



A Collaborative ELD Summer School Model: Focusing on LTELs and Professional Learning



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If you want teachers to learn how to target the specific language needs of their English learners and students to experience abundant, contextualized opportunities to improve their written and oral language skills, summer school provides an excellent opportunity for deep learning for both teachers and their students.

The model I will share is based on a profound experience I had at the beginning of my career when my district set up a "two teachers per classroom" summer school model. We co-taught students in the morning and received professional learning in the afternoon, with the goal of immediate implementation with support. Fast forward 25 years to when I had the opportunity to update and pitch a version of this model to a local school district. My updated version included shared leadership, a specific EL student population, and a strategically

designed unit of study based on the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC) and using a gradual release model.

The district and I shared leadership through a division of responsibilities. I led the content and created the unit of study and corresponding materials, and led pre-service and daily professional learning. The district led the logistics which included procuring a school site, hiring teachers, organizing bus schedules, planning for breakfast and lunch, ordering and assembling materials, etc.

As an English learner advocate, I felt it was very important to target a particular population of English learners whose specific language needs were not being met. This idea was based on district data. Leadership agreed to invite English learners in grades three through eight, who were either at-risk for becoming Long-Term English

Learners (LTELs) or who had already received the designation of LTEL.

All classrooms participated in the same unit of study which provided common discussions for professional learning. The grade level differentiation focused mostly on pacing and depth. Older students went faster and could engage in more abstract conversations than younger students. All classroom materials that the teachers used for the first week and most of the second week (primarily charts, pictures, and photocopies) were prepared by the district. This supported teachers to focus on learning and applying the new strategies, not on lesson planning or preparing materials. This gradual release model allowed teachers to experience teaching instructional sequences using many new strategies first—before co-planning them with their peers. (See Figure 1.) [Editor's note: All figures

in this article are available in the online version. See the link at the end.]

I had specific goals for the participating students, their teachers, and district leadership.

- 1) For the English learners the goal was to experience rich instruction and joyful learning while improving their academic language and literacy, increase their confidence in active classroom participation, and prepare them to transfer the strategies they learned to their school-year classroom contexts.
- 2) For the participating teachers, the goal was to provide them with a structured, supportive environment and opportunities to apply their learning of practices designed to accelerate language and literacy development in real-time. I wanted them to become deeply familiar with the California English Language Development (ELD) standards and the powerful teaching described in the California English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework. Also, I wanted them to transfer their learning back to their classrooms.
- 3) For district leadership, the goal was to have a place to observe what classrooms look and sound like in an enrichment model where high-leverage literacy practices using complex texts were utilized. I wanted them to experience a print-rich environment and see what their students were capable of.

In this model, the unit of study plays a key role in the intentional design of instruction targeting the linguistic needs of our English learners designated as at-risk or

LTEL. To create a unit of study, it is critical to first determine the writing goals, because if I focus on writing, I cannot help but address all other domains of language and literacy. Also, writing is the domain with which teachers have the most difficulty and the least amount of professional learning. It is important for both teachers and students to have the opportunity to practice different text types (e.g. descriptive, explanatory, and argumentative).

For summer school, I created a Text Organization Matrix to help organize my planning and to use as an overview during professional learning. With each new text type, teachers and students co-created an anchor chart to explicitly discuss each text's task, purpose, organization, and particular language features. (See Figure 2).

Next, I selected texts and wrote instructional sequences to match each writing text type. I created these using a process for systematically scaffolding student's listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking called the Teaching & Learning Cycle (TLC) (Derewianka & Jones, 2012; Spycher & Linn-Nieves, 2014). The stages of the TLC include: Building content knowledge of the topic, Learning about the language of text types, Jointly constructing texts, Independently constructing texts, and Reflection. The TLC acknowledges that, in addition to content knowledge, students need abundant practice to understand how English works in different ways with different text types and in different content areas. This helps students match their writing to the task, purpose, and audience.

Stages two and three of the TLC— Learning about the language of text types and Jointly constructing texts—help address the missing components of most writing instruction.

A sample instructional sequence demonstrates the fluidity of the TLC. As soon as you build some content knowledge, you want to begin working more deeply with the text by creating activities focused on Part II of the ELD Standards while using Part I. Delving deeply into how English works through a variety of activities that are engaging and often game-like supports students to speak and write more academically almost immediately. (See Figure 3.)

As a classroom teacher, I loved the “two teachers per class” model because I learned so much from watching my co-teacher in action, and it was much more rewarding to plan a lesson plan together. Now I've noted that there is no downtime and therefore teachers can cover a lot more content. There is also a higher level of accountability to try out strategies that are new, especially when you will be bringing in student samples to discuss during the daily professional learning. I walked through all the classrooms at least once a day. Sometimes jumping in and teaching upon request, answering questions, and finding topics to revisit during the daily professional learning. We began our two-hour afternoon sessions by sharing what went well during the morning, such as something a teacher observed their partner do or an example of what students did. In addition to sharing ideas and reflecting

on our practices, I introduced the next day's instructional sequence, modeled strategies, and continuously linked our instruction back to the ELD standards. Over time teachers began to collaboratively plan lessons, commenting that now they had so many ideas of ways to work more deeply with texts and better understood how to plan sequences of instruction.

Students completed on-demand writing samples on their first and last days of summer school and constantly wrote in their journals. It was highly rewarding for both teachers and students to see the writing progression at a glance. Naturally, we did not expect students to know much about the content in their initial writing. Instead, we focused on analyzing their writing skills. We tallied

"approximations" that students made to help us determine areas of focus for instruction. The top areas of instructional need were subject-verb agreement ("*Bees are little insects that fly.*"), almost exclusive use of simple sentences ("*Salmon are fish.*"), pronoun reference ("*Bees have wings and bees fly.*"), prepositions ("*Sea otters live on the water.*"), and academic vocabulary ("*Bees make honey from their tail.*"). The growth students made over the month was substantial, both in quality and quantity. As one student shared with me recently, "It's easy to write when you know a lot." Most notable was the frequent use of complex sentences and precise vocabulary. (See Figure 4.)

At the end of the day, the reason we do all that we do is for our wonderfully capable students. We deeply desire for them to have the

confidence and skills which will allow them to have choices in their futures. Over the past six years, I have been incredibly fortunate to collaborate with school districts that are invested in improving educational practices for their English learners. I continue to be amazed by the results we are able to achieve during just a month of half-day summer school. Intentional instruction using complex text in accessible ways is a fantastic place to begin targeting the linguistic needs of our At-risk and LTEL students. My team and I will be expanding this model to three new districts in San Joaquin County in June 2022. Please contact me if you would like to visit to see this work in action: klinnnieves@sjcoe.net. ☞

References are available in the appendix of the online version: <https://www.gocabe.org/index.php/communications/multilingual-educator/>



LAS VOCES DE LOS ESTUDIANTES AL REGRESAR A CLASE

El otoño pasado, CABE preguntó a los estudiantes, "¿Cómo se siente volver a la escuela después de meses de aprendizaje a distancia desde casa?"

Mario Vásquez,
Grade 10, Sierra Vista High School, Baldwin Park Unified School District

Al momento de hacerme esta pregunta, simplemente puedo contestar que me siento tan emocionado como inquieto, pero también me pongo a pensar en los tantos cambios que estoy actualmente enfrentando en mi vida. Ahora que estoy viviendo en este gran país, tengo que aprender un nuevo idioma, acerca de una nueva cultura, hacer nuevos amigos, averiguar cómo es que funciona este sistema educativo primermundista, todo mientras sobrevivimos esta pandemia global y regresamos a clases después de un año entero de cuarentena.

Estoy consciente que estaremos enfrentando un sinnúmero de retos asociados a esta "nueva normalidad" y no simplemente por el miedo de los contagios de COVID-19, sino también a los tantos ajustes y dificultades que surgirán a lo largo de este momento tan esperado. A pesar del regreso a clases, debemos de tomar en cuenta algunas medidas preventivas y comenzar a desarrollar nuestra adaptabilidad. Como me dijo una vez mi hermana mayor, tenemos que aprender a ser resilientes; esta es la capacidad de enfrentar las dificultades de la vida y transformarlas en fuerza motora para superarse y salir fortalecido de ellas. Será un proceso duro, pero sé que cambiará nuestras vidas para ser mejor.

The English translation is available in the appendix of the online version: <https://www.gocabe.org/communications/multilingual-educator/>.