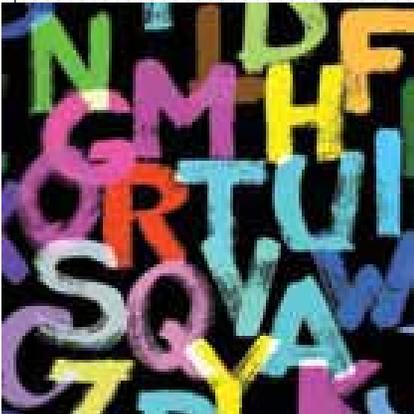


Learning from Consistently High Performing and Improving Schools for English Language Learners in Boston Public Schools

Rosann Tung, Virginia Diez, Laurie Gagnon,
Miren Uriarte, and Pam Stazesky
with Eileen de los Reyes and Antonieta Bolomey



Research Questions

- In which BPS schools were ELL students at intermediate to advanced English proficiency levels performing at a consistently high level or showing steady improvement during SY2006-SY2009?
- What were some of the practices that the school's staff attributed to their success with ELL students during SY2006-SY2009?
- Which of the practices identified by school staff were shared among the selected schools?

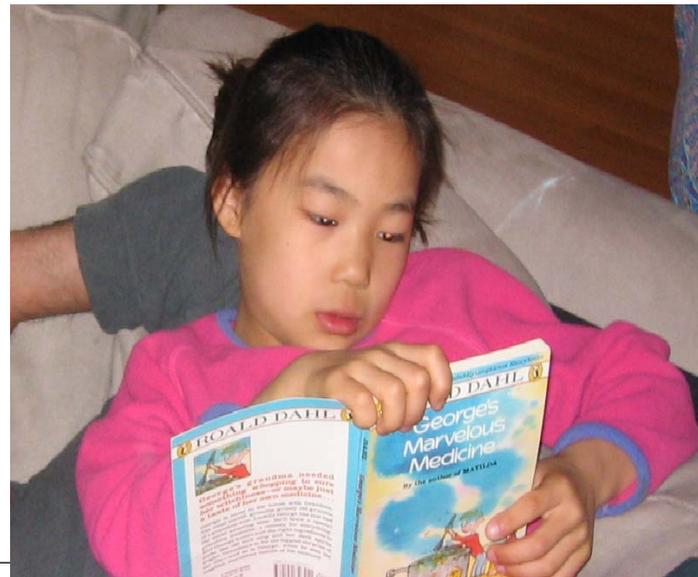
Methods

- ELL best practices framework
- Identification and selection of high performing and improving schools for ELL students at intermediate to advanced levels of English proficiency
- Case studies using an inductive approach
- Synthesis of key cross-cutting findings



Limitations to Methods

- The delay between the study period and the data collected from each school
- Restriction to MCAS proficiency of LEP students with MEPA levels 3 and 4 in the multiple regression
- Silence on other groups of ELL students present at the school who were not part of the dominant ELL group
- No comparison schools for case studies
- No student voice



Case Study Schools, SY2009

	ELA			Math		
	Observed Proficiency Rate	Predicted Proficiency Rate	Standard -ized Residual	Observed Proficiency Rate	Predicted Proficiency Rate	Standard -ized Residual
Josiah Quincy Elementary School	40.9%	17.6%	1.88	52.3%	24.2%	1.83
Sarah Greenwood K-8 School	41.7%	11.5%	2.43	50.0%	22.4%	1.80
David Ellis Elementary School	37.5%	8.6%	2.33	43.8%	18.0%	1.68
Excel High School	29.0%	17.5%	0.93	92.9%	34.8%	2.46

Case Study School Programs

	Grades	Reason for Case Study	ELL Program Type	Major Home Language	% LEP	% Low Income
Quincy School	K-5	Consistently High Performing	SEI Language Specific	Chinese dialects	46%	78%
Sarah Greenwood	K-8 (K-5 in case study)	Consistently High Performing	Two-Way Bilingual	Spanish	43%	90%
Ellis ES	K-5	Steadily Improving	SEI Language Specific	Spanish	29%	97%
Excel HS	9-12	Steadily Improving	SEI Language Specific	Vietnamese	23%	70%

Principals and LAT facilitators shared cultural and linguistic experiences with ELLs

- Principals
 - BPS bilingual teachers
 - ELLs themselves
 - Stability during study period
- LAT facilitators
 - Spoke native language of ELL students
 - Experienced ESL teachers
 - Stability during study period



Principals laid the groundwork for teachers to lead reform of ELL education

- Vision
- Recruitment of bilingual, bicultural, licensed ESL teachers
- Creation of professional learning communities
- Changes in school culture and stance towards ELL students

LAT facilitators served as catalysts for teacher growth in ELL best practices

- Compliance with district ELL policy
- Instruction
 - Knowledge of student English proficiency levels
 - Appropriate placement in classes
- Professional development
 - Collaborative coaching
 - 4-category SEI training
- Family engagement
 - Communication and trust with families



LAT facilitators served as catalysts for teacher growth in ELL best practices

I would credit [the LAT facilitator] as the one who taught me what to do... So every day during my ESL time, my kids and I worked with her, and she would model lessons, and then we would break the kids up. So I would be learning from her, and then we would divide the children to differentiate the instruction.

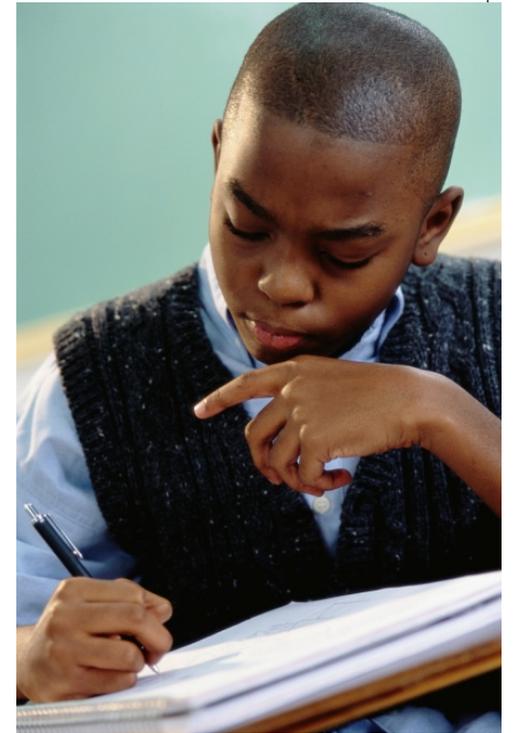
— SEI teacher, Ellis ES

The Category training was key for dealing with ELL students. The best training was with [the LAT facilitator], because she knows us and she knows the school. This school was ahead of the curve [relative to other BPS schools] because the old Principal pushed training the whole school. They all felt in it together.

— ELL teacher, Excel HS

Cultural competence crossed all aspects of school reform

- Staff representative of student body
- Climate of safety and belonging
- Family and community engagement
- Instructional approaches



...all the [SEI] teachers do have the experience of what the child is experiencing now, because we have all grown up that way. I learned my English this way. ...My parents didn't speak English at all. ... — SEI teacher, Quincy Elementary

Collaboration as effective professional development for ELL education

- Professional learning communities through teaming
- Data-based inquiry using multiple sources of data

Change starts with adults, and teacher buy-in is built through genuine collaboration, not top-down direction.

— Sarah Greenwood Case Study

What patterns do you see... What's the small, very high leverage thing that would give us the biggest bang for our buck? It made us... focus in on a group of kids.

— SAM team member, Ellis ES

Collaboration as effective professional development for ELL education

- Teachers “spoke with one voice,” were “on the same page”
- Teachers opened their classrooms, moving from isolation to trust and collegiality

I might teach a lesson...and then we would debrief...the lesson and how it went. We'd have goals ahead of time of what we wanted to look for. So it was basically peer observation. I found it to be very helpful. — Teacher, Sarah Greenwood



Coherent, standards-based curriculum, sheltered for ELL students

- High school aligned ELA and ESL curricula for a smoother transition
- SEI teachers adapted the district curriculum for ELL students

The ELA and ESL departments worked together to align the curricula so that they feed into each other. There is less differentiation for the students as they move from ESL to ELA. Now, the ESL curriculum uses more literary texts, and has the students do more analysis and essay writing.

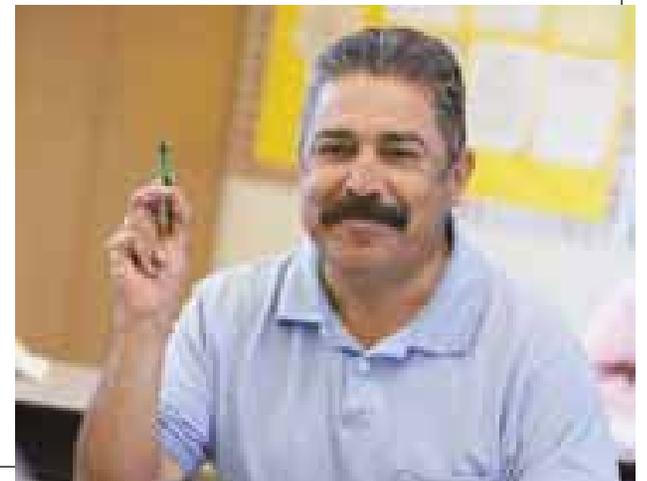
— ELL teacher, Excel HS

Whatever curriculum we get, it doesn't matter, as long as we can adapt and scaffold, we'll teach the standards in the frameworks. Our end goal is clear.

— SEI teacher, Quincy Elementary

Explicit teaching of all aspects of English and opportunities to use them

- Questioning techniques, pair sharing, peer editing, Readers' and Writers' Workshop, and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)
- Heterogeneous groupings by English proficiency
- Listening, speaking, reading, and writing in each class period
- Ability to use native language to support learning
- Extended day, afterschool, and summer programs



Selected Recommendations about Leadership

- Consider hiring Principal, LAT facilitator, and teacher candidates whose professional and life experiences prepare them to teach ELL students
- Ensure that retiring principals have succession plans, and that incoming principal roles are clear (to sustain or to turn around a school)
- Define each ELL program type and establish clear criteria to monitor fidelity of implementation

Selected Recommendations about Professional Development

- Augment the 4-category training with support for teachers to apply the practices, strategies, and ideas from the training
- Ensure that structures are in place for faculty to develop professional collaborative cultures, within and across grades
- Ensure a focus on continuous improvement of instruction
- Begin a conversation about the language acquisition needs of all student subgroups in the district, and how to support them.
- Begin a conversation about cultural competence in schools and in the classroom, and the multiple ways in which it impacts learning.

Selected Recommendations about Future Research

- This model of collaboration between researchers and district offices should inform other program areas within the district.
- The case study schools represented three of the five top non-English language groups in BPS. Thick descriptions of SEI language specific schools serving Haitian Creole and Cape-Verdean Creole native speakers well are needed.
- Study how these cross cutting themes translate into improved curriculum and instruction
- Encourage and understand student voice – What do ELL students have to say about their own academic language acquisition?

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