

Aligning Curriculum and Practice to the Common Core Standards: The Role of Teachers

Charting the Course of Success for English Language Learners Conference: Common Core Standards Implementation

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The urgency of developing effective educational practices for ELLs cannot be overstated

As we discuss the role of teachers in a common core standards- based curriculum, it is important to consider:

- In a knowledge-based global economy the nation's future will increasingly depend on the academic fate of our English Learners
- Common core standards hold students to common **high expectations**, the role of teachers is to provide the **high levels of support** required for students to succeed.
- The work entails many changes...

We know that teachers...

- **Feel inadequately prepared to teach English Language Learners** (Gándara, 2005)
- **Do not receive adequate professional development.** Only 29.5% of teachers with ELLs in their classrooms had received some training. (Ballantyne, Sanderman, Levy, 2008)
- **Hold misconceptions about ELLs, their potential, and general and disciplinary second language development.** For example:
 - In a survey of 729 teachers in a district where one third of the population were ELLs, 52% believed that L1 use at home impeded the development of English and 32% thought that if students were not able to produce fluent English, they were also unable to understand it (Karabenick and Clemens Noda, 2004)
 - 71.1% of teachers in another study thought that students should be able to learn English within two years (Reeves, 2006)
- **Who teach subject matter content do not feel it is their responsibility to teach disciplinary literacy nor the SM academic uses of English.**

Key Findings from a CA Study

(Walqui, Koelsch, Hamburger et al, 2010)

- 1. Leadership for and commitment to the education of English Learners is pivotal but mostly absent** (use of relevant data in ways that teachers can use to make instructional decisions; professional development decisions, etc)
- 2. Programs for English Learners in middle schools lack coherence** (reclassification decisions, course determinations, curricular choices)
- 3. Academic Trajectories decelerate students' access to key academic subjects at grade level**
- 4. Learning and teaching is guided by low expectations**
- 5. Implementation gaps** (policies and supports, definitions of rigor, etc.)

Learning Opportunities for ELLs

Currently teacher emphasis is placed on:

- Recall of information
- Teacher-fronted classes
- Superficial knowledge (atomistic, inert)
- Content, work on texts is implicit

In a CC standards-based curriculum they will need to :

- Apply higher order thinking to key disciplinary areas
- Deliberately structure productive collaboration
- Develop rigorous and coherent content knowledge and applications
- Develop disciplinary multiliteracies; explicit development of disciplinary genres

This move also has implications for the school collective

In most schools today

- ELLs are an afterthought in decision-making
- There are discontinuities across courses and pedagogies
- Teachers work in isolation
- Teachers “teach” most of the time
- Professional development needs and actions are mismatched

Schools will need to become places where

- ELLs along other students become central in decision-making
- There is increasing coherence in the nature of courses and pedagogy
- Teachers collaborate and learn together
- Students engage in deep learning
- Teachers participate in coherent portfolios of activities deliberately designed for their professional growth

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