarin, Cantonese, Farsi, Hmong, and Portuguese, among others.



University
of
California

Key Research

1. Dominquez de Ramirez, R., & Shapiro, E.S. (2006). Curriculum-based measurement and the evaluation of reading skills of Spanish-speaking English language learners in bilingual education classrooms. *School Psychology Review*, 35, 356-369.



University
of
California

Key Research

2. Geva, E., & Yaghoub-Zadeh, Z. (2006). Reading efficiency in native English-speaking and English-as-a-second-language children: The role of oral proficiency and underlying cognitive-linguistic processes. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 10, 31-57.



University
of
California

Key Research

3. Lesaux, N., & Siegel, L. (2003). The development of reading in children who speak English as a second language. *Developmental Psychology*, 39, 1005-1019.



*University
of
California*

Level of Evidence: Strong

- Generalizable and consistent research findings



University
of
California

Recommendation 2: Provide reading interventions.

English learners at risk for reading problems benefit from additional instruction.



University
of
California

Example

- A teacher works with a group of five first grade children, including three English learners, for about 45 minutes after lunch each day. Students participate in the regular core reading program each morning with their peers; the afternoon session provides review and lots of practice, currently focusing on decoding and fluency. Two of the five children are now ready for a more advanced group based on last week's assessment results.



University
of
California

Key Actions

1. Select or develop intervention program(s). Schools should identify or develop reading intervention programs that share the research-based characteristics in programs found effective by the What Works Clearinghouse. Schools may employ **multiple interventions** to match the needs of students at risk for reading problems.



University
of
California

Key Actions

2. Use techniques and strategies that are supported by research.

Programs found effective by the *What Works Clearinghouse* shared similar characteristics. Each included:



University
of
California

Effective Techniques And Strategies

- Daily small-group instruction of 30-50 minutes
- Direct, explicit instruction, including modeling by the teacher
- Fast-paced instruction with frequent practice, review, and response opportunities
- Coverage of all five reading elements
- Corrective feedback when students make errors



University
of
California

Key Actions (cont.)

3. Provide teachers professional development and other support to help them implement interventions.

Remember: Teachers may require time for planning and coordinating instruction with other adults providing interventions to the same students.



University
of
California

Suggestions

1. Use an intervention program for students who enter first grade with weak reading and pre-reading skills or older elementary students with reading problems.
2. Ensure that the program is implemented daily for at least 30 minutes in small groups 3-6 students.
3. Give those students with weak English language skills additional work in various aspects of English language development.
4. Remember that there are long term payoffs to work on English language development.



University
of
California

Level of Evidence: Strong

Brief Summary of Evidence to Support this Recommendation

Four high quality randomized controlled trials of reading interventions for struggling English learners have been conducted. They appear as Intervention Reports on the *What Works Clearinghouse* website, www.whatworks.ed.gov.

These interventions were conducted using the following three programs:

- Enhanced Proactive Reading*
- Read Well*
- SRA Reading Mastery/ SRA Corrective Reading.*



University
of
California

Evidence

- The interventions tested were conducted with English learners and share core characteristics in design and content. Two of the studies demonstrated lasting effects one or two years after intervention.



University
of
California

Key Research

1. Denton, C.A., Anthony, J.L., Parker, R., & Hasbrouck, J.E. (2004). Effects of two tutoring programs on the English reading development of Spanish-English bilingual students. *The Elementary School Journal*, 104, 289-305.



University
of
California

Key Research

2. Gunn, B., Smolkowski, K., Biglan, A., & Black, C. (2002). Supplemental instruction in decoding skills for Hispanic and non-Hispanic students in early elementary school: A follow-up. *Journal of Special Education, 36*, 69-79.



University
of
California

Key Research

3. Vaughn, S., Cirino, P.T., Linan-Thompson, S., Mathes, P.G., Carlson, C.D., Cardenas-Hagan, E., et al. (2006). Effectiveness of a Spanish intervention and an English intervention for English language learners at risk for reading problems. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43, 449-487.



University
of
California

Recommendation 3: Teach vocabulary.

- Provide high quality vocabulary teaching at multiple times during the day.
- Teach essential content words in depth from core reading program and content area text.
- Reinforce these words during ESL/ELD instruction.
- Address the meanings of common words, phrases, and expressions that English learners have not yet learned during reading and content lessons. **Do not over-assume knowledge of very basic words (string, can, mud, dirt).**



University
of
California

Explanation

- If **core** reading programs do not include adequate instruction in vocabulary for English learners, districts and schools will need to develop a framework of essential words to be taught explicitly and in-depth. Vocabulary instruction should be emphasized in all parts of the curriculum and include common English words and phrases, words used in all content areas, and content words.



Teach vocabulary

- Lists of essential words can be drawn from the core reading program and content textbooks. English learners will also need explicit instruction in the meanings of common English words and expressions that are not part of their speaking vocabularies. (Based on Carlo et al. 2004 - see research references.)



University
of
California

Example

- In the fifth grade, the teacher introduces 10-12 target words each week on Monday for which students receive 30-45 minutes of daily instruction and practice with the words. Learning activities include discussions with word meanings, cloze activities, and word analysis. On Friday, students review the words taught over the previous four weeks.



University
of
California

Suggestions

1. Adopt an evidence-based framework of vocabulary instruction (e.g., *Bringing Words to Life*).
2. Develop lists of essential vocabulary words for instruction from reading texts and other content sources.



University
of
California

Key Actions

- 1. Develop a framework for teaching vocabulary that includes lists of essential words.** The panel recommends adopting a district-wide core vocabulary list to ensure that teachers focus instruction on the most useful words and to eliminate duplication of effort. The lists of vocabulary words in core reading series are likely not adequate for English learners.



University
of
California

Key Actions

2. Identify and use research-based instructional strategies for teaching both academic and everyday words. Research-based vocabulary instruction for English learners is more thorough and explicit than typical vocabulary teaching.



University
of
California

The expert panel recommends vocabulary instruction with the following characteristics:

- Focus on a limited number (8-10) of target words each week;
- Provide multiple exposures of target words through reading, writing, listening, and speaking;
- Use student-friendly definitions;
- Make active use of words in meaningful contexts; and
- Include regular review.



University
of
California

Key Actions

3. Provide teachers professional development in vocabulary instruction. Teachers require support to understand and implement the research-based techniques. Teacher study groups and in-classroom coaching are two recommended professional development approaches.



University
of
California

Potential Barriers

- Providing high quality vocabulary instruction is harder than many think.
- Many teachers will need concentrated professional development and coaching to teach vocabulary effectively.
- There is a paucity of high quality curricula in the marketplace at the current time.



*University
of
California*

Evidence Base: Strong

The expert panel based the recommended practice on three studies (including two randomized controlled trials) of the direct impact of vocabulary instruction on reading that were conducted with English learners as well as a large body of research associated with vocabulary development in native English speakers.



Key Research

1. Carlo, M. S., August, D., McLaughlin, B., Snow, C. E., Dressler, C., Lippman, D., et al. (2004). Closing the gap: Addressing the vocabulary needs of English language learners in bilingual and mainstream classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 39, 188-215.



University
of
California

Key Research

2. National Institute of Child Health and Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.



University
of
California

Key Research

3. Perez, E. (1981). Oral language competence improves reading skills of Mexican American third graders. *Reading Teacher*, 35, 24-27.



University
of
California

Recommendation 4: Develop academic English.

Devote specific blocks of time each day to building students' academic English.

When feasible, link the instruction of academic English to reading texts.



University
of
California

Academic English

We will probably not see large gains in reading scores in the upper grades unless we teach academic English in t

Supported by correlational research and direct classroom observations





University
of
California

Suggestions

- Teachers need to learn how to use English that is specifically structured to develop academic English.
- They should be diligent in using academic English themselves and structuring occasions for their students to use it.
- They should ensure that key material is presented orally and in writing.



University
of
California

Key Actions

1. Work from standards to organize a framework and materials for teaching academic English.
2. Teach academic English throughout the day.
3. Address academic English development needs at all levels of English proficiency.
4. Provide teachers with professional development in teaching academic English.



University
of
California

Barriers

- Some educators may want to cushion their English learners.
- There may be insufficient time in the instructional day to teach the features of academic English.
- Teachers may not know how to teach academic English; e.g., they may fail to link vocabulary instruction to instruction on proper usage of words.



University
of
California

What does the research say about academic English?

- Teachers overemphasize conversational English and spend insufficient time teaching academic English, even in instructional settings where the express purpose is to build academic English
 - Foorman, Saunders, & Carlson, 2006.

There is not much research on academic English.



Evidence Base: Low

- ✓ Overwhelming consensus; expert opinion
- ✓ One descriptive study, Saunders, Foorman & Carlson, 2006
- ✓ Two high quality experiments support effectiveness but in very limited domains (oral narrative retell, syntax)



University
of
California

Experimental Support

- Explicit instruction in the structure of English language oral narrative retellings led to significant improvements. (*Arthur the Aardvark*)
- *FastForward* supports growth in syntax.

Source: *What Works Clearinghouse*

Recommendation 5: Schedule peer learning.



Partner work provides the opportunities for students to practice what the teacher has taught and can be used to strengthen a wide range of skills, including word and text reading, fluency practice, comprehension, vocabulary development, spelling, and writing. Devote at least 2 hours per week on instructional activities in which English learners work in pairs on academic tasks.

These activities should provide practice and extension opportunities of material already taught.



Characteristics of Effective Peer Learning

- Clear instructional activities are planned in advance by the teacher and based on material that has been taught;
- Procedures and routines for working in pairs are taught by the teacher in advance of peer work;
- Members of pairs differ in reading ability or English proficiency; and
- Peers work together for appropriate amounts of time (e.g., approximately 90 minutes per week) in reading and language practice.





University
of
California

Example

- A third grade teacher builds different types of peer practice into reading instruction. During whole-class instruction, he asks peer pairs to use new vocabulary words in sentences to demonstrate understanding of meaning. Selected pairs share examples with the class.



University
of
California

Example (cont.)

- As part of comprehension practice, students practice story retelling. Students use structured prompts to aid retelling. Finally, students listen to partners read aloud for fluency practice, supplying words to their partners as needed.



University
of
California

Key Actions

- 1. Develop a plan for using structured partner work schoolwide and throughout the day.** Using partner work schoolwide is efficient. Once students learn the routines of pair work, they can quickly engage in practice opportunities in a wide variety of subjects. Using similar peer routines throughout the day allows teachers to augment the number of practice opportunities for all students.



Key Actions

2. Use research-based techniques and strategies for structured partner work.

In addition to teaching students peer-assisted learning procedures, teachers need to structure the learning activities to maximize productive practice, including a product or way to check on the accuracy of responses.

Research indicates results from 90 minutes of peer practice each week.



University
of
California

Key Actions

- 3. Prepare students to work with partners, including building on students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.** To get the most out of practice together, procedures for working together need to become routine for students.



University
of
California

Key Actions

- Preparation includes providing training in appropriate discourse, including prompts and feedback, as well as teacher modeling of the intended learning activity.



University
of
California

Key Actions

- 4. Provide professional development and support for teachers to use partner work.** Teachers may require in-class support (coaching) to help them get started with peer-assisted learning in addition to training in establishing peer routines as well as structuring assignments to maximize learning.

Classroom management is key.



University
of
California

Evidence

Two experiments (randomized controlled trials) have been reviewed by the *What Works Clearinghouse* and rated as providing *potentially positive effects* on reading achievement. Two other studies showed positive impact on reading for groups of four to six students working together.



University
of
California

Evidence

- The expert panel recommends using peer-assisted practice for English language development although there is no experimental research using this outcome measure.
- The expert panel suggests that the recommendations are relevant for cooperative learning groups as well as pairs even though there is less evidence that supports cooperative groups.



University
of
California

Key Research

1. Calderon, M., Hertz-Lazarowitz, R., & Slavin, R. (1998). Effects of bilingual cooperative integrated reading and composition on students transitioning from Spanish to English reading. *Elementary School Journal*, 99, 153-165.



University
of
California

Key Research

2. McMaster, K.L., Kung, H., Han, I., & Cao, M. (2008). Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies: A "tier 1" approach to promoting responsiveness to beginning reading instruction for English learners. *Exceptional Children*.



University
of
California

Key Research

3. Saenz, L.M., Fuchs, L.S., & Fuchs, D. (2005). Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies for English language learners with learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 71, 231-247.



University
of
California

Possible Limitations

Some: Considerations

- Characteristics and preparation of learners and partners
- Language features
- Specific type of practice provided
- Duration and intensity effects



University
of
California

Barriers

Teachers may feel additional time required by English learners for partner work takes away from other students.

Teaching the routines take time.

- There is an early initial investment.
- The structure of partner work can work in other subject areas.

Teachers may be concerned about loss of instructional time.

- It is important to emphasize the extended learning nature of the partner format.



University
of
California

Summary

1. Screen and monitor progress.

- 1.a Conduct screening assessments in kindergarten and first grade using English language measures of phonological processing, letter knowledge, and word reading to identify English learners who require additional instructional support.
- 1.b Monitor reading progress systematically and frequently.



University
of
California

Summary

- 2. Provide reading interventions.** Provide intensive small group instruction for students who fall well below grade level or benchmark levels in reading.
- 3. Teach vocabulary.** Provide high quality vocabulary instruction throughout the day.
- 4. Develop academic English.** Devote time each day to building students' academic English. When feasible, link the instruction of academic English to reading texts.



University
of
California

Summary

5. Schedule peer learning. Devote time to instructional activities in which English learners work in pairs on academic tasks.



University
of
California

Questions?





University
of
California

The Dilemma

- If students are not given challenging, instruction, they fail to acquire high level literacy skills.
- If they cannot access this instruction, they often fail to acquire language and may drop out of school.



*University
of
California*

The Solution

- Teach them to access challenging instruction.



University
of
California

The *only* way to give students a chance of reaching content standards is to give them access to *rigorous* instruction.



University
of
California

What's the problem?

- Students are running out of time!
- Content AND language need to be taught together; If they aren't, English learners lag behind.



*University
of
California*