

Understanding Language: Schools to Learn from

Introduction

Our vision at Understanding Language is to increase college, career and community readiness for all students - especially English Language Learners (ELLs) - by transforming the quality of their educational experiences.

We are looking for a set of secondary schools that have done exemplary work in developing students' English language proficiency in the context of rigorous academic instruction-- schools that have produced graduates who are college, career, and community ready. In this work, we aim to study and profile a set of schools from which others can learn. Our goal is to provide educators with examples of what successful schools do to create successful learning environments for English language learners.

Help us find schools that are implementing innovative and effective school and classroom models for ELLs!

Selection Criteria

Our selection criteria for our case study schools are guided by the *Understanding Language Instructional Principles for ELLs* and *Carnegie's Ten Effective Secondary School Design Principles*. We believe that schools that best support ELLs create learning environments that incorporate the following principles:

1. Instruction focuses on providing ELLs with opportunities to engage in discipline-specific practices which are designed to build conceptual understanding and language competence in tandem.
2. Instruction leverages ELLs' home language(s), cultural assets, and prior knowledge.
3. Standards-aligned instruction for ELLs is rigorous, grade-level appropriate, and provides deliberate and appropriate scaffolds.
4. Instruction moves ELLs forward by taking into account their English proficiency level(s) and prior schooling experiences.
5. Instruction fosters ELLs' autonomy by equipping them with the strategies necessary to comprehend and use language in a variety of academic settings.
6. Diagnostic tools and formative assessment practices are employed to measure students' content knowledge, academic language competence, and participation in disciplinary practices.

Additionally, we will be examining a range of college and career readiness outcomes from the nominated schools.

Our advisory team will make the final selections for our case study schools as well as provide guidance in our study and analysis of these schools.

Online Nomination

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/UnderstandingLanguage>

Questions?

Email us at UnderstandingLanguage@stanford.edu

Understanding Language: Schools to Learn from

Nominations for Schools

Understanding Language wants your help in identifying secondary schools (middle schools and high schools) that have shown evidence of success for their English Language Learners.

Fill out the form below to nominate a school. Nomination schools should be public schools serving secondary school students (grades 6-12) in the United States. Based on your nominations, we will select five schools to profile in our work and share insights and innovative practices with our educator learning community in the fall of 2015.

Nominations are due October 6, 2014 by 5 pm.

Your Name* _____

Your Email* _____

Your Title _____

Nominee School* _____

School District* _____

State* _____

Please describe how this school has demonstrated success with English Language Learners. Be as specific as you can in your description. Please use the [online form](#) for your submission.

1. Describe the success of the school in terms of traditional (e.g., academic achievement test scores, ELL rate of reclassification, graduation rates) and/or non-traditional (e.g., measures of social emotional well-being, community engagement, special awards) measures.
2. How is the school organized to support ELLs' academic language development? (e.g. How are courses organized for ELLs? What types of collaborations take place among staff, such as between academic content and ESL/ELD specialists? Is there shared learning time within the master schedule? How do teachers grow their professional expertise?)
3. In what ways does the school support ELLs' academic language development together with preparing them for college, career, and community readiness?
4. Describe the school culture and climate. (e.g. How does the school leverage the cultural and language assets of the students and the community? How is the school staffed to reflect and respect the students' cultural and linguistic makeup?)
5. Is there a clear and ambitious mission and vision that shapes the school's work with ELLs? Describe the school's mission and vision. How does the leadership support this mission and/or vision?

Understanding Language: Schools to Learn from

ADVISORY TEAM

Kenji Hakuta (Co-Chair) is the Lee L. Jacks Professor of Education at Stanford University. He is an experimental psycholinguist who has worked on research, practice, and policy supporting English Language Learners for over 30 years.

Maria Santos (Co-Chair) is the former Deputy Superintendent for Instruction, Leadership and Equity-in-Action at the Oakland Unified School District. She has also been a Mathematics & Science Supervisor at San Francisco Unified School District, and Executive Director of the Office of English Learners at the New York City Department of Education. Santos was recently named one of *EdWeek's Leaders to Learn from* in 2014.

Susan O'Hara's research focuses on professional development for teachers, building and sustaining intellectually challenging learning communities, and approaches to providing challenging and meaningful science, math, and technology-enhanced curricula for linguistically and culturally diverse populations. Susan is currently Executive Director for the UC Davis Center for Cooperative Research and Extension Services for Schools (CRESS Center).

Lydia Stack is an international education consultant and English language teacher educator. She designs and presents workshops for Teachers of English on second language acquisition and teaching methodology for young learners. She worked in the San Francisco Unified School District as an elementary and secondary English as a Second Language teacher. She is a past president of the International TESOL organization.

Guadalupe Valdés is the Bonnie Katz Tennenbaum Professor of Education at Stanford University, where she specializes in language pedagogy and applied linguistics. Her work has focused on the English-Spanish bilingualism of Latinos in the United States and on discovering and describing how two languages are developed, used, and maintained by individuals who become bilingual in immigrant communities.

Aída Walqui is Director of the Teacher Professional Development Program at WestEd, where she directs the Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) project. As Director of QTEL, Walqui brings a career-long focus on increasing the academic success of English language learners. Walqui collaborates with school and district leaders across the country to tailor QTEL implementation that is responsive to local needs.

Jeff Zwiers has worked for more than fifteen years as a professional developer and instructional mentor in urban school settings, emphasizing the development of literacy, thinking, and academic language for linguistically and culturally diverse students. He has published books and articles on reading, thinking, and academic language. His most recent book is *Common Core Standards in Diverse Classrooms* with Susan O'Hara, and Robert Pritchard.

.....

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English Language Arts and Mathematics as well as the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) require that English Language Learners (ELLs) meet rigorous, grade level academic standards. The following principles are meant to guide teachers, coaches, ELL specialists, curriculum leaders, school principals, and district administrators as they work to develop CCSS-aligned instruction for ELLs. These principles are applicable to any type of instruction regardless of grade, proficiency level, or program type. Finally, no single principle should be considered more important than any other. All principles should be incorporated into the planning and delivery of every lesson or unit of instruction.

- 1. Instruction focuses on providing ELLs with opportunities to engage in discipline- specific practices which are designed to build conceptual understanding and language competence in tandem.** Learning is a social process that requires teachers to intentionally design learning opportunities that integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening with the practices of each discipline.
- 2. Instruction leverages ELLs' home language(s), cultural assets, and prior knowledge.** ELLs' home language(s) and culture(s) are regarded as assets and are used by the teacher in bridging prior knowledge to new knowledge, and in making content meaningful and comprehensible.
- 3. Standards-aligned instruction for ELLs is rigorous, grade-level appropriate, and provides deliberate and appropriate scaffolds.** Instruction that is rigorous and standards-aligned reflects the key shifts in the CCSS and NGSS. Such shifts require that teachers provide students with opportunities to describe their reasoning, share explanations, make conjectures, justify conclusions, argue from evidence, and negotiate meaning from complex texts. Students with developing levels of English proficiency will require instruction that carefully supports their understanding and use of emerging language as they participate in these activities.
- 4. Instruction moves ELLs forward by taking into account their English proficiency level(s) and prior schooling experiences.** ELLs within a single classroom can be heterogeneous in terms of home language(s) proficiency, proficiency in English, literacy levels in English and student's home language(s), previous experiences in schools, and time in the U.S. Teachers must be attentive to these differences and design instruction accordingly.
- 5. Instruction fosters ELLs' autonomy by equipping them with the strategies necessary to comprehend and use language in a variety of academic settings.** ELLs must learn to use a broad repertoire of strategies to construct meaning from academic talk and complex text, to participate in academic discussions, and to express themselves in writing across a variety of academic situations. Tasks must be designed to ultimately foster student independence.
- 6. Diagnostic tools and formative assessment practices are employed to measure students' content knowledge, academic language competence, and participation in disciplinary practices.** These assessment practices allow teachers to monitor students' learning so that they may adjust instruction accordingly, provide students with timely and useful feedback, and encourage students to reflect on their own thinking and learning.

These principles are based on papers and discussions from the January 2012 Understanding Language Conference at Stanford University. In developing these principles, the Understanding Language District Engagement Subcommittee drew directly from theory, research, and professional knowledge related to the education of ELLs and the papers presented at the conference. These principles explicitly reference the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, and a Framework for K-12 Science Education: Practices, Cross-cutting Concepts, and Core Ideas.

An effective secondary school design incorporates 10 integrated principles to meet the demands of the Common Core.

These were developed through a scan of design principles used by New York City Department of Education, New Visions for Public Schools, and other high-performing school networks, and refined with the feedback and contributions of experienced educators.

A HIGH-PERFORMING SECONDARY SCHOOL:

Integrates **positive youth development** to optimize student engagement & effort

Caring, consistent student-adult relationships that communicate high expectations for student learning and behavior

Clear expectations for student competencies and standards of performance

Opportunities for students to **contribute** to the school environment and have a **voice** in decisions

Encouragement of **student responsibility** for meeting learning and personal goals

Openness to and encouragement of **family participation**

Integration of **community participation**, assets, and culture



Prioritizes **mastery of rigorous standards** aligned to college & career readiness

Curriculum that **enables all students** to meet rigorous standards

Multiple **opportunities for students** to show mastery through performance-based assessments

Student advancement based on **demonstration of mastery** of knowledge and skills



Continuously improves its operations & model

Use of **performance data and analytics** to improve curriculum and instruction

Regular review and revision of **school operations** and **model** to increase effectiveness



Develops & deploys **collective strengths**

Teacher teaming that strengthens instructional design and delivery and enables professional growth

Mechanisms that promote **innovation and initiative** among teachers and staff

Differentiated roles for adults (e.g., multiple "teacher" roles) that enable effective implementation of the school model



Manages **school operations** efficiently & effectively

Purposeful use of time, people, and technology to optimize teachers' ability to support student learning

All elements of school design organized to maximize **efficient use of resources**

Flexible, customizable scheduling

Clear **operational performance goals** and accountability mechanisms

Automation of basic tasks whenever possible



Maintains an effective **human capital strategy** aligned with school model & priorities

Consistent, high-quality systems for sourcing and selecting teachers and staff

Individualized professional development that cultivates teachers' strengths and meets school needs and priorities, including use of blended learning

Fair and equitable teacher evaluation

Leadership development opportunities and a leadership pipeline



Empowers & supports students through key transitions into & beyond high school

Explicit linkages between **future academic and career pathways** and current learning and activities

Transparency regarding student status and progress toward graduation for students and parents/guardians



Remains **porous & connected**

Effective **partnerships** with organizations that enrich student learning and increase **access to community resources** and supports

Participation in a network of schools that **share knowledge** and assets



Has a clear **mission & coherent culture**

Clearly defined **purpose, goals, and school culture**

Mission and culture embodied in all aspects of school design



Personalizes student learning to meet student needs

Instruction in a **variety of learning modalities**, linked to students' strengths and learning goals

Data-driven, real-time feedback for students and teachers

Embedded, performance-based **formative assessments**

Effective use of technology for **anytime, anywhere learning**

