

Professional Development Requirements Related to English Learners



OKLAHOMA
Education

This following guidance outlines the professional development activities a Local Educational Agency (LEA) must implement when serving one or more identified English Learner (EL) students.

Legal Requirements

In 1981, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals case [Castañeda v. Pickard](#) defined the actions a public LEA must take to ensure that language programs designed for English Learners are sufficient in assisting students to overcome linguistic barriers that limit access to a meaningful education. In *Castañeda*, the Fifth Circuit established a three-part “test” for determining how local EL language education programs would be held responsible for meeting the requirements of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA):

- The program must be based on sound educational theory
- The program must be implemented effectively with resources for personnel, instructional materials, and space
- After a trial period, the program must be proven effective in overcoming language barriers

The *Castañeda* decision determined that an EL student’s access to content instruction and the language supports necessary to meaningfully participate in a public education is a civil right. As such, the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights provide oversight of SEA and LEA-level activities and will take an enforcement role if state or local policies determine that such a course of action is necessary. To be clear, an LEA not providing the EL-specific services and supports necessary to ensure the academic success of an EL student would be violating the civil rights protections guaranteed under the EEOA and the fourteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Professional Development

As the *Castañeda* decision requires LEAs to both choose a program of EL instructional intervention and effectively implement that program, any LEA serving one or more EL students is required to implement local professional development initiatives (i.e., “resources for personnel”) aligned with their chosen intervention model.

Please note the following points regarding required EL-specific professional development activities:

- EL-specific PD initiatives should align with an LEA's chosen intervention program(s) or model(s).
- PD initiatives should be sustained, at minimum, for the time necessary to ensure presented practices are consistently observed and effectively implemented in classroom instruction.

- Formal learning supported by local peer networks and engaged administrative oversight are two common components of effective professional learning initiatives.
- Although a requirement, it is at LEA discretion to both choose and support with professional learning activities the EL intervention program or model that will most effectively address the learning needs of local EL students.

Intervention Programs and Models

The state of Oklahoma recognizes five general programs or models that may be used to address EL learning needs at the local level. The descriptions below provide a brief overview of each and their correlates for WIDA demographic reporting.

- **Transitional Bilingual:** Students are taught core content and language fluency in their native language for varying periods of the day with the remainder of time focused on English language acquisition. The goal of the program is to transition students to native English instruction within two to five years with no loss of content instruction. Classes may be self-contained or combined. (WIDA correlate: Mixed Bilingual / MBL)
- **Dual Language or Two-way Immersion:** Students are taught both content and language fluency in two languages with the goal of the program being fluency in those two languages. Programs can last the duration of a student’s enrollment. (WIDA correlate: Either EL Bilingual / EBL or Mixed Bilingual / MBL depending on local program design)
- **English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD):** Students are provided supplemental individual or small-group instruction outside the general education classroom (e.g., “pull-out” or ESL classes) with no native language support in either setting. Supplemental instruction can target both English language fluency and core content instruction. The goal of the program is to increase EL student success in mainstream, non-ESL supported general education classes. (WIDA correlate: EL-specific English-only Instruction / EEO)
- **Content Classes with Integrated ESL Support:** Students are provided core content instruction with no native language support in mainstream classes utilizing integrated ESL strategies (e.g., teachers trained in EL methods and best practices, use of EL paraprofessionals, etc.). The goal of the program is to provide EL supports in the general education classroom at the level necessary to ensure EL student success. (WIDA correlate: Mixed Classes with English-Only Support / MEO or Mixed classes with Native Language Support / MNL depending on local program design)
- **Newcomer Programs:** Students new to U.S. schools are placed in classes that primarily emphasize English language acquisition. Instruction may be in English or can utilize a student’s native language. The goal of the program is to move an EL student toward English language proficiency as quickly as possible. (WIDA correlate: EL- specific Transitional Instruction / ETI or EL-specific, English-only instruction/EEO)

Note that an LEA is not limited to any single strategy identified above. An LEA serving a larger, more diverse EL student population may implement multiple strategies and levels of intervention to address a wider range of EL student learning needs.

Additional Resources

While the EL-specific professional development requirements detailed above may be met through locally-developed or contracted activities, LEAs may also take advantage of the following state-supported resources at no cost:

Improving Outcomes for English Learners

Developed by OSDE's Office of English Language Proficiency, this series of seven self-paced sessions focuses on providing effective instruction for English learners. Implementation of the strategies presented in these sessions will increase access and equity for ELs and improve academic achievement for all students. To access this series, visit osdeconnect.ok.gov, sign up or sign in, click the green "Add" button, and search for the series title.

While this series may be used at local discretion, LEAs should note that conceptually it is most aligned with **English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD) and Content Classes with Integrated ESL Support** program models.

CEOE ESL Certification Examination Prep Course

Developed by the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence and supported by OSDE, this self-paced course is aligned to the Oklahoma ESL certification framework. Staff completing all course modules will gain conceptual understanding of the content assessed through the CEOE ESL certification exam. To access this course, visit osdeconnect.ok.gov, sign up or sign in, click the green "Add" button, and search for the series title.

As this resource is not specifically aligned with any specific program or model, LEAs may consider it a supplemental support for all formal intervention programs and/or models.

Teachers of English Learners

Developed by the Oklahoma Foundation for Excellence and hosted by OSDE, this self-paced course features curated content intended to build the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively teach English Learners. To access this course, visit osdeconnect.ok.gov, sign up or sign in, click the green "Add" button, and search for the series title.

As this resource is not specifically aligned with any specific program or model, LEAs may consider it a supplemental support for all formal intervention programs and/or models.

Annual WIDA Professional Development Opportunities

Each year, the OSDE Office of English Language Proficiency works collaboratively with WIDA to provide EL professional development opportunities that address a wide range of EL policy and/or learning needs. LEAs should note that these learning sessions are often limited in attendance, but recordings are generally available for review in a user's WIDA Secure Portal. Sessions will be announced through the EL listserv notification system. To join the listserv, please email a request to oelp@sde.ok.gov.

As this resource may or may not be specifically aligned with any specific program or model, LEAs may consider it a supplemental support for all formal intervention programs and/or models.

LEA Example

In the coming year, a PreK-8 elementary LEA will serve six Spanish-speaking EL students across grades 1 through 8 who span the range of English language proficiency. No two EL students will be in the same grade, four of the students are at least conversationally fluent in English, two are considered “newcomers,” and all have extremely limited English language literacy. The LEA currently employs no Spanish-speaking staff and will not have the ability to hire an EL teacher to manage the learning of all six EL students.

Given the limited local resources, the LEA adopted a **Content Classes with Integrated ESL Support** intervention model. In this model, an EL student is provided core content instruction by teachers utilizing integrated ESL strategies in mainstream classes with no native language support. As this model places on the classroom teacher the responsibility of ensuring a student both develops English language proficiency and has access to core content instruction, the LEA developed an EL professional development plan aligned to those expectations:

- All teachers who will serve an EL student in the coming school year will be identified and scheduled supplemental EL-specific professional development activities.
- During pre-service, identified teachers of ELs and a designated administrator will screen an online learning module discussing Tier 1 instructional best practices for EL students and complete the accompanying activities and planning sheets.
- A bi-weekly EL PLC comprised of the selected teachers and administrator will be established to ensure ongoing support in the implementation of appropriate EL classroom interventions and best practices.
- Over the course of the school year, the PLC will engage in review, discussion, and ongoing implementation of classroom best practices for ELs (e.g., Universal Design for Learning, sheltered instruction, culturally responsive teaching, alignment of WIDA language development standards and OAS content standards, use of domain-specific and formative assessment and data to appropriately scaffold learning activities, etc.).
- The LEA will provide the two newcomer students access to language acquisition software and specialized professional development for their teachers in how to use this resource as one component of the students' overall learning plans.
- A summary of the LEA’s professional development plan will be submitted in the appropriate narrative in the LEA’s Consolidated Application for federal funds to ensure approval.
- Supporting documentation related to plan implementation (e.g., PLC notes, agendas, etc.) will be retained and submitted to ensure compliance in the Consolidated Monitoring process.

For assistance regarding the information contained in this document, or for support with other issues related to English Learner students, please contact the OSDE Office of English Language Proficiency at (405) 522-5073 or by email at oelp@sde.ok.gov.