

Principles for Planning and Implementing a LAP

Introduction

In order for each English Language Learner (ELL) to meet the high standards set for all students, and to equally participate in New York City Department of Education literacy and mathematics initiatives in addition to core academic subjects, he or she must have access to coherent programs that are uniformly delivered throughout the City, as well as rigorous instruction. In other words, schools need to have a consistent language allocation policy (LAP) to assist ELLs with cognitive development and academic skills. A LAP is a systematic plan for language development that guides programmatic and curricular decisions for students until they acquire academic proficiency in English (Freeman 1993). The LAP will standardize programs offered to ELLs within schools as well as across the City. Student performance in New York City schools as well as other performance-related data show that ELLs who move among mixed programs tend to perform poorly compared with those who participate in strong, coherent programs that span their tenure as ELLs (New York City Board of Education 2000). Also, instructional programs with high levels of rigor and support result in higher achievement for ELLs (Walqui 2000), in contrast with the traditional approach of a simplified curriculum for ELLs. The programs and principles described here support varying levels of instructional work in English and the native language, putting literacy and learning standards on par with the expectations of monolingual students. Native language instruction in core subject areas is more accessible to ELLs because they can draw on their background and experiences for content while continuing to improve English language acquisition skills (August and Hakuta 1998; Baker 1992; Brisk 1998; Calderón 1999).

Programs designed for ELLs must also take into account theoretical research and demographic realities (Committee on Education and Labor 1986). Even well-designed programs are challenging to replicate in diverse and dynamic populations. Therefore, a clear understanding of each program type and how it can meet the needs of different ELLs is crucial to its success (Faltis & Hudelson 1998). The instructional programs available for ELLs are: Transitional Bilingual Education, Dual Language, and freestanding English as a Second Language. All ELLs are entitled to up to six years of bilingual/ESL services. Schools may request an Extension of Services from the State Education Department for ELLs who have received three or more years of service for up to six years.

ELL Program Descriptions

Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Programs

In TBE¹ programs, instruction is provided in the student's native language with intensive support in English, with required English as a Second Language (ESL)/English Language Arts (ELA)/Native Language Arts (NLA) time allotment. A transitional program of instruction includes an ESL component designed to develop skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English; content-area instruction in the native language and English designed to teach core subjects to ELLs; and an NLA component designed to develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in a student's home language as well as an appreciation of their history and culture. The goals of a TBE program are as follows:

- Provide instruction in two languages: the language spoken at home and English. In the beginning stages of English language development, 60 percent of instructional time will take place in the student's native language, and 40 percent in English. As the student develops fluency in English, instructional time in English increases.
- Provide grade-level academic work in the student's native language so that the student maintains academic progress while developing English proficiency.
- Help each ELL attain English language proficiency.
- Help each ELL meet or exceed New York State (NYS) and New York City (NYC) standards.

In TBE programs, as students develop their English proficiency, the time allocated to native language learning shifts to English-language learning until the student is ready to enter an all-English program (Krashen 1999). Across time, ELLs are taught language arts using a dynamic blend of NLA, ESL, and ELA (Cummins 1981). Content-area instruction—language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—is taught in the native language and English using ESL strategies. Research suggests that most students new to English upon entry in US school systems need four to seven years of instruction before they are sufficiently prepared to enter the all-English mainstream of general education courses (August and Pease-Alvarez 1996; Hakuta, Butler, and Witt 2000).

¹ TBE classes are formed in grades K-8 when there are 15 or more ELLs of the same language in two contiguous grades. In grades 9-12, TBE classes are formed when there are 20 or more ELLs in any single grade.

Dual Language (DL) Programs

Dual Language programs are developmental, language-enriched, bilingual education programs that integrate students who are native English speakers with native speakers of another language for all or most of their content-area instruction. All students in DL programs develop their second-language skills while learning content knowledge in both languages. The goals for students in both language groups of the DL program are as follows:

- Develop proficiency in their first language.
- Develop proficiency in their second language.
- Develop positive cross-cultural attitudes, behaviors, and skills that will help them function in a global society.
- Attain higher levels of self-esteem.
- Help each ELL meet or exceed NYS and NYC standards.

Students are expected to build academic skills in their first language and eventually transfer these skills to the second language. ELLs and English Proficient (EP) students are linguistically integrated for all or most content-area instruction in all grades. The students are also expected to comprehend, speak, read, and write in both languages upon their completion of a DL program.

Freestanding English as a Second Language (ESL)

Students in freestanding ESL programs receive all instruction in English with native language support. NYS regulations determine how many units of ESL instruction each student should receive according to his or her English proficiency level from their New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) scores. The two recommended ESL instructional program models include self-contained ESL classes, and “push-in” teaching. The goals of a freestanding ESL program are as follows:

- Provide academic content-area instruction in English
 - Using ESL methodology and instructional strategies.
 - Utilizing Native Language support to make content comprehensible.

- Incorporate ESL strategic instruction.
- Assist students to achieve the State-designated level of English proficiency for their grade.
- Help each ELL meet or exceed NYS and NYC standards.

In freestanding ESL programs, language arts is taught using ESL and ELA methodologies. Content-area instruction is in English using ESL strategies. Native language supports are used to enrich comprehension.

Each of these three models—TBE, DL, and ESL— must address the needs of students and be applied coherently. It is critical that decisions on language use include strategic supports that enable students to succeed academically. Therefore, each school should develop and implement its own LAP in alignment with regional goals and in consultation with feeder schools. Also, the LAP must comply with the ASPIRA Consent Decree and Part 154 of the Commissioner’s Regulations.

LAP Principles

LAP principles are designed to help schools determine their own language allocation policy. Individualized school LAPs must address the complex composition of each school’s ELL population, taking into account differing languages, cultures, education levels, amount of time spent in English-speaking school systems, abilities, and economic backgrounds. Schools must follow regulations and secure appropriate staffing, curriculum, instruction, materials, resources, and assessments to implement coherent LAPs. Therefore, school leadership must call on the help of teachers and parents in developing and writing an explicit LAP for their school that is consistent with these principles² (listed below). The participation of all ELL community stakeholders—administrators, teachers, parents, and students—in formulating a school-based LAP should facilitate its implementation. If the school’s ELL community can comfortably articulate the school’s LAP and its underlying rationale, it is more likely to be successful. Finally, the LAP should be reviewed annually to determine its effectiveness and inform improvement plans.

² ELL community stakeholders must receive orientation and training as well as key documents (translated into target languages) so they can participate in formulating a school-based LAP in an informed manner.

A coherent language allocation policy (LAP) for each school: The LAP is a school-originated document that is written in consultation with feeder schools and reflects City goals. The LAP must comply with Part 154 of the Commissioner's Regulations. The LAP is understood by all school stakeholders and enacted by all practitioners. All stakeholders should be able to clearly articulate when and why the student's native language and English are used in teaching and learning.

Academic rigor: Educational programs for ELLs embody the conceptual understanding of challenging content and well-developed learning strategies that will prepare ELLs to think critically, solve problems, and communicate in the language(s) of instruction. ELLs are actively engaged in standards-based academic curriculum.

Use of two languages: The use of languages for instruction is clearly defined to support the development of oral and written fluency, content knowledge, and the ability to communicate well in the target languages. The school plan for the use of languages is clear and matches programmatic goals.

Explicit English as a Second Language (ESL), English Language Arts (ELA), and Native Language Arts (NLA) instruction: ESL, ELA, and NLA instruction includes literature and content-based instruction that is aligned explicitly to New York State learning standards in ESL, ELA, NLA, and content areas. ESL, ELA, and NLA instruction must comply with CR Part 154 regulations.

Literacy instruction in Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)/Dual Language (DL) programs: Standards-based literacy instruction is provided in the native language and in English for the duration of students' education in TBE/DL programs. Literacy instruction is consistent with the program model design.

Content-area instruction: The native language and English are used consistently to teach core academic content areas—language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies—for students' duration in TBE/DL programs.

Assessment in two languages: Ongoing assessments of students in academic content areas as well as language development inform teaching and learning. Collecting and analyzing multiple sources of data in two languages and setting annual measurable goals help improve areas that most impact teaching and learning, and assessment for ELLs. Assessment of content-area learning and language development matches the language of instruction and programmatic goals.

High-quality teachers of ELLs: Educational programs for ELLs are staffed with teachers who demonstrate strong academic language proficiency in both English and other languages of instruction, and who are equipped with the appropriate teaching certifications, engaged in professional development, and skilled in both content and pedagogy.

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