



Success Indicator CC02: All personnel (including front office staff, bus drivers, custodians, learning/behavioral support classroom aides, and cafeteria workers) are provided with information on the demographics of the students served by the school (e.g., native languages, home countries, age of arrival in the U.S., educational background in home country and in U.S). (5861)

Overview: Providing school personnel critical background data on the ELs they serve has the potential to close achievement and motivation gaps between ELs and other students by providing ELs new opportunities to learn and socialize in a safe environment (Hawley & Wolf, 2011). Training school personnel can change the culture of the school in positive ways by making it more accepting of diversity and welcoming to ELs and their families (August & Hakuta, 1998; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 2004; Theoharis & O’Toole, 2011), and by establishing and maintaining effective dialog between the school, ELs, and their families (U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Weiss, López, & Rosenberg, 2010).

School personnel can also greatly benefit from understanding the issues of power dynamics in the school and understanding the ELs’ language and culture to better support all linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Educators with knowledge about ELs’ backgrounds are better prepared to “meet the needs of racially and ethnically diverse students, often referred to as ‘Culturally Responsive Pedagogy’” (Hawley & Wolf, 2011, p. 2), and non-teaching staff can support ELs as they position themselves socially within the school.

Questions: What impact might ensuring all personnel are familiar with the demographics of the students they serve have on ELs’ school experiences? How might school personnel utilize their knowledge about students’ backgrounds?

What impact might ensuring all personnel are familiar with the demographics of the students they serve have on ELs’ school experiences?

Knowing ELs’ academic and demographic profiles is necessary for US school staff to engage in practices that counter disparaging ideologies about language other than English and negative practices directed towards learners of English. Language is not a series of linguistic rules bounded by territorial and national spaces (Paasi, 2002). Rather, it is a social construct, “influenced by social, cultural, political, and economic factors and framed within social practices” (García, 2014, p. 95). Thus, to support ELs’ social, as well as academic, growth, U.S. school personnel must first understand the attitudes, assumptions, and biases ELs encounter as English language learners in the US. The context in which these students are learning their second language shapes how they see themselves as well as their perceptions of English and their first language (Creese & Blackwell, 2010).

The English language has been recognized around the world as the language of empire, imperialism, and globalization (García, 2014). According to Gándara & Hopkins (2010), the U.S. has ventured to keep the dominance of English use in public life and in schools. Thus, where, when, and how ELs are instructed in English raises issues of power and equity by pointing at whose language is valued and whose is not (Blommaert, 2010). Historically, in the United States, monolingual English speakers have held a superior status in the public domain, especially in schools (García, 2014). The U.S. does not have an official English language policy; rather, a series of laws that provide non-English speaking stu-



dents a right to access the English language and to have access to an equitable education while they are doing so (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). However, it has been argued that the laws contradict the promise to provide successful English learning for English Language Learners (ELLs). Pyon (2009) asserts that Title VI of the Civil Rights Movement (1964), which disallows discrimination based on cultural origin, including language, and Title VII, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) or Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1965 (U.S. Congress 1968, 816), have not been agents supportive of the equitable literacy education of those whose first language is not English.

Research has shown that, while disassociation is detrimental to student growth (García & Menken, 2010), student identification with the school community promotes learning (Nieto, 1999). To change this political and linguistic landscape, school personnel can explore the languages used in the school, juxtaposing the ways English language is used and described versus the languages of the school's ELs. School personnel can then work against the marginalization by explicitly acknowledging the value of bilingualism in today's global society and economy and providing an environment that values multilingualism.

Leadership can provide training to personnel to help them develop their awareness of biased linguistic and cultural practices in schools, and create an environment sensitive to ELs' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Providing programs that provide personnel with a safe and nonjudgmental space for critical reflection and professional development may be more appropriate for discussing such sensitive topics (for a discussion of possible themes for training, see Garcia [2017] to learn about Critical Multilingual Awareness, and Smith and Murillo [2015] to learn about Human Capital).

How might school personnel utilize their knowledge about students' background?

Smith and Murillo (2015) argue that affective, cognitive, social, cultural, academic, and economic forms of human capital are key in understanding and creating agreeable climates for ELs. By having a greater awareness of these as well as demographics, all personnel can positively contribute in to the overall experiences of ELs in their schools.

Affective capital is “a person's emotional resources and

feelings about oneself and others” (Smith & Murillo, 2015, p. 34), which a person is made aware of through interaction with others. Consequently, in schools where students are encouraged to utilize both English and their first language, ELs are expected to develop at a higher level emotionally and academically.

In practice, this might include:

- Staff greeting students in their home languages
- Asking students to teach them something in their home language
- Posting signage in students' home language
- Avoiding comments that discourage home language use both in and out of classrooms

Cognitive capital, which deals with the intellectual resources of individuals (Smith & Murillo, 2015, p. 65), also encourages the use of both ELs' languages. According to this construct, speaking and writing in multiple languages offers increased chances for academic growth. Smith and Murillo (2015) recommended that personnel recognize that what ELs can express in English may not be a true representation of their cognitive ability.

In practice, this might include:

- Using differentiated assessments
- Making enrollment decisions, especially for higher level classes, based on several data sources
- Use multiple modes to communicate with students and families

Social capital, defined as the networks of relations that individuals draw upon to pursue their goals (Lin, 1999), can equip school personnel with the understanding that the more ELs have opportunities to create relations with members of the school community, the more they are prone to succeeding in school.

In practice, this might include:

- Engage ELs in social conversation (i.e., in cafeteria, on bus, in library, at entrance)
- Invite ELs to participate in social events, such as school dances, sports, or clubs.
- Provide wait time (i.e., do not rush conversations) to allow ELs to fully express themselves

Cultural Capital (or funds of knowledge), encourages personnel to reflect on the fact that “there exist many ways to act and interact with others, and therefore encourages them to create a non-subjective environment



in which all cultures and ways of being are respected and valued” (Smith & Murillo, 2015, p. 66). In the classroom, for example, this type of non-subjective environment can be demonstrated when a teacher avoids negative views of ELs because they do not speak standard English.

In practice, this might include:

- Learn to properly pronounce students’ names.
- Expand the repertoire of multicultural resources in the library and curriculum.
- Plan activities that enable all students to explore their identity, with an emphasis on
 - Perceiving cultural similarities and differences
 - Treating one another with respect
 - Building constructive cross-cultural relationships
 - Challenging stereotypes or exclusion

Academic Capital includes grades, test scores, graduation rates, letters of recommendation, scholarships, degrees earned, publications, etc., with distinct implications for individuals and groups (Smith & Murillo, 2015, p. 67).

In practice, this might include:

- Using multiple assessments to identify students’ academic strengths as well as needs
- Encourage students to pursue challenging coursework
- Invite students to participate in academic clubs or other related activities

Economic Capital is “the material and financial resources that actors hold or can easily access” (Smith & Murillo, 2015, p. 67). Although it may not directly affect teaching, it can negatively impact ELs’ learning, and school personnel can benefit from understanding it. EL families’ chances of obtaining gainful employment may be hindered by a language barrier. Therefore, an EL parent may have to resort to working in several lower-paying jobs and thus be too busy to attend school meetings or be difficult to reach during school hours. An understanding of the effects of economic capital may make school personnel more sensitive to ELs and their families as they reinforce school policies, such as collecting late cafeteria fees or making a parent come into the school for an IEP meeting.

In practice, this might include:

- Find a time and place that is better suited for parents to attend meetings

- Create an economic plan that will alleviate pressure on ELs and their families

Cognizance of these forms of human capital may bring the realization to school personnel that not speaking the dominant school language causes ELs to be at a systemic disadvantage in society.

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