Supporting English Learners in the Later Grades

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Focus Topics

• English literacy trajectories of ELLs beyond Grade 3
  – Evidence from longitudinal research
• Effective instructional methods for ELLs in upper elementary and middle school grades
  – Evidence from experimental & quasi-experimental field trials
• Gaps in these bodies of research
Developmental Trajectories: Converging Evidence

• Developing academic English proficiency (particularly in reading & writing) is a long-term process (e.g., Conger, 2009; Cook et al., 2011; Hakuta et al., 2000; Kieffer, 2008, 2011; Umansky & Reardon, 2014).

• Underachievement of students who enter school as ELLs persists after many years of U.S. schooling — but may be more related to poverty, limited opportunities to learn, and other risk factors than language background per se (e.g., Kieffer, 2008, 2010 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Lesaux & Kieffer, 2010)
Growth Trajectories in English Reading (Kieffer, 2011)

- Examined reading growth between Kindergarten and Grade 8 for language minority learners of differing initial English oral proficiency, as compared to their native English-speaking counterparts
- Drew on data on a nationally representative sample of students from Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten, 1998 Cohort
Research Questions

1. How do English reading growth trajectories differ among
   - **iELLS**: Parent report of another language at home & who enter kindergarten with limited oral English proficiency on K LAS-based screener
   - **iBilinguals**: Parent report of another language at home & proficient on K LAS-based screener
   - **Native English speakers**

2. How do these trajectories differ when comparing students from the similar socioeconomic backgrounds attending schools with similar concentrations of poverty?
   - Family SES: Income, Parental Education, Occupation
   - School concentration of students receiving free/reduced lunch
Initial-ELLs remain far below national norms

\[ d = -0.78 \]

2.4 years behind

\[ d = -0.57 \]

2.1 years behind

(Kieffer, 2011)
But, initial-ELLs converge with their classmates from the same SES backgrounds.

\[ d = -0.15 \text{ 1/2 year behind} \]

\[ d = 0.10 \text{ 1/3 year ahead} \]

(Kieffer, 2011)
Initial-Bilinguals pull ahead of their classmates from the same SES backgrounds.

- $d = .24$; 0.7 years ahead
- $d = .32$; 1.2 years ahead (Kieffer, 2011)
Gap between Reading Words & Comprehending Texts: Converging Evidence

• Language minority learners reach adequate levels of decoding, but struggle with reading comprehension (see meta-analysis by Lesaux et al., 2006 in August & Shanahan, 2006).

• This pattern persists through the upper elementary and middle school grades (e.g., Lesaux et al., 2010; Lesaux & Mancilla-Martinez, 2010, 2011; Nakamoto et al., 2007).

• English vocabulary and listening comprehension are common sources of reading difficulties (e.g., August et al., 2005; Lesaux & Kieffer, 2010; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2011; Proctor et al., 2005).
Gap between Reading Words & Comprehending Texts

(Lesaux, Crosson, Kieffer & Pierce, 2010)
Word Reading: Pre-K to Grade 5

(Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2011)
Oral Vocabulary: Pre-K to Grade 5

Monolingual Norms

English

Spanish $d=1.0$

$d=1.8$

(Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2011)
Effective Instruction for English Language Learners in Grades 4-8: Evidence from Experimental & Quasi-experimental Studies
Panel

- Scott Baker (Chair) – Executive Director, Center on Research and Evaluation, Southern Methodist University
- Esther Geva – Professor, University of Toronto
- Michael J. Kieffer – Associate Professor, New York University
- Nonie Lesaux – Professor, Harvard University
- Sylvia Linan-Thompson – Associate Professor, University of Texas at Austin
- Joan Morris – Teacher Specialist, Pasadena Unified School District
- C. Patrick Proctor – Associate Professor, Boston College
- Randi Russell – Curriculum Support Specialist, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

WWC Practice Guide on Teaching English Learners
Recommendations

1. Teach a set of **academic vocabulary** words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities.

2. Integrate oral and written English language instruction into **content-area teaching**.

3. Provide regular, **structured opportunities** to develop written language skills.

4. Provide **small-group instructional intervention** to students struggling in areas of literacy and English language development.

(Baker et al., 2014)
## Supporting Evidence (that met WWC standards)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>WWC Level of Evidence</th>
<th>Studies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Academic Vocabulary</td>
<td><strong>Strong</strong></td>
<td>1 Study in PreK-2</td>
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<td>5 Studies in Grades 5-7</td>
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<td>2. Integration with Content</td>
<td><strong>Strong</strong></td>
<td>1 Study in PreK-2</td>
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<td>4 Studies in Grades 5-7</td>
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<td>3. Writing</td>
<td><strong>Minimal</strong></td>
<td>1 Study in Grade 6</td>
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<td>1 Study in Grades 6-12</td>
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<td>Inconsistent results</td>
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(Baker et al., 2014)
Gaps in these Bodies of Research

- Literacy development & instruction in high school
- Writing development & instruction
Gaps in these Bodies of Research

• Identifying the active ingredients within multi-componentional interventions

• Effective instruction for sub-groups of English language learners
  – adolescent & pre-adolescent newcomers
  – “Long-term” ELLs
  – Former ELLs
  – ELLs with disabilities


References


