

Recommended Educational Practices for Standard English Learners

Executive Summary

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Recommended Practices for SELs

CREDITS

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Glossary of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Term
AAE	African American English
CAL	The Center for Applied Linguistics
CDOE	California Department of Education
C & I	Curriculum and instruction
ELL	English language learner
ELPS	English Language Proficiency Standards
ESL	English as a Second Language
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
LAE	Latino American English
LEP	Limited English proficient
The Panel	The Expert Panel convened for this study
PD	Professional development
SB	

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understanding (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994, p. 40). Academic English encompasses language which is both content and structure specific; for example, the academic English needed for math differs from the academic English needed for social studies (O'Neal & Ringler, 2010). Some students command standard English at school entrance, but all students must learn academic English, and proficiency in standard English is frequently needed to do so successfully.

While research and data about SELs are limited at best, it has been hypothesized that students who are not proficient in standard English may struggle in school and that their academic performance may fall below that of their non-SEL peers (Adger et al., 2007). Further, there is evidence that directly teaching standard English to SELs can improve their literacy skills (Wheeler, 2006).

Standard English Learners in Texas

Existing data do not allow the exact number of SELs in the Texas PK-12 student population to be determined. However, it is likely that Texas schools serve large numbers of SELs. Extant research has identified several language varieties and influences across the state. The Atlas of North American English (Labov, Ash & Boberg, 2005) identifies two regional language varieties which are used in Texas. These are labeled "South" and "Texas South". South is the variety used across much of the Southeastern United States, while Texas South is a combination of the varieties brought by settlers from the Lower South (Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana) and settlers from the Upper South (Tennessee, Kentucky and North Carolina). There are a number of areas of the state where students are likely to use African American English (AAE), as estimates suggest that more than half of African American children entering urban schools speak a variety of AAE fluently and that the majority of African American students speak AAE to some degree (Terry, N., 2006). Lastly, language used in Texas has also been strongly influenced by the fact that Texas

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Objective 2

Produce a description of PD best practices for educators who serve SELs based on other states' and national practices.

- x The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)¹ was contracted to write a discussion of PD issues and recommendations for SELs. CAL responded to a request from the TERC to address seven PD topics.
- x CAL based its report on research regarding effective PD, the authors' own experiences in providing PD on language variety, the authors' own knowledge of language variety-related PD efforts, and research on teachers' implementation of a language variety awareness curriculum conducted by one author.

Objective 3

Conduct an Expert Panel review of the C & I and PD reports.

- x In the second phase of this research, at the recommendation of the Legislature, the TERC convened an Expert Panel which included members with expertise in: (1) linguistics, (2) curriculum development, (3) PD, and (4) accommodating linguistic and cultural diversity within classrooms. Panel Members were Drs. Lisa Green, Elena Izquierdo, William Labov, Noma LeMoine, Rebecca Wheeler and Robert Williams.
- x The Panel met as a group to review and critique the literature review and PD reports and their findings.

Objective 4

Develop recommendations regarding best educational practice for SELs, which could include changes to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills and to other parts of the Texas Administrative and Education codes that might be used as mechanisms for implementation.

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The overall recommendation of the Panel is to increase teacher capacity such that teachers recognize SELs in their classrooms and offer instruction that addresses their needs. The Panel recognized that further information about Texas's SEL population is needed, but also believed that strategies that can be used to offer differentiated instruction to SELs (i.e., contrastive analysis/code-switching and language variety awareness instruction) exist. They have been used in classrooms and school districts in other states, and there is evidence that they have achieved success in developing students' standard English skills. While two other states have limited policies that address SELs, implementation of The Panel's recommendations would allow Texas to become the first state to have a comprehensive policy regarding instruction for this group. However, for these recommendations to be implemented there is a need to gather data that will allow the state to develop a better understanding of the SEL population in Texas. Policy issues related to addressing the needs of a heretofore unidentified group must also be addressed.

Recommendations for Future Research

In considering the state's response to the needs of SELs, it is important to recognize the limits of current knowledge about this population and to address the gaps that exist. A necessary first step in any such efforts would be to commission a study of the

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They were designed as an enrichment tool for language acquisition, and the ELPS Proficiency Level Descriptors could be used to measure SELs' standard English language development. However, there are some barriers. For example, although SELs could potentially participate in instruction offered through ESL programs, this would be at the discretion of individual districts, schools and teachers. Should SELs be served outside of ESL programs, it is likely that their instruction would be provided by general educators, rather than teachers who hold ESL certification. At present, these educators are less familiar with language acquisition instruction than are bilingual educators.

- o Standards specific to SELs, could be designed using the ELPS as a model. This would allow the advantages of the ELPS to be retained, while incorporating modifications needed to address SELs' unique needs. However, even with an existing model, developing a new system would require large amounts of effort and funding, and might lead to the need for individual identification and accountability.
 - o Finally, methods that do not require changes in statewide legal codes might be considered. For example, districts or schools most likely to serve SELs could be identified, and those districts or schools could be provided with PD or other assistance in meeting student needs.
- x The Panel recommended that language variety awareness instruction be provided to all students. However, their suggestion that changes be made in Social Studies TEKS is difficult to immediately implement. The Social Studies TEKS for the next six years have been set. It will be important to consider other, less formal ways in which language variety awareness instruction can be introduced (e.g., providing PD to Texas History teachers which introduces them to the strategies and materials needed to provide such instruction).
 - x It is important that any new initiative, including recognizing the needs of SELs, be evaluated in ways that assure that all outcomes that ensue, both intended and unintended, are examined.
 - x Efforts to recognize the needs of Sabiiounibe

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A full report and executive summary of the Recommended Educational Practices for Standard English Learners can be obtained at:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147495222&menu>