

ELs in Education

Spring Issue 2012

Training for All Teachers Program @ SCSU

What School Leadership Can Do To Improve the Education of English Learners (ELs)

During 2008 to 2010, the Training for All Teachers Program of Southern Connecticut State University provided professional development to over 225 public school educators throughout the state. In the culminating activity of these trainings – a gallery walk to process Aida Walqui's (2000) "Ten Priorities to Consider When Designing Instruction for Immigrant Students" – participants recorded what they could do in their own classrooms and what they needed from their school and district administration to support these steps. The recordings were analyzed, synthesized, and categorized, resulting in a select number of clear, concise recommendations for administrators.

Reviewing and revising curriculum and instruction emerged as one of the most pressing areas for improvement, in which eight specific needs were identified. Three of these needs are shared in the teachers' voices below.

A call from the classroom to the administration:



Eliminate Curriculum Restrictions to Foster Meaningful Learning



Extend Spiraled and Thematic Learning

"Reassess how curriculum is developed to allow spiraling, themes, etc."

"Inclusion of thematic units at all levels."

"Teachers should be included in planning curriculum, not just department chairs and administration."

"Provide flexibility and time for teachers to explore different avenues of learning."

"Concepts should be taught and applied across all content areas."

"Allow more time to deepen understanding before moving onto to the next concept – fewer units."

"Get rid of pacing guides that make sure everyone is teaching the same skill on the same day."

Incorporate Project-Based, Student-Centered Learning

"We think that projects should be part of the curriculum in every grade and be criteria for grading."

"Students will not 'buy into' what we are 'selling' unless it is relevant to them and their families."

"We need opportunities to make lessons meaningful and exciting!"







Don't miss the next issue when we share teachers' voices that address:

Making everyone aware of expectations and ensuring high expectations for all.

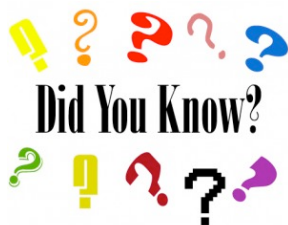
Best Practices From the Classroom

Teachers know that all students, regardless of language background, need to show what they have learned. Modeling language provides ELs with ideas for writing and speaking which can be modified to suit a student's language ability. The language model below was designed to provide middle school ELs with the language they needed to fully engage and interact with the content, the teacher and peers throughout the language arts lesson.

Victor felt _____	when ...
nervous 	...he spoke to Teresa in homeroom. ...Teresa wasn't in his English class. ...Mr. Bueller spoke to him in French.
upset 	...Mr. Bueller didn't tell Teresa Victor's secret. ...he looked for Teresa at lunch. ...Teresa smiled at him at lunch.
happy 	...Teresa asked him for help with French. ...he spoke French in French class. ...he said Teresa's name in English class.
embarrassed 	

After reading *7th Grade* by Gary Soto, Mr. Doug Bowman asks his students how the characters in the story felt by giving them the language choices to accomplish this objective. A word bank, on the left, contains a list of feelings with corresponding emoticons and then additionally, on the right, he gives a phrase bank to complete the sentences. Used to engage, assess, and demonstrate their understanding of the story, the students are able to express 'Victor felt upset when Teresa wasn't in his class.'

Quick Facts About Connecticut's English Learners



In the 2009-2010 School Year...

- The ELL subpopulation had 133 dominant languages. Those that have experienced significant growth include Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, and Creole-Haitian.
- Over four thousand ELL students were identified for special education.
- Twelve districts accounted for 68 percent of ELL students.

(CSDE, Division of Assessment, Research & Technology Data Bulletin, Nov 2010)

Coffee Q & A with the Experts

Does your leadership team have questions about how to best serve your EL students? Concerns about program types? Assessments? Appropriate texts? Southern Connecticut State University's Training for All Teachers Program invites you to meet informally at your school with SCSU's EL experts for a personal Q&A. You bring the questions. We'll bring the coffee. To schedule a meeting, telephone Marisa Ferraro, TAT Program Manager, at (203) 392-5162.

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