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■ **What kinds of knowledge and skills do administrators need in order to implement an effective program for English language learners?**

BARBARA MARLER

The qualities of an effective leader will have particular relevance to administrators in the education of English language learners (ELLs). According to Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005), the following five operating principles come into play when establishing and maintaining a leadership team:

1. **Significance**—An administrator leads educators to address “questions that matter” so that new and existing work can be reviewed against goals and emerging issues in efforts to allocate resources appropriately.
2. **Quality**—The work and approach of teachers and administrators must exemplify the highest professional standards and withstand critical scrutiny. An administrator must hold all under his or her leadership accountable for both processes and results.
3. **Responsibility**—An administrator identifies, develops, and shares information and techniques that improve student learning so that educators can learn, grow professionally, and remain relevant in their work.
4. **Integrity**—The administrator is challenged to create and maintain an environment of trust, respect, and common values to produce maximum effectiveness among staff and students.
5. **Ethics**—An administrator’s work and approach should reflect fair, just, and compassionate understanding and insight to produce opportunities for all children regardless of race, culture, language background, or socioeconomic status.
6. **Openness**—The decision-making process, led by an administrator, should be transparent to both internal and external audiences.

More specific to ELL education, an administrator needs to understand the basic process of second language acquisition and acculturation so that he or she can support teachers in their work with ELLs. To serve as an exemplary manager in this area, simple knowledge of the two processes is not sufficient. An effective administrator must know how to apply this knowledge to help support staff in creating and managing optimal school environments for learning. Such information should be used as a guide in decision making in such areas as planning for staff development for all educators (not just bilingual/ESL staff), allocating resources (staff, materials, and classroom space), crafting program design and supportive infrastructure (scheduling, language allocation, instructional priorities, collaboration opportunities), implementing policies and practices that will facilitate smooth student transitions (program entry, subject area transitions, and program exit), and designing parental involvement activities that will appeal to language minority parents (at home and school).

Additionally, an administrator needs to know the research in the area of effective instructional/assessment strategies for ELLs and the efficient use of standards-based data in order to serve as an instructional leader. Such knowledge allows the administrator to coach or direct teachers in creating and sustaining classroom environments that result in maximum academic achievement and linguistic progress for ELLs in the building or the program. This information also helps the administrator to accurately interpret student performance data in a way that has a meaningful impact on instruction and to communicate the data to a variety of stakeholders. Also, the administrator who is knowledgeable in these areas is a more effective and credible role model for staff as he or she demonstrates in his or her daily professional life what matters most in the education of ELLs.

Finally, an administrator needs to know the Federal and state law as it applies to ELLs. Many administrators are well versed in the legal requirements and legislation and court decisions pertaining to special education students. The law in relation to ELLs is less prescriptive and less prolific than the law in relation to special education. However, it does set minimum standards for education for ELLs and ensures the protection of the civil rights of language-minority students; it is therefore essential for an administrator to know this law.

The operating principles listed at the beginning of this essay set the foundation for the creation and maintenance of an effective program for all students. Knowledge and skills in the areas of second language acquisition; the process of acculturation; research in instruction/assessment strategies; and knowledge of relevant legislation, rules, and regulations move those principles into a cohesive and productive program for ELLs. *Perfect Match* (see [www.thecenterweb.org/irc/](http://www.thecenterweb.org/irc/) for information on this staff development program) pulls these principles, knowledge, and skills together to guide leadership teams in the creation of an optimal ELL program.

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■ **What kinds of knowledge and skills do general education teachers, English as a second language teachers, bilingual teachers, and support staff need to implement an effective program for English language learners?**

JOANN (JODI) CRANDALL with HOLLY STEIN and  
JOHN NELSON

We begin by looking at the knowledge and skills needed by all teachers; then we address each of the specific categories of teachers, indicating what knowledge and skills they are likely to have as well as those for which they are likely to need special professional development. Finally, we discuss some special considerations for school personnel (guidance counselors, school secretaries, other support staff). We also provide a list of suggestions for professional development activities to promote better un-

sion and controversy in schools today about ELLs/bilingual learners, quite a bit is known about how children learn in two languages. We know why it takes so long for ELLs/bilingual learners to develop the academic language and literacies they need for academic success. We know that knowledge and skills developed in the primary language in oral and literacy domains transfer to English, the second language. We know that students can more readily learn abstract, cognitively challenging content-area concepts through their stronger language, and that ELLs must continue to develop cognitively while they are acquiring English in order to achieve academically at school. We know that universal concepts learned in one language do not need to be learned again in another language because they transfer. We know that it is easier to learn to read in a language that one is orally proficient in. Our understanding of this theoretical foundation has significant implications for how we teach content-area concepts to ELLs, and when and how we introduce second language literacy to these students. We also know that it is easier to acquire an additional language, and to learn in that language, in a familiar cultural context. Thus, cultural relevance must be central to the ELL classroom and school.

The responses offered by the experts in this chapter and throughout this guide are based on research on how younger and older students learn in two or more languages. To help administrators and leadership team members apply these research findings to their classrooms and educational programs, the chapter concludes with a Survey for Reflection and Action. Educational leaders can use this survey in their schools to determine whether their policies, programs, practices, and assessments are theoretically sound, and to address any discrepancies they find.

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## ■ How long does it take for an English language learner to become proficient in a second language?

JIM CUMMINS

This question seems fairly straightforward until we probe a little deeper into what we mean by proficient and what aspects of second language proficiency we are talking about.

### WHAT IS LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY?

As all administrators who have to deal with state standards and high-stakes assessments know, the term *proficient* can refer to widely different levels of actual competence, depending on the test and state standards. What counts as proficient in one state on a reading assessment, for example, may be far from proficient in another state. For purposes of thinking about English language learners' (ELLs') academic progress in English, however, we can define proficient in relation to the level of English competency of their native English-speaking peers. So the question can be rephrased as, How long does it take ELLs to catch up to their native English-speaking peers in English proficiency?

This brings us to the issue of what we mean by English proficiency. Although we commonly talk about “learning English” as though English proficiency were a unitary construct, we can all intuitively recognize some clear distinctions within that notion of English proficiency. These distinctions are apparent whether we are talking about native speakers of a language or second language learners. Specifically, we know that *conversational fluency* is quite different from *academic proficiency* in a language. The fast talkers in our classes are not necessarily the best readers. We also know that there are major differences between many of the technical or rule-governed aspects of a language, such as the rules for sound-symbol relationships (phonics), spelling, grammar, discourse, and so on, and the kinds of skills involved in reading comprehension. Thus, we can begin to distinguish three very different aspects of language proficiency: *conversational fluency*, *discrete language skills*, and *academic language proficiency*.

#### **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TO CATCH UP ACADEMICALLY?**

Very different time periods are required for ELLs to catch up to their peers in each of the three dimensions of proficiency. It usually takes about one to two years for students to become reasonably fluent in conversational English. About the same time is typically required for many ELLs in the early grades to acquire basic decoding skills in English to a level similar to that of their English-speaking classmates of similar socioeconomic background. However, research studies conducted in several countries show that second language learners usually need at least five years to catch up to native English speakers in academic English. Sometimes the catch-up period is much longer. Research conducted in Israel, for example, showed that Russian and Ethiopian immigrant students required about nine years to catch up to their peers in Hebrew academic skills.

These observations bring us to the next questions: What exactly is academic English? Why does it take so long for ELLs to catch up in this dimension of language?

#### **WHAT IS ACADEMIC ENGLISH?**

Academic English is the language of school success. As students progress through the grades, they are required to read, write, and talk about increasingly complex texts in the content areas of the curriculum (science, math, social studies, literature). Academic language becomes increasingly complex after grades three and four. The complexity of academic language reflects the following:

- The difficulty of the concepts that students are required to understand.
- The vocabulary load in content texts, which may include many low-frequency and technical words (primarily from Latin and Greek sources) that are rarely used in typical conversation.

- Increasingly sophisticated grammatical constructions and discourse structures that, again, are almost never used in everyday conversational contexts. By the upper grades of elementary school, students encounter the frequent use of the passive voice, embedded clauses, and extended noun phrases in a wide range of genres.

Not only are students required to read this language, they must also use it in writing reports and essays and in other forms of homework.

#### **WHY DOES IT TAKE SO LONG?**

One reason that catching up in academic English is challenging for ELLs, then, is the complexity of academic language. A second reason is that they are trying to catch up to a moving target. Native English-speaking students are not standing still waiting for ELLs to catch up. Every year, they make gains in reading, writing, and vocabulary abilities. So ELLs have to run faster to bridge the gap. In fact, in order to catch up within six years, ELLs must make fifteen months' gain in every ten-month school year. The average student makes just ten months' gain in every ten-month school year.

#### **HOW CAN WE SUPPORT STUDENTS IN ACQUIRING ACADEMIC ENGLISH?**

Understanding the nature of academic language points to some of the ways we can help students acquire it. If academic language is found in texts rather than in typical conversations, then we have to ensure that students are given ample opportunities and encouragement to read extensively. Thus, an administrative priority should be to ensure that school and classroom libraries are well stocked with engaging books. Encouraging students to write for authentic purposes is also crucial. Even recently arrived ELLs can create dual language books by writing stories or accounts of their experiences, initially in their first language and then working with peers, teachers, volunteers, older bilingual students, and even technology (Babel Fish or Google language tools) to translate and adapt their writing into English. (Two good web-sites with examples are <http://schools.peel.schools.org/1363/pages/dual.aspx> and <http://www.multiliteracies.ca>). Finally, some technology tools may be useful. An example is the the e-Lective Language Learning program, which provides supports to enable students to access the curriculum and to harvest the language of academic texts (<http://www.dyned.com/products/el/>).

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#### **H. GARY COOK**

Two critical notions are behind these questions: "What do we mean by proficiency in English?" and "What do we mean by how long?" In the con-