A Call for Equity and Excellence for English Language Learners in Washington

February 2016

Executive Summary

This Bilingual Education Advisory Committee (BEAC) position paper identifies the significant challenges facing Washington school districts in seeking to implement bilingual programs to address the specific needs of English language learners (ELL). These challenges include: implementation of research-based bilingual ELL program models, effective assessments and student monitoring systems, and training and professional development for both pre-service and in-service educators in ELL best practices. Originally written in 2010, the paper has been updated by BEAC in 2015 to recognize progress and reflect new opportunities and challenges.

These challenges are fundamentally policy issues, and, ultimately, leadership issues. Members of BEAC write this paper to galvanize Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Washington school districts and to hold ourselves responsible and accountable to provide education for all students, particularly our English language learners, to be prepared for success in a global 21st century economy.

Call to Action

We believe that to ensure meaningful and effective participation of ELLs, it is imperative that districts and schools live up to the state’s vision for culturally and linguistically diverse learners by providing ELL students an instructional environment that achieves both state and national standards and honors the linguistic and cultural resources they bring to the classroom.

We believe that school districts have the obligation to prepare all students, including ELLs, for career and college success. Every English language learner must have access to rigorous content, with supports provided, to achieve at the same level as their English speaking peers.

Districts should also provide ELLs with the opportunity to maintain and/or develop literacy in their native language as well as in English. We believe that literacy in a student’s native language best prepares our learners for the world in which they compete.

Teachers must be prepared with the knowledge, skills, and systems for implementing appropriate instructional strategies to address the unique needs of each student; including understanding of the language demands of the curriculum, knowing how to assess and address an ELL student’s language needs, their strengths, and the background knowledge students bring to the classroom.
A Call for Equity and Excellence for English Language Learners in Washington

This position paper is the work of OSPI's Bilingual Education Advisory Committee (BEAC) which represents a diverse group of educators and parents from across the state of Washington. The role of BEAC is to advise the State Superintendent on issues related to bilingual students to "help facilitate the provisions of bilingual education and related services in order to meet the unique needs of students whose primary language is other than English" and to support the Bilingual Education Program at OSPI (BEAC Bylaws). This paper has been prepared with this role and responsibility in mind.

With this paper, we examine some of the factors leading to the current needs of ELLs, including limited access to research-based ELL program implementation practices, need for effective assessment and student monitoring systems, and increased teacher training and professional development in ELL best practices. This paper will examine current data, instructional practices, and ELL research. It will also review previous BEAC recommendations, update progress on them, and name next steps on how to improve academic outcomes for ELLs in the state of Washington.

Current Data and Overview

ELL Demographics:
In May 2014, there were 1,055,517 students enrolled in Washington public schools. English language learners constituted 110,579 students, or 10.5 percent, of that population, as measured by the Washington English Language Proficiency Assessment. The National Education Association predicts that, "by 2025, nearly one out of every four students will be an English language learner." These projections are being realized in Washington, where an increasing number of school districts have growing ELL populations. For example, in 2013-14, there was an increase of 5,539 students (5.3 percent) from the previous year. The number of different home languages is also diverse; students served by the TBIP program in 2013-14 spoke 219 different home languages. Given the national projections, Washington state's own ELLs increases, and the variety of languages, the sense of urgency to effectively educate all students—particularly the high number of underachieving ELL students—could not be greater.

ELL Services:
Washington state's Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program (TBIP) is defined as one that "uses two languages, one of which is English, as a means of instruction to build upon and expand language skills to engage a student to achieve competency in English" (WAC 392-160-005). Despite the state requirement that districts provide bilingual instruction to ELLs if at all possible, in 2013-14 only 14 percent of Washington's students enrolled in the TBIP received bilingual instruction. The large majority of ELLs in the state (86 percent) received instruction only in English. Between the 2009–10 school year and the 2013–14 school year, the number of students receiving instruction in their native language increased by three percentage points.
ELL Performance:
Statewide data from 2013–14 show that 72.1 percent of ELLs made progress towards English language proficiency, an increase of 0.6 percent from the previous year. The percent of tested students (12,728) who met the Transitional Performance Level and exited TBIP services was 12.3 percent, a nine percent increase from the previous year. A review of 2013–14 data from OSPI indicates that, of the 295 school districts in Washington state, zero percent of the grade levels met the uniform bar of 100 percent LEP students meeting standard in either Reading or Math without safe harbor (which requires a 10 percent reduction in students not making AYP).

In 2014–15, the state’s growth target, as measured by the WELPA, was 68.1 percent, and its target for transitioning students was 8 percent. The state surpassed both targets, with a growth rate (AMAO 1) of 77.9 percent and a transition rate of 16.7 percent. In fact, districts showed growth above the state target in every grade except ninth, and districts transitioned at percentage levels above the target in every grade. However, despite the growth in our student population, much work needs to be done. In the eighth grade, about 80 percent of recently transitioned (L4) students statewide did not meet standard on the ELA or Math portions of the Smarter Balanced exam. That statistic strongly suggests that students (despite successfully exiting the TBIP) are still unable to successfully access academic content.

This data is compelling and the sense of urgency apparent. Response to this data on disproportional student achievement, high dropout rates, and access to rigor in Washington schools for ELL students requires bold leadership at both a state and district level. This paper proposes action in order to effectively address the academic success of ELL students.

Teacher Preparation:
Researchers have found teacher preparation and certification have a strong association with student achievement, even more strongly than student poverty and language status (Darling-Hammond, 1999). In 2010, Washington’s Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) infused cultural competency throughout Standard 5 (Knowledge and Skills for all teachers) as a means of addressing students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In 2011–12 in the state of Washington, only 270 teachers graduated from a Washington State University teacher-credential program with an ELL endorsement. Only 14 teachers graduated with a Bilingual Education Endorsement (BLE). A testimony to the insufficiency of this number is that in 2014–15, TBIP funded 38 Bilingual Education endorsed teachers in Washington, which is a ratio of roughly one BLE teacher to every 3,909 ELL students. Of those 38 TBIP teachers, only 19 were considered full-time (1.0 FTE), and 16 of them were half time (.5) teachers or less. There are 676 teachers who are not funded through TBIP who have BLE to teach ELL students. This is a ratio of roughly one BLE teacher to every 164 ELL students.
State and Federal Mandates

Washington’s Goal Statement for the education of bilingual students states that, “Bilingual Education programs promote school environments that recognize language and cultural assets as valuable resources to learning that directly contribute to student success in college, career and life.” In order to meet this goal, districts are required to provide students who have no, or limited, English proficiency with a transitional bilingual instructional program or, if this is not practicable, an alternative instructional program that supports these students through English only (WAC 392-160-005). At the federal level, in *Lau v. Nichols*, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the Department of Education memorandum of May 25, 1970, directing school districts to help ELL students overcome language barriers and to ensure that they can participate meaningfully in the district's educational programs. We as BFAC argue that ELL student performance on state assessments, as measured by AYP above, indicates that we as a state are not doing nearly enough to provide our ELLs access to high quality bilingual programs that value their cultural and linguistic heritage to prepare them for college, career, and life.

Research

*Bilingualism as an Asset:

Research in the field of education for English language learners clearly indicates that bilingualism is an asset to students cognitively, socially, and academically. Beyond the benefits for English language learners, research, as well growing public opinion, points to the benefits of development of bilingualism and biliteracy for students’ competitiveness in the 21st century.

- “Emergent bilingual children (i.e., dual-language learners) should be given the proper type of education starting early in development (from birth, pre-kindergarten, or kindergarten) and sufficient time to become proficient in English while maintaining high ability in their home language, ultimately achieving high bilingual proficiency and balance. Children who are English monolinguals should be provided the opportunity to learn a second language from early on as well” (Garcia & Nanez, 2011, 183).

- “Students need to develop their oral language skills in both their native language and English” (Graves, 2006, 126).

- “There is compelling evidence that prior literacy and schooling experiences in the home language are the most important factors that account for student success in the second language” (Himmele & Himmele, 2009, 5).

ELL Program Models:

Factors that contribute to effective teaching of ELLs include teacher quality and program models of ELL instruction. Researchers have found that, “content or subject teachers should not be the only educators of EL learners, and systematic bilingual and specific second language teaching should also be a part of school’s overall response to EL learners” (Gibbons, 2009). These studies have found that bilingual programs are more effective than English-only programs in both
helping students develop English proficiency and in increasing student achievement. By
definition, a bilingual program uses both English and a student's native language in instruction.
Washington’s program guidelines for the TBIP program list three different bilingual program
models, each with varying histories of efficacy when implemented properly: 1) dual language or
two-way immersion; 2) developmental or late-exit; and 3) transitional or early-exit. Two
alternative models, plus the Newcomer program, are also noted. The alternative program models
use only English as the language of instruction. In addition, there are many variations to these
programs currently practiced. In Washington, 86 percent of ELL students receive instruction in
some form of alternative program that provides instruction only in English. Descriptions of these
six program models follow below.

Program Descriptions

Bilingual Instruction Programs

Dual Language Program (Two-Way Immersion or Two-Way Bilingual Education):
Dual Language Programs (also known as Two-Way Bilingual Education and Two-Way
Immersion) integrate language development with academic instruction for both native speakers
of English and new speakers of English (ELL students). The goal is for students to become
highly proficient in both their native language and their second language while simultaneously
gaining high academic achievement in both languages. Additionally, dual language programs
seek to foster student success in becoming bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural.

Dual Language Programs typically balance native language (L1) and English language (L2)
instruction 50/50 by means of content areas, unit of study, or by instructional time such as class
period or day. This model differs from a Developmental Bilingual Education model in that
instruction is provided to both native English speakers and English language learners in the same
instructional setting simultaneously. Teachers use techniques and strategies to make content
accessible regardless of the language being used for instruction.

Students in a Dual Language Program may continue to be enrolled in the program after they have
exited TBIP on the annual English language proficiency test. However, once the student exits
TBIP based on the annual English language proficiency test, they are no longer counted for TBIP
funding. Such exited students would then be counted as “Exited TBIP Students” for up to two
years. Refer to the guidelines on reporting and serving TBIP-eligible Exited Students.

Developmental Bilingual Education (DBE or Late-Exit):
Developmental Bilingual Education (DBE) or Late-Exit Bilingual programs are similar to Dual
Language programs in that instruction is carried out in both English and the student’s native
language. Typically, Late-Exit programs begin in kindergarten or first grade with 90 percent of
instruction occurring in the native language and 10 percent in English. Instruction in English
incrementally increases, while instruction using the native language gradually decreases until
there is an equal balance of instruction occurring in both languages. The 50/50 division of
instructional time continues through the completion of the program, which is usually in the sixth
grade. Students then transition into regular mainstream instruction in English.
Developmental Bilingual Programs typically divide native language (L1) and English language (L2) instruction by means of content areas, unit of study, or by instructional time, such as class period or day. As with Dual Language programs, students may continue in the Late-Exit program after they exit TBIP on the annual English language proficiency test. However, once the student exits TBIP based on the annual English language proficiency test, they are no longer counted for TBIP funding. Such exited students would then be counted as “Exited TBIP Students” for up to two years after scoring at exit level on the annual English language proficiency test. Refer to the guidelines on reporting and serving TBIP-eligible Exited Students.

**Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE or Early-Exit):**
The purpose of a Transitional Bilingual Education or Early-Exit model is to use the student’s native language as a foundation to support English language development.

TBE models generally begin by initially providing 90 percent of instruction in the native language and 10 percent in English, increasing English instruction systematically until all instruction is provided in English. TBE (Early-Exit) models differ from Developmental Bilingual (Late-Exit) models in that students move to English-only instruction more quickly, with students generally moving into mainstream English-only classes within three or four years.

When a student exits TBIP on the annual English language proficiency test, the student may or may not continue to be served in a TBE model. However, once the student exits TBIP based on the annual English language proficiency test, they are no longer counted for TBIP funding. Such exited students would then be counted as “Exited TBIP Students” for up to two years after scoring at exit level on the annual English language proficiency test. Refer to the guidelines on reporting and serving TBIP-eligible Exited Students.

**Alternative Instruction Programs**

**Content-Based Instruction (CBI) or Sheltered Instruction (SI):**
Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Sheltered Instruction (SI) models both integrate English language development with academic content learning using English as the language of instruction.

CBI and SI models are used in classes comprised predominantly of English Language Learners with instruction delivered by teachers specially trained in the field of second language acquisition and instructional strategies to support both English language development and academic grade-level content. CBI and SI classes can be designed to meet core content credit requirements or to serve as language development support classes.

OSPI recommends that teachers be endorsed in both:
- ELL, ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages), or Bilingual Education
- The content area of instruction. Alternatively, SI and CBI courses may be team taught by ELL ESOL teachers and content area teachers.
CBI and SI vary slightly in their focus. SI models focus primarily on content learning with a secondary focus on language development. CBI models focus primarily on English language development, using academic content as the vehicle of instruction. While the state recognizes the distinction between SI and CBI models, the terms Sheltered Instruction or SI will be used in CEDARS reporting (statewide data system) and the LEP application for EDS.

**Supportive Mainstream:**
Consistent, focused, and effective language development instruction is provided through ELL pull-out/push-in instruction or through small group work with the classroom teacher. Language instruction is delivered in English by teachers who have been specifically trained in the field of second language acquisition and strategies. Instruction may occur either individually or in small groups within the mainstream classroom (push-in) or separate from the mainstream classroom (pull-out) with the focus of supporting English language development.

Students in this model access grade-level academic content through participation in their mainstream classrooms. It is therefore imperative that districts employing this model ensure that sufficient time and resources are allocated for professional development of classroom teachers who will be responsible for providing access to grade-level curriculum for the English language learners in their classrooms.

**Note:** Current schedules of TBIP eligible students must be kept on file indicating the type and amount of English language support services being provided to each student.

**Newcomer Programs**

Newcomer Programs provide specialized instruction to beginning level English Language Learners who have newly immigrated to the United States and are especially useful for districts with large numbers of students with limited or interrupted formal education who may have low literacy in their native language. Such programs typically are employed at the secondary level, but could go as low as third grade to provide a foundation of both Basic English language skills and content instruction to facilitate students’ transfer into a district’s regular TBIP program, while additionally serving to familiarize newcomers with American culture and educational settings.

The amount of time that students spend in a Newcomer Program varies both in daily schedule and program length, depending on the particular district model. Districts must establish clear criteria for when students are to move out of the Newcomer Program and into the regular English language development program. Such criteria should be based on a combination of English language ability and length of time in the Newcomer Program. Individual student factors should also be considered regarding a student’s preparedness to receive services through another program model. Program length is typically one semester to one year, but may be more or less time depending on individual student needs.
**Note:** Newcomer Programs should never constitute the district’s entire English language development program, but should serve only as a foundation for students to move into the regular district TBIP program.

**Understanding the Needs of ELLs**

In order to determine the appropriate instructional practice for students, educators must first identify the relevant learning needs of ELLs. Currently, the state of Washington groups all ELLs together into one single category. This is equivalent to placing all students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) into one single category, obscuring individual students’ learning needs and, as such, their personalized instructional needs.

A more coherent and relevant framework for diagnostic need would enable districts to better evaluate where English learners are making gains and where they have gaps. We believe that more descriptive typology of ELLs is an essential first step to designing and implementing more effective instructional programs. In order to do so, BEAC adopted on May 17th, 2013, an English Language Proficiency Typology.

- **All Students** includes every student in Washington public schools.
- **Never ELLs** are students who have never been identified as English language learners in Washington.
- **Ever ELLs** are students who are currently or ever have been eligible for TBIP services in Washington State.
- **Current ELLs** are students eligible for TBIP services during the current school year.
- **Former ELLs** are those who transitioned on the annual WELPA one, two, three, or more years prior to the current school year.

**Effective Teachers of ELLs**

As a state, we need to make teacher preparation for English language learners a top priority. We must re-conceptualize teacher training to mandate that all teachers’ credentials include comprehensive ELL elements if teachers are to be qualified to teach Washington’s rapidly changing school populations.

Universities and the state of Washington must address the significant shortage of teachers qualified to teach the growing number of linguistically diverse students. This must include specific recruitment and incentives for bilingual teachers with the capacity to implement bilingual programs.

Districts need to commit to retraining our existing teachers to meet the needs of our diverse learners and to recruit and facilitate bilingual capacity in our educational ranks.
State Leadership

In order to successfully address the call for equity and excellence for all students, close our achievement gap, and provide an equitable and rigorous education for all of Washington's students, BEAC recommends that, following existing guidance, districts with a dominant language other than English be compelled to develop bilingual instructional programs that value and build upon the linguistic and cultural assets of their ELLs. Below we make recommendations of how public agencies across the state – such as OSPI, universities, and the PESB – can create the conditions for school districts to best serve their ELLs. This list builds on recommendations made in an earlier version of this paper, noting where progress has been made, as well as proposed next steps.

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<th>Updates</th>
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<td><strong>Knowing Students, Their Strengths, and Their Needs</strong></td>
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<td>Utilize improved systems to more accurately assess and determine student needs.</td>
<td>Reporting systems in CEDARS have developed and improved—The Possible Eligible, Not Reported List was created.</td>
<td>Include student performance disaggregated through a progress model (based upon, for example, student level factors such as FRL status, disability, country of origin, native language, and/or student mobility) on the “Report Card” on OPSI’s website and legislative reporting.</td>
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<td>Develop and maintain systems of observation and mechanisms for monitoring student progress.</td>
<td>Include student performance disaggregated through a typology in legislative reporting.</td>
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<td>Emphasize articulation between levels.</td>
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<td>Professional development on <em>Funds of Knowledge</em> and <em>Academic Language</em> have been made available to support educators’ understanding of students’ strengths and needs.</td>
<td>Create robust system within CEDARS to identify, through the program type, for ELL qualified students to support and ensure schools have ease of access to inform instruction and program design.</td>
<td>Support for home visits to develop teachers’ understanding of students’ and families’ funds of knowledge as resources.</td>
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**Common Expectations For Growth**

| | Publish expectations for growth and achievement of ELLs by time in program and language proficiency, as articulated in the peer analysis reporting function in CEDARS. | Peer analysis tool in CEDARS is assisting schools in understanding student performance relative to other students across the state. | Articulate growth goals for ELL qualified students across language and content area standards, in order to create meaningful analysis of student growth, beyond simply identifying ELLs as “not proficient.” Articulate how standards are to be measured across two languages in both language development and academic success. |
| Closely examine ELL performance—as measured by AMAO 1, AMAO 2, as well as other measures—by district and school to determine the scope of student learning need. | | |

**Implementation of Program Models**

| | Research evidenced-based bilingual models, as measured by AYP proficiency targets and other achievement data. | The Seal of Biliteracy has been adopted through legislation, raising awareness, and prestige to bilingualism. | Create state exams in languages of instruction to match program goals of Dual Language programs. |

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<td>Implement, refine, and maintain instructional models supported by valid research for ELLs.</td>
<td>The Bilingual Education Office, using funds provided through ESSB 6052, is providing $500,000 to pairs of districts to mentor and begin dual language programs.</td>
<td>Provide state office staff for adequate technical assistance to support schools in implementing more bilingual plans, which are more complex than English-only programs.</td>
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<td>Assist districts in examining and adopting instructional characteristics of strong ELL programs and integrate these into the ESEA, SB6696, and state CPR compliance processes.</td>
<td>Provide targeted technical assistance to those districts with disproportionately high percentages of ELLs enrolled under Program Model code, “P” for Parent Waiver.</td>
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<td>The number of Dual Language programs has grown, but still only reaches a fraction of students who would greatly benefit.</td>
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**Supporting Use of Effective Materials**

<p>| Provide curriculum that facilitates differentiation for varying levels of language and developmental need. | Provide webinars and on-site statewide training on the use of the English Language Proficiency Standards. | Convene stakeholders to identify a range of recommended materials to support program models. |</p>
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<td>Increase access to preschool programs designed for English language learners.</td>
<td>Determined that districts must identify and serve ELLs aged three and older in federally funded schools.</td>
<td>Work across agencies to ensure publically funded preschool programs align with research based practices for emergent bilinguals.</td>
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<td><strong>Teacher Training for Working with Emergent Bilinguals</strong></td>
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<td>Provide endorsement programs and professional development (including coaching and collaborative time) for teachers and administrators to more clearly understand and address the needs of ELLs.</td>
<td>Through the PESB, endorsement criteria around language learning has been strengthened. School systems are investing in ELL endorsement training using Title III funds. The PESB’s Alternative Pathways Block Grant holds potential to develop bilingual teachers. PESB’s Educator Retooling program offers scholarships to support currently certified teachers to add ELL and Bilingual endorsements.</td>
<td>Develop and support multi-partner pipelines with multiple entry points for bilingual teachers. Streamline credentialing reciprocity as needed for specialized program, especially Dual Language. Consider developing incentive programs, such as NBCT for bilingual teachers. Develop professional learning opportunities to increase building principals and district administration’s understanding and knowledge of effective ELL research and programming. Provide clear communication on exchange programs to support bilingual programs.</td>
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<td><strong>Communication with Stakeholders</strong></td>
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<td>Communicate clear expectations to all stakeholders about what quality instruction looks like through clear webinars and effective communication on the OSPI website.</td>
<td>Webinars, program guidelines, federal law and guidance, annual reports to the state legislature, parent forms and more can be found on the OSPI Bilingual Education website.</td>
<td>In addition to maintenance of a strong website, consider increased regional visits of program staff; in order to do this, increase bilingual program staffing at OSPI.</td>
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OSPI's presence at the 2015 WABE conference provided an excellent opportunity to communicate with staff implementing programming across the state.

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**Summary**

The Bilingual Education Advisory Committee submits this call to action paper to strengthen Washington's K-12 education programs in support of English language learners. By implementing the recommendations and next steps outlined here, BEAC believes ELLs will have equitable access to excellent and effective programs that ensure that all Washington's students are ready for college, career and life. The state, school districts, colleges of education, and external partners all share in the responsibility to ensure that our systems are moving forward with effective solutions for ELLs. As BEAC continues to represent stakeholders across the state, further input from the field on these recommendations and next steps is encouraged. BEAC can be reached by contacting staff in the Migrant and Bilingual Office at OSPI via e-mail at jenny.choi@k12.wa.us or by phone at (360) 725-4477.
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References


