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## Evaluation of the ELD Practicum: Year 1 Report

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### Summary

- The majority of sample teachers completed the mandatory training, received all the required curricular materials and components, and implemented the ELD program.
- Students of teachers who implemented the ELD program outperformed students of teachers who did not implement the program on the ELA CST and CELDT.
- Students at higher ELD levels significantly outperformed their peers at lower ELD levels.
- Additional substudies showed:
  - High quality teaching practices were evident in classes in which all students performed well, including those students at lower ELD levels
  - In classrooms with a mix of high performing upper-level ELD students and low performing lower-level ELD students, there was less evidence of differentiation and high quality teaching practices

### Overview

In July of 2006, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) began implementing a newly designed English Language Development (ELD) program. The program was comprised of the original *Into English!* lessons and enhanced *Into English!* lessons. The instruction in the enhanced version is founded on the research-based Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) theory and practice, (Wills, 1996; Skehan, 1998; Feez 1998) and is expected to increase the effectiveness of the ELD program. Research and Planning (R&P) launched a study in 2006 to examine the effects of the ELD Program in third and fourth grade as supported by the Title III ELD Practicum Professional Development.

The evaluation documents:

- The capacity of schools to support the *ELD Program* implementation as measured by the provision of ELD Practicum professional development and access to curriculum materials.
- The nature and extent of *ELD Program* implementation in third and fourth grade classes serving English learners.
- The effectiveness of ELD instruction as measured by student progress in English language acquisition (student CELDT scores and ELD levels) and ELA (ELA CST performance level gains).

## Methods

Data was collected from 100 elementary school classes (50 third grade/50 fourth grade) during the first and second semesters. Observers' field notes and report summaries, along with teacher interviews chronicled not only what lessons the teachers followed, but also the instructional strategies they employed during class time. Using this data, the implementation level of the ELD program in each class was determined, and then analyzed against student performance data. Whenever applicable, standardized adjusted gain scores were computed for English learners who tested two consecutive years on the California Standards Tests (CST) in English Language Arts. In order to compare standardized adjusted gain scores for different groups, group to group effect sizes were computed. An effect size difference greater than .20 standard deviations is generally considered to be educationally significant (Cohen, 1988).

## Key Findings

**The Capacity of Schools to Support the ELD Program Implementation:** *The majority of schools provided adequate training and materials to sample teachers.*

According to the sample teachers interviewed during the second semester of the study, the majority completed the mandatory training and had all the materials required to teach the ELD program. More specifically, 81 teachers out of 100 in our sample had completed the mandatory ELD practicum training for third or fourth/fifth grade teachers by the time they were interviewed in the spring. Seventeen teachers did not have the mandatory training. We had no training data for two teachers.

The majority of teachers (82%) said that they had all of the ELD materials. Of the 18% who said that they didn't have all the ELD materials, most were missing components such as Language Logs, *Into English!* lesson posters, picture cards, CDs, and student books, while 6% of teachers were missing TBLT lessons, and 5% were missing TBLT posters. Also, 6% of teachers reported that they had to share ELD kits with teachers in their schools.

When asked about the use of supplemental materials, the majority of teachers in both grades (74%) stated that they regularly used supplemental materials, while 26% stated that they did not. Most teachers said that they used a variety of materials to supplement the ELD program, commonly mentioning the use of realia, visuals, different types of literature, and the internet. Some teachers said that they used OCR supplements, science books or science aids, social studies books or aids, and/or spelling and grammar aids. Although teachers used different supplemental materials from various sources, the purpose for using them was the same: to aid in comprehension and re-enforce the ELD lessons.

**The Nature and Extent of ELD Program Implementation in the 3rd and 4th Grades:** *The majority of sample teachers implemented the program and, in doing so, taught ELD for an average of 39 minutes per day.*

Although **the** average ELD class was 39 minutes a day, the actual length of time devoted to ELD varied widely, with the longest class averaging 77 minutes and the shortest class averaging 12 minutes. No ELD lessons were taught in 5 classes.

During Semester 1, 80% of the sample classes implemented the program, while 20% implemented at a very low level or not at all. During Semester 2, there was a decrease in the number of classes implementing the program from 80% to 77%. Conversely, the number of classes that implemented at a very low level or not at all increased from 20% to 23%.

**Effectiveness of ELD Instruction:** *Implementation of the ELD program generates stronger student performance as measured by ELA CST gains and CELDT reading scores.*

We used ELA CST scale and performance level gains to measure student progress in ELA, and CELDT reading scores to measure language acquisition. Our analysis of the adjusted standardized gains scores reveals an association between the implementation and student performance level in both third and fourth grades. More specifically, it shows that implementation generates stronger student performance in ELA as measured by CST ELA scores and language acquisition as measured by CELDT reading scores, while very low or no implementation produces weaker student performance in both. In fact, third and fourth grade students in implementing classes performed significantly better than students in classes with very low or no implementation. In third grade, the effect size for implementing vs. non-implementing classes was .32 for CST ELA and .22 for CELDT reading. The same is true for the fourth grade. The effect sizes for the implementing vs. non-implementing classes were .29 for CST ELA and .27 for CELDT reading.

Our data reveal that implementation of the ELD program had a positive impact on performance for all English learners, particularly on CELDT scores. Although the ELD program had a positive impact overall, the magnitude of success varied widely among ELD levels. In fact, students at ELD levels 4 and 5 performed the best overall (CELDT gains in implementing classes for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade = .25 and for 4<sup>th</sup> grade = .44). Students at ELD level 3 performed moderately well in classes with implementation (CELDT gains for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade = .00 and for 4<sup>th</sup> grade = .17). Students in ELD levels 1 and 2 turned in the weakest performance overall (CELDT gains for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade = -.27 and for 4<sup>th</sup> grade = -.26).

Upon further examination, the lower level ELD students may have had the weakest performance because teachers aimed their teaching to the higher ELD students, and followed few, if any, of the suggested differentiation activities. It seems that teachers adhered to a “one style fits all” practice, failing to differentiate instruction for students at various ELD levels, thus students at lower ELD levels struggled to achieve.

Upon close examination of the Quality of Teaching and Learning framework in a subset of classes with major differences in performance between students at higher and lower ELD levels, we found that the teachers do not typically engage in all of the high quality teaching practices, particularly those that may have a stronger effect on lower level ELD students. We found that the learning environment was not typically student centered; there was no evidence of teachers being responsive to student needs or providing extra oral opportunities when needed. Most of the time, the teachers did not cover all vocabulary that may have been helpful to better understand the lesson. There were no instances of teachers using assessment practices<sup>1</sup>. They rarely accessed prior knowledge. There were no instances of teachers listening to students to help inform their teaching.

Application of the same framework in our analysis of the classes with high performing students at all ELD levels revealed that the practices of high quality teaching **were evident** in these classrooms. Most of the teachers taught lessons that were centered on the needs and abilities of the students. The classroom topics were typically relevant to the students’ lives, needs and

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<sup>1</sup> Assessment practices embedded in the ELD program included the use of ballparking and student progress forms.

interests. Most of the teachers adapted the pacing plan to meet the needs of the students. Half of the teachers in this group gave students extra oral opportunities. Most of the teachers taught vocabulary in context. All teachers accessed prior knowledge and most of them listened carefully to their students.

## Conclusion

Our one-year evaluation suggests that implementation of the ELD program had a positive effect on student performance in English language arts. Students in implementing classes performed significantly better than their peers in classes with no implementation. Thus, the District must make a greater effort to ensure that the ELD program is being implemented and that teachers have the necessary support to do so. Local District superintendents and directors of school services should plan for the professional development of school administrators and monitor the capacity of schools to implement and support the ELD program. They should ensure that all schools have trained principals, assistant principals, staff, and teachers. Then, principals and assistant principals in partnership with school site leadership bodies should: develop detailed plans for the implementation of the ELD program, provide the necessary support, and closely monitor program implementation in each classroom with English learners. Administrators must pay regular visits to the classrooms, observe instructional practices, and provide directions when necessary to ensure implementation. In order to be able to do this, principals and assistant principals should take responsibility for their own personal development and training in ELD programs and practices, as well as the professional development of school staff and teachers.

Furthermore, our findings revealed that students at ELD levels 4 and 5 are significantly outperforming their classmates at lower ELD levels. Therefore, we recommend re-visiting professional development design, curriculum, and the way the program is implemented for practices that target ELD levels 1, 2 and 3. More emphasis should be given to differentiation practices since many of our classes contain more than two consecutive ELD levels per class. The Language Acquisition Branch should find ways to strengthen the professional development design, curriculum, and the way the program is implemented in order to address the needs of students at lower ELD levels.

Through the course of our study, we observed many classes that contained all five ELD levels. Schools need to make a greater effort to ensure that there are no more than two consecutive levels per class, as per District policy. This is especially important during ELD time. Principals, local district superintendents and directors of school services should take a lead in creating conditions to enable and enforce this policy.

The Local Districts in partnership with the Language Acquisition Branch should continue providing professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators. Teachers found the Practicum's demonstration lessons to be the most beneficial by far and requested additional follow-up training sessions of this nature. We strongly recommend that the Language Acquisition Branch provide additional training in core differentiation practices. For those teachers who have completed the Practicum, differentiation training should be provided as mandatory follow-up training. Moving forward, the Practicum itself should be augmented to provide training in core differentiation practices.

Since we found that success is not just a function of program implementation, but also of the ability of teachers to respond to the needs of students, we recommend that additional steps be

# Research Brief

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made to incorporate high quality teaching strategies across all core content professional developments in our District; including, the ELD Practicum. Implementation of such initiatives should be coordinated between the Division of Professional Learning, Development, and Leadership, and the Language Acquisition Branch.

**For more information regarding this study see the full report:**

Vuckovic, Gojko. Evaluation of the ELD Practicum: Year 1 Report. Research and Planning No. 2008–10. Available Online: [research.lausd.net](http://research.lausd.net)