

A Focused Look at Schools Receiving School Improvement Grants That Have Large Percentages of English Language Learner Students (NCEE 2014), examined the depth to which 11 SIG schools (including schools in California) included targeted attention to the unique needs of EL students on six dimensions:

1. School improvement goals that explicitly target ELs
2. The use of disaggregated data for ELs or data on English proficiency to inform EL instruction
3. Extended learning time (ELT) targeted toward meeting EL students' needs
4. Instructional practices that open access to content or address socialization needs of ELs
5. Professional development for teachers on addressing EL needs
6. Targeted strategies for engaging EL parents

The authors of the report note that "although ELLs share some educational needs with other learners and may benefit from instructional supports that are directed to all students, ELLs also present distinctive sets of cultural and linguistic needs as language learners and, in some cases, as immigrants. Thus, to be academically successful, ELLs may require additional supports and services that would not be required for non-ELLs" (8-9). The authors recommend that the unique needs of ELs displayed in figure 11.4 be considered in any improvement efforts in schools and districts serving ELs.

Figure 11.4. Addressing the Unique Needs of English Learners

<p>English language development and access to the academic curriculum</p>	<p>ELLs face the unique challenge of developing proficiency in English while simultaneously mastering grade-level academic content. Thus, in addition to learning social English, ELLs must develop the academic language and literacy skills needed to meaningfully access the grade-level curriculum. As ELLs are developing such skills, they require appropriate instructional modifications and supports to make academic content comprehensible. To improve ELL outcomes, schools might take actions to ensure that both ESL and content-area teachers are well prepared to employ effective instructional strategies that support ELLs' dual English language development and academic needs.</p>
<p>Culture and socialization needs</p>	<p>ELLs come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and schools may be able to enhance ELLs' educational experiences by taking that diversity into account. For example, schools might strive to support ELLs' reading comprehension by choosing instructional texts with culturally-familiar content or by preparing ELLs with appropriate background knowledge when using texts with less familiar content. Furthermore, by fostering an appreciation for diversity within the school's culture, schools may help to facilitate ELLs' transition from home to school and make them feel valued for their cultural heritage and experiences.</p>
<p>Parent and family engagement</p>	<p>Parents and families play important roles in promoting positive student behavior and achievement, but language barriers and a lack of familiarity with the U.S. system of schooling may make it difficult for parents of ELLs to stay informed about their children's progress and become involved in school decisions and activities. Schools can take steps to ease obstacles to parent involvement by providing parent outreach supports, ensuring that school-related communications are disseminated in a language and mode that parents understand, and offering services such as ESL classes and workshops on navigating the school system.</p>

<p>Issues of isolation and segregation</p>	<p>Interactions with model English speakers can help facilitate ELLs’ English language development, yet for ELLs who reside in linguistically-isolated households or communities, attend segregated schools, or participate in classes separately from English-proficient peers, access to model English speakers can be limited. To increase this access, schools might choose to incorporate more inclusive teaching practices, use more heterogeneous student groupings, create structured opportunities for ELLs to engage with English-proficient peers, and train ELLs and non-ELLs in strategies for productive peer-to-peer interactions.</p>
<p>Interruptions in schooling or limited formal schooling</p>	<p>Some ELLs have experienced interruptions in their schooling, or arrive in U.S. schools with limited prior schooling. Such students possess varying levels of literacy in their native language and may need intensive and accelerated learning supports to help prepare them to participate meaningfully in academic classrooms. Schools may look for ways to better assess and address these students’ individualized learning needs and help them adjust to academic settings by offering short-term newcomer programs or other specialized strategies.</p>
<p>Exiting from ELL status</p>	<p>An important goal in serving ELLs is to help these students become proficient enough in English that they no longer require specialized supports to engage productively with academic content and can therefore exit from ELL status. Schools might use focused strategies to help ELLs—particularly those who have been in ELL status for many years—satisfy ELL exit criteria, which vary across states and districts but can include such factors as performance on the state English language proficiency assessment, performance on state content assessments, teacher recommendations, and classroom grades. Furthermore, once students transition out of ELL status, schools can continue to monitor their progress and provide tutoring, academic counseling, and other supports to former ELLs who need it.</p>
<p>High school completion</p>	<p>Adolescent ELLs face a limited time frame in which to develop English language and literacy skills, master academic content, and satisfy course requirements for graduation. Fitting in coursework that supports their English language development and acquisition of appropriately rigorous academic content can pose challenges. Schools can help mitigate those challenges by creating instructional supports that accelerate ELLs’ acquisition of English and academic content, afford opportunities for credit recovery, allow flexible scheduling, or provide extended instructional time.</p>
<p>Source Golden, Laura, Barbara Harris, Diana Mercado-Gardia, Andrea Boyle, Kerstin Carlson Le Floch, and Jennifer O’Day. 2014. <i>A Focused Look at Schools Receiving School Improvement Grants That Have High Percentages of English Language Learner Students (NCEE 2014-4014)</i>. Washington DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.</p>	

These recommendations are consistent with those made throughout this *ELA/ELD Framework*. The recommendations in the figure address the unique needs of ELs in general; schools and districts should ensure that their improvement efforts also take into account the particular characteristics, backgrounds, and learning needs of their specific student population.