

**ESOL Best Practices**

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EDU 620: Intro to Special Education

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### **ESOL Best Practices**

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides the nation with a goal for educating students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are deserving of an appropriate education that strive to provide equal opportunities, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. One of these groups of students is English Language Learners (ELL).

Over the years, many different legislative acts and court cases have continued to provide equal education opportunities. Our 14<sup>th</sup> amendment states, “nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law...” (Artecona-Pelaez, 2020, p.21). The 14<sup>th</sup> amendment includes a person’s right to an education. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act took this one step further by allowing any person to participate in federal financial assistance programs. The Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) of 1974 was the beginning of the push to prevent language barriers from preventing non-English speaking students from having a quality education. A supreme court case from the same year clarified that equal opportunity does not mean that every student receives the same book but receive the same quality of education. In 1982 the Supreme Court, through another case, deemed that undocumented children should still receive the same education because denying them that would be a violation of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment (Artecona-Pelaez, 2020).

These laws, however, were not always followed. In 1981, the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit court developed a three-part assessment to determine if school districts were following EEOA. It wasn’t until 2001 that some form of punishment was enacted under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB stated that districts not meeting their EL performance requirements could lose 10% of the administrative funding from grant programs. These laws were all applicable to programs and employment that received federal funding. This still did not protect students with disabilities

from discrimination in the private sector. The Americans Disabilities Act (ADA) extends the protection into the private sector, including private schools and businesses (Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Shogren, 2020).

There are students in the education system, where English is not their first language. A Language barrier should not hinder them from receiving the same education as English-speaking students. Students must be identified if they are Limited English Proficient (LEP) to ensure that they are receive a quality education. LEP students are students whose language they speak or their family speaks is not English, they have difficulty communicating through speech or text in English, they are a culture that is highly impacted by other languages, or they are born in a country where English is the primary language. These students started being identified in the years 1990-1991 due to a court case of eight groups represented by Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy Inc. and the Florida Board of Education. The signed Consent Decree serves as the framework regulating compliance for federal and state laws regarding ELL students' education.

To identify these students, a home survey is conducted when a student is enrolled in the education system. Three questions that are asked on the survey that helps identify these students: a.) Is a language other than English used in the home? b.) Does the student have a first language other than English? c.) Does the student most frequently speak a language other than English? This information is stored and presented to a committee is responsible for determining the eligibility of the student. Once a student has been identified as LEP, the committee with then develop a student plan. Students will be assessed and reclassified until the student reaches English proficient status. Parents can choose to have their students opt out of the program, however. This group of students still have to be monitored and assessed routinely. The parents

must be notified of the child's progress. This way, they can be aware of their students and if they need to opt in to services or programs that they think their student needs.

The three most common models for teaching ELL students are English-only, Bilingual, and Bilingual with transitioning support. There are many gradations between the models. When looking at the English-only model the students' native language plays a very small part. English immersion has ELL students' gradual depend less on their native language as they develop English proficiency. The instruction of classes utilizing this starts with providing supports in an English-only class, and as students progress, they begin to remove these supports. Bilingual model school programs vary in length and intensity. The bilingual model's dual-language style helps foster learning in the second language while maintaining native languages and cultures. They benefit both ELL students and English-speaking students by presenting good models of both languages used. Bilingual transition style programs use native languages while trying to increase English language skills. The native language use tapers as the students have a better grasp of the English language and develop their language skills (Moughamian, Rivera, & Francis, 2009).

### **Teacher Responsibility**

When teaching ELL students, various methods can be successful in the classroom and outside of the school to provide support for ELL students. The supports can appear through multiple forms, such as visual representations, collaborations, and supplemental materials. By learning more about your students, you will determine which strategies to use best when works with ELL students. One of the first steps that a teacher can take is to use language objectives. Language objectives are similar in style to content standards but focus on the language skills that the ELL students are trying to master. The objectives outline the type of language that a student

will need to use and practice in order to accomplish class tasks. These objectives usually involve one of the four language skills that allow students to participate in the class while practicing their language skills. Language objectives should complement the content standards. Language objectives are not something that you need to differentiate for each of the levels of students that you have in your class. Providing supplementary materials to help different levels work toward the language and content standards (Himmel, 2020).

### **Strategies to Support**

ELL students learn from their peers as well as teachers. Having flexible grouping or collaborative projects can help students learn from their native language peers and in English. When allowing for collaborative work, this challenges ELL students to communicate their thoughts and understanding to their peers. Peers often can use everyday jargon that ELL students will pick up in typical scenarios. Grouping also allows instructors to gauge students' progress (Robertson, 2019) informally.

Visual representations for students are used when students need to build vocabulary. The graphical representation allows students to know the meaning of a word while visually picturing something they understand in their native language. One of these representations is a graphic organizer. The graphic organizer allows a student to reinforce relationships between concepts in both their native language and English. Graphic organizers can be used as a summary or a way to introduce new information (Sigueza, 2020).

Supplementary materials are available in so many different forms. Many forms are not necessarily designed for use in a classroom but can be used none the less. These resources can reflect the use of the target language in an authentic, real-world sense. The use of jokes, films,

and short stories are new ways that can excite students in learning the target language (Thakur, 2015). Some resources are designed for classroom use and can be as simple as an English-Spanish dictionary. There are a wide variety of resources available to use to help in either model of instruction for English Language Learners.

### **Core Value**

When working in education we have to strive to provide quality education to every student regardless of their background and skills. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, we are required to use various methods and skills to provide that education. Working with others in our field will allow us to be successful in developing students who are morally responsible leaders (Saint Leo University, n.d.). English Language Learners are just as important as any other student with a disability. Thanks to the hard work of many people over the years, they are being provided with an equal opportunity education.

### References

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