Core Function → **Instructional Practices**

Effective Practice → **All ELs have access to comprehensible, grade-level, standards-based instruction in all content areas**

Success Indicator IN04: The school provides professional development training to all teachers (including life skills, music, art, technology, and physical education) focused on differentiated instruction based on the proficiency levels of the ELs in their classrooms. (5881)

Overview: ELs often experience poorer outcomes in part because most mainstream content teachers have not received pre-service training (Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Reyes & Rojas, 2014), or participated in in-service professional development (PD) designed to foster EL instruction (Ballentyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008). Not surprisingly, many beginning as well as veteran teachers report that their preparation to teach ELs is inadequate (Correll, 2016; Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002; Reeves, 2006). Additionally, many teachers hold the traditional view that students first need to learn English before they can learn disciplinary content (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), and that English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers are primarily responsible for teaching English to EL students (Pettit, 2011). Clearly many teachers need professional learning experiences to build their capacity to address the instructional needs of EL students (Reyes & Rojas, 2014).

Questions: Is our school currently differentiating instruction for all of our students? For our EL students in particular? Have our teachers received professional development to build their capacity and ability to differentiate instruction for our EL students?

What does the research say about differentiating instruction for EL students?

Differentiated instruction is "an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the diverse needs of individual students and small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunities for each student in a classroom" (Tomlinson, et al., 2003, p. 121). Differentiating instruction allows teachers to provide EL students with access to learning the same academic content as their native English-speaking peers. Researchers at Stanford University (2013) derived key instructional principles that reflect recent shifts towards ensuring EL students have equitable access to standards-based learning within content areas, including:

- Standards-aligned instruction for ELs is rigorous, grade-level appropriate, and provides deliberate and appropriate scaffolds; and,
- Instruction moves ELs forward by taking into account their English proficiency level(s) and prior schooling experiences.

Scaffolds (instructional supports) are designed to help students engage with grade-level content in ways that enhance their learning and develop their language skills (Goldenberg, 2008). Scaffolds include teaching the academic language necessary for learning within a discipline (e.g., DiCerbo, Anstrom, Baker & Rivera, 2014), and encouraging the use of students' prior knowledge and experience to make intellectual claims (e.g., Kibler, Valdés, and Walqui, 2014). Other scaffolding approaches include using "sheltering" techniques such as discourse adaptations (modifying teacher talk so that it is comprehensible to ELs), and print modifications such as adding visuals to a text (e.g., Echevarria & Short, 2010). These techniques help teachers make content accessible to their ELs while simultaneously

developing their academic English proficiency (Short, 2013). Sheltering techniques provide a menu of options and are a starting point; teachers must then "make decisions on how to differentiate based on language proficiency [and then] review the material and the task required for their native English speakers and 'tier' the activity to meet the ELs at the appropriate level" (Baecher, 2011, p. 67). This step is critical as ELs within a single classroom can be heterogeneous in terms of their English (both language and literacy) and home language (both language and literacy) proficiency, as well as their prior schooling and amount of time they have been in the U.S. (Stanford University, 2013). It is important to note that scaffolding instruction and differentiation based on language proficiency does not mean reducing expectations or simplifying instruction for ELs. Rather, these techniques serve to support EL's understanding and use of emerging language as they engage in standards-based learning that challenges their thinking and builds their capacity to become competent and autonomous learners within different disciplines (Stanford University, 2013).

How have research findings been incorporated within professional development to build teachers' capacity to provide differentiated instruction for EL students?

Research initiatives have examined the impact of PD on teachers' ability to use differentiated instructional strategies for ELs within English, math, science, and social studies (e.g., Janzen, 2008; Llosa, et al., 2016; Johnson, Bolshakova, & Waldron, 2016) and discussions of ways to differentiate instruction by providing scaffolding in other areas such as technology, arts, and physical education (e.g., Sato & Hodge, 2016). Several widely-used PD approaches, such as the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) programs are designed to help teachers reach high-level language and content goals with ELs. Results for these programs are mixed; more rigorous control studies have generally yielded few significant benefits for improving instruction or EL achievement (Bos, et al., 2012; Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Canges, & Francis, 2011). Implementation issues and study attrition likely contributed to these results; researchers studying both programs noted that follow-up support for teachers is crucial in the form of sustained coaching, onsite collaboration, and sufficient time for teacher planning.

Several rigorous studies have examined large-scale science interventions designed to improve EL learning that include comprehensive and sustained PD for science teachers (e.g., Johnson, et al., 2016; Llosa, et al., 2016). The Transformative Professional Development (TPD) model significantly enhanced middle school science teacher quality, attitudes toward underrepresented students, and science achievement within a large, low-performing urban district with a predominantly Latino student population (Johnson et al., 2016). The PSELL 5th grade science inquiry and language development program produced significant improvements in both researcher-developed and state science tests for all subgroups of ELs (ELs, recently reclassified ELs, and former ELs) (Llosa, et al., 2016). Both programs incorporated critical features of effective professional development (Desimone, 2009), including content focus (science), active learning experiences (e.g., providing teachers with opportunities for immersion within effective pedagogy), coherence (e.g., aligned with standards), sustained duration, and collective participation (all science teachers participated from each school).

What are best practices for providing professional development that can be implemented with fidelity to ensure that teachers can successfully differentiate instruction for EL students?

As noted above, professional development for teachers should be continuous, sustained, and collaborative, rather than isolated and brief "one-shot" workshops (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Desimone, 2009). Short (2013) offers the following research-based guidelines to ensure rigorous PD and high fidelity implementation for classroom teachers working to differentiate instruction for ELs:

1. Begin with PD that has been validated by research and that addresses the knowledge and skills teachers need to work with ELs.
2. Give teachers ample time to learn content from PD and incorporate it into their teaching.
3. Ensure that PD is job-embedded and specific to teachers' content area, allowing time for teachers to practice and reflect on the instructional techniques.
4. Provide plenty of support through instructional coaches, professional learning communities (PLCs), etc.; coaches can observe instruction and provide feedback, and PLCs allow for collaborative planning.

5. Explain the theoretical basis behind the PD to allow teachers to move beyond surface understanding of PD components, particularly with respect to unique second language learning of ELs.

6. Engage school administration so they fully understand the PD and can monitor evidence of implementation, evaluate its effectiveness, and keep the intervention going after PD ends.

7. Assess teacher implementation with an observation tool to measure fidelity and share results in coaching/mentoring systems to support teacher learning.

Effective PD can provide teachers with the specialized knowledge and strategies necessary to teach English and academic content to ELs. This PD should include all classroom teachers (not just core content teachers) and administrators. Involving the entire teaching staff signals that everyone is responsible for ensuring EL students have equitable access to high quality instruction in all areas (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

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Additional Resources

These resources describe a variety of differentiated instruction strategies within the major content areas and contain plenty of practical resources:

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