

Leveraging Afterschool for English Learner Success

Resources

This compilation of resources was created with the needs of afterschool programs and staff in mind. Many were written by and for educators, and include evidence-based best practices that can be used in afterschool environments to support English Learners—and all kids! Use them for staff development year-round during trainings, workshops, meetings, and coaching sessions, and make the most of afterschool as a vital asset for narrowing the achievement gap. Click on the title of any article to open a full version.

→ **Part I: English Learners in California, A Model** orients afterschool staff to the big picture of challenges and needs for English Learners across California, home to the largest population of ELs in the nation. It includes how English language proficiency and academic progress are tested and classified, statistics and data, common issues facing immigrant children and youth, and specific recommendations identified by California classroom teachers. The world of ELs in education has a language all its own. Acronyms and terminology can be found in the [California Department of Education's English Learners in California: Frequently Asked Questions](#).

→ **Part II: Best Practices** examines research-based strategies and techniques to help English Learners develop their language skills in afterschool settings, where mixed EL and non-EL groups, mixed ages and grades, and informal, hands-on teaching and learning are the norm. Wondering where to start? Claude Goldenberg's [Teaching English Language Learners: What the Research Does—and Does Not—Say](#), is a great overview of what the experts are saying.

→ **Part III: Afterschool and ELs** provides a collection of reports examining the benefits of afterschool programming for EL students. Together, they help make the case for afterschool as a powerful resource for boosting academic achievement, English language proficiency and family engagement. Specific recommendations for recruiting and supporting the growing population of ELs is included. [Maximizing After School Opportunities for English Learners](#), released by Alliance for a Better Community in 2009, lays out four helpful recommendations to facilitate high quality experiences for English Learners.

→ **Part IV: Online Resources** spotlights websites and blogs for great EL activity, project, and game ideas. Some of the most creative resources can be downloaded, often free. English language teaching blogs highlight innovative strategies, conferences, and events, and connect with others sharing an interest in the topic. To start, check out [Language and Literacy for All](#), Foundations, Inc.'s blog with strategies and commentary on English Learners and Grade Level Reading.

Part I: English Learners in California, A Model

English Learners in California: What the Numbers Say, Ed Source, March 2008

The report analyzes geographic representation across the state, how English Learner proficiency is classified, and test performance. Charts and graphics detail home language and geographic breakdowns by county and school district, distribution across grade levels, the English Learner Designation/Redesignation Process, California English Language Development Test (CELDT) scores broken down across various categories, and the California Standard Tests (CST) and California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) scores.

English Learners in California: Frequently Asked Questions, California Department of Education, August 2006

This document explains support structures for English Learners in California schools and deconstructs the many systems and processes related to ELs. Topics include: the process for identifying ELs; different language acquisition programs including Sheltered English Immersion (SEI), Dual Language, and Two-Way Immersion; English Language Development (ELD) standards; testing regulations and procedures involving ELs; and a list of acronyms for terms and programs used in schools.

Has Progress Been Made in Raising Achievement for English Language Learners? Center on Education Policy, 2010

The Center on Education Policy analyzes national trends in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) data from 2006-2008, concluding that while gains are being made in all areas, large disparities exist. The report provides statistics and graphs useful for workshops and other presentations. California data is included throughout.

Listening to Teachers of English Language Learners: A Survey of California Teachers' Challenges, Experiences, and Professional Development Needs, Gandara, P., Maxwell-Jolly, J., and Driscoll, A., The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, 2005

Through surveys and discussions with over 5,000 teachers, the authors gathered educators' insights, challenges, and recommendations related to working with English Learners. Teachers generally reported positive attitudes, and showed ingenuity, hard work, and persistence when working with ELs; most, however, identified language barriers and lack of instructional time as obstacles to providing the type and level of supports desired.

Children in Immigrant Families: A California Data Brief, Newhouse, C., Children Now, August 2007

Recognizing that fully serving and supporting English Learners requires an understanding of immigrants' lives both inside and outside of school, Newhouse explores the life experiences of children in immigrant families. The complexity of the children's lives substantiates the idea that many need greater supports than schools alone are equipped to provide.

Reparable Harm: Fulfilling the Unkept Promise of Educational Opportunity for California's Long Term English Learners, Olsen, L., Californians Together, 2010

This report, by [Californians Together](#) addresses the large number of students who remain English learners despite many years of schooling. Common characteristics of long-term ELs in later grades include high social English proficiency and low reading and writing skills. Basic principles and promising approaches for school districts to meet the needs of English Learners more effectively are outlined.

Part II: Best Practices

Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades, Gersten, R., Baker, S., Shanahan, T., Linan-Thompson, S., Scarcella, R. and Collins, P., Institute of Educational Sciences, 2007

This report offers five evidence-based recommendations for supporting literacy and English language instruction in the early years. Three to four suggestions for implementation accompany each recommendation, along with possible roadblocks and corresponding solutions.

Teaching English Language Learners: What the Research Does—and Does Not—Say, Goldenberg, C., *American Educator*, Summer 2008

Goldenberg’s article examines recent evidence surrounding best practices for making progress with English Learners. The article promotes the idea of teachers deliberately modifying instruction in all subjects in response to ELs’ language strengths, challenges, and prior knowledge.

Succeeding With English Language Learners: Lessons Learned from the Great City Schools, Horwitz, A.R., et al., *The Council of Great City Schools*, October 2009

The Council of Great City Schools examines four large urban districts with high concentrations of English Learners (including San Francisco), and addresses best practices at the system level. Findings indicate that EL success results from sustained, well-articulated efforts involving highly trained teachers and staff, shared accountability, and data-driven decision making.

How Languages are Learned, Lightbown, P. M. & Spada, N., Oxford University Press, 2006. Chapter 7: Popular ideas about language learning revisited (pp. 183-195)

A number of commonly-held assumptions about second language acquisition are presented in an accessible format, followed by a short summary of evidence supporting or refuting each claim. Practical implications for program design, pedagogical techniques, and educational activities are emphasized.

Frontloading, San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families, 2009

Frontloading, sometimes called *pre-teaching*, is a process of introducing or exposing students to academic concepts, vocabulary, or skills that will be used in subsequent classwork. Frontloading is especially useful for ELs, who may need additional time to learn and master new material.

What Teachers Need to Know About Language, Wong Fillmore, L., and Snow, C., ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 2000

Teachers in the 21st century face immense pressure to support the increasing number of children from immigrant families, but often lack training. Topics include the basic units of language, how words and grammar are acquired, and the ideal environment for language learning. Emphasis is placed on the California education system.

More Than Just Talk: English Language Learning in Afterschool, Weisburd, C., Center for Afterschool Education, Foundations, Inc., 2007

Afterschool is an excellent opportunity for English language development. *More Than Just Talk* provides information, techniques, and activities staff need to support and encourage practice with English, to maximize games, activities, and projects for vocabulary and language expansion, and to connect with families. This guidebook, including a CD of activities and staff training plans, is available for purchase at www.afterschooled.org or on loan free from the California Afterschool Resource Center (click [here](#) for more information).

Oral-Language Skills for English Learners Focus of Researchers, Zehr, M.A., Education Week, October 2009

Zehr's *Education Week* article highlights the growing body of evidence that oral language underlies literacy and other academic skills, with more speaking time improving academic vocabulary and school performance.

Part III: Afterschool and ELs

Learning English and Beyond: A Holistic Approach for Supporting English Learners in After School, Bhattacharya, J., and Quiroga, J., California Tomorrow, October 2009

This report takes a holistic look at the socio-emotional and cultural needs of English Learners, presenting various strategies, such as building connections between ELs and native-speaker peers, supporting the acquisition of academic English, and others.

Supporting Student Outcomes through Expanded Learning Opportunities, from Enhancing School Reform through Expanded Learning, Little, P.M., Harvard Family Research Project, January 2009

Beginning with a brief history of afterschool programs as well as the impact of the recent reauthorization of 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) legislation, Little concludes that the most effective afterschool programs have mutually beneficial relationships with schools.

After School Programs in the Central Valley Benefit Children and Youth: Evaluation Results from the 2006-2007 School Year, Newhouse, C., Central Valley Afterschool Foundation, 2008

Using data collected from more than 80 Central Valley afterschool programs, Newhouse highlights the positive effect of afterschool programs on attendance, language learning, and academic performance for ELs. A number of policy recommendations, including the need for more professional development to support language development are included.

Gaining a Voice After School: Why After School Programs Are a Powerful Resource for English-Language Learners, Weisburd, C., Education Week, February 2008

Highlighting the relationships among practice, motivation, experience, and vocabulary and language development, Weisburd offers a rationale for how and why afterschool can play a vital role for English learners and learning.

Putting the Pieces of the Puzzle Together: How Systematic Vocabulary Instruction and Expanded Learning Time Can Address the Literacy Gap, White, C., and Kim, J., Center for American Progress, 2009

Expanded learning opportunities can help ELs—and all students—gain academic vocabulary. This report offers a wealth of evidence for the importance of systematic vocabulary development during expanded learning time. This material was created by the [Center for American Progress](#).

Maximizing After School Opportunities for English Learners, Zarate, C., Alliance for a Better Community, 2009

This report from the Alliance for a Better Community examines the status of ELs and afterschool in CA, roles afterschool programs could play in supporting English Learners, and offers four recommendations for facilitating high quality educational experiences for English Learners.

Part IV: Online Resources

Websites

Colorín Colorado A bilingual site for families and educators of English Learners produced by PBS. Visit the site for web resources, do-able strategies, and ideas on a range of topics perfect for afterschool.

Reading Rockets Sister site to *Colorín Colorado*, *Reading Rockets* offers resources for helping struggling readers; many are easily do-able by afterschool staff without formal training. An extensive parent section includes guides for empowering parents and for bilingual families.

Dave's ESL Cafe The *Idea Cookbook* offers great ideas for getting EL students talking, reading, using the web to learn English, and more. You'll also find a dictionary of idioms and phrasal verbs, ideal for older English learners.

In the STARlight The STARlight Consortium for Academic Achievement, a California-based resource, features online editions of a short newsletter with afterschool-relevant topics that would make a great 2-3 page handout at a staff training.

Team Afterschool Created by the Region 9 Technical Assistance Center (RTAC) for After School Programs, Team Afterschool showcases best practices using short videos along with ideas for high quality afterschool.

Thinkfinity *Thinkfinity* offers dozens of free interactive activities, (perfect for downtime in afterschool programs), as well as project-based modules created for afterschool.

Blogs

Language and Literacy for All All children—English Learners and native English speakers alike—need to develop strong language and literacy skills to succeed in school and beyond. Foundations, Inc.'s blog provides a mix of resources, strategies, and commentary, along with concrete, engaging ideas for teaching and enrichment.

Learning the Language This popular *Education Week* blog highlights the latest research, commentary, and policy relevant to ELs and immigrants across the U.S.

Educational Technology in ELT The ET blog provides ideas for using educational technology tools to enhance English teaching and learning.

Larry Ferlazzo's Websites of the Day Larry Ferlazzo is a Sacramento-based teacher and former community organizer with a large online following. Each day, his blog features a resource with the English learner in mind. Many of the sites chosen are excellent for planning activities and projects around current events.