English Learner Guidebook: Changing Educational Outcomes for English Learners

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
Louisiana Believes

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, Louisiana educators have taken the charge to raise expectations and educational outcomes for its students, believing our students are smart, capable, and deserve opportunities to become productive members of a global society. Through a clear alignment of standards, curriculum, and assessments, our students have stepped up to the challenge and made significant gains in educational outcomes. Yet, for English learners (ELs), this has not been the case. As demonstrated in statewide data, our current instructional practices have created disproportionate outcomes for the EL population. This compels us to focus our attention to changing the trajectory of ELs to close the achievement gap.

- *ELs have less than half the access to college or career opportunities than their peers.*
- *The rate of ELs graduating from high school declined 5.2 points in the past five years.*
- *As students in Louisiana make academic gains and demonstrate higher levels of achievement, the achievement gap of ELs remains constant, with little signs of improvement.*

Students Passing College-Level Courses or Achieving Basic Statewide Credentials

All Students / English Language Learners

Four Year Cohort Graduation Rate

All Students / English Language Learners

2017 LEAP Assessment Results: Percent of Students Scored Mastery and Above for Subgroups Combining ELA, Math and Science

All Students / English Language Learners
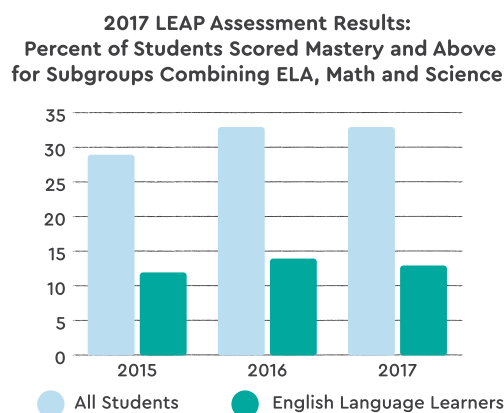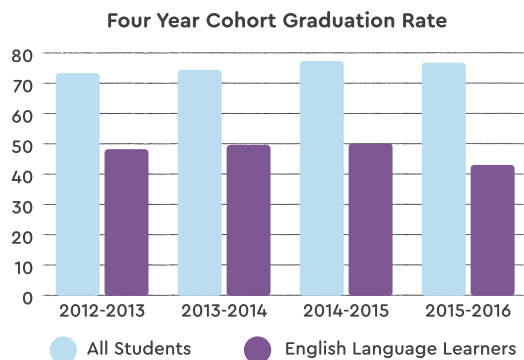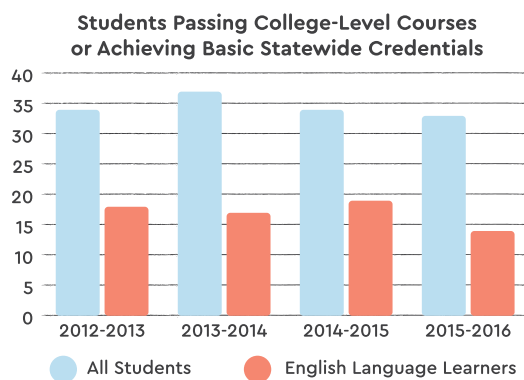
OUR THEORY OF ACTION

Historically, instructional programming for ELs has been driven by a compliance mind-set. Although it is imperative that LEAs comply with Federal mandates, statewide data compels us to redefine our understanding of compliance and rethink our current instructional approach for ELs. High-quality and effective instruction for English learners occurs within a collaborative school culture and relies on commitment to continuous improvement. This begins with an assessment of existing beliefs, resources, systems, and professional knowledge and skills.

Our theory of action focuses on instruction:

Providing ELs with equal access and opportunity to high-quality instruction requires school systems and school-site leaders to design and implement school structures and instructional models that allow language acquisition to occur across all content-areas all day, every day.

This document provides guidance to school systems and school-site leaders in implementing such programs. The strategies described are grounded in research-based practices of effective instruction and successful school models for ELs. Aligning current practices to the suggested strategies will help schools provide equitable, high-quality instruction for ELs.

EQUITABLE AND EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

Integrated Instruction

Instruction

Curricula

Targeted Support

Immersion Model

Strategies for **English Learners**
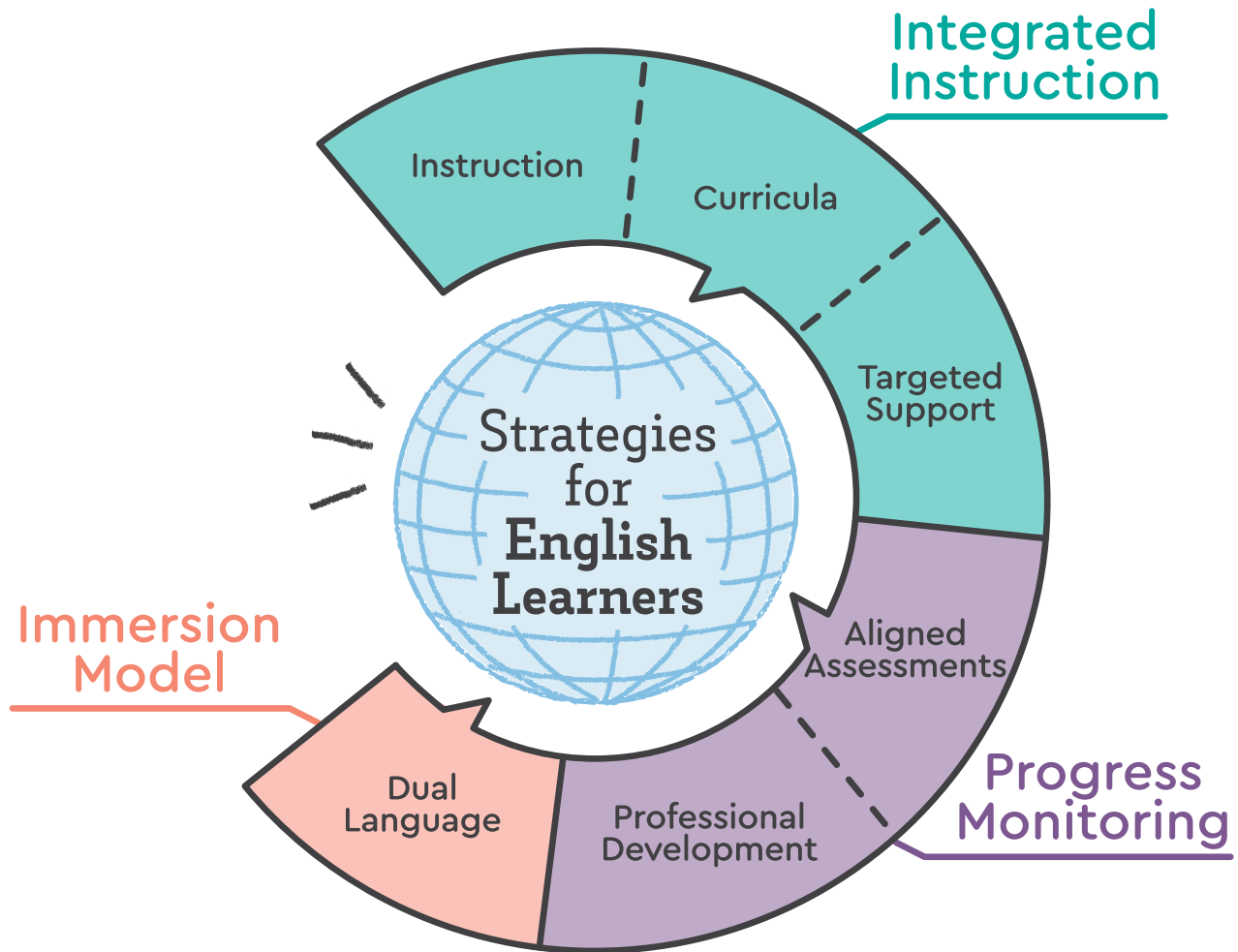
Dual Language

Aligned Assessments

Professional Development

Progress Monitoring

STRATEGIES:

- *English learners receive standards-based instruction alongside their English speaking peers.*

- *Progress monitoring is an ongoing practice to support and accelerate instruction.*

- *A well-implemented, Two-way Language Immersion instructional model should be available in schools that serve established ELs of one common language.*

STRATEGY 1: ENGLISH LEARNERS RECEIVE STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION ALONGSIDE THEIR ENGLISH SPEAKING PEERS

English learners need to be exposed to strong English language models to help them acquire and practice English language skills. Keeping students in classes with their English speaking peers allows them to become part of a community of learners with strong language skills; one where students acknowledge and appreciate one another's skills and talents and support each other's learning, especially when they are given an opportunity to cooperatively work on in-depth, project-based units of study. **Research** defines equitable, high-quality instruction for Els as one where they receive language instruction through standards-based content from their content-area teachers, in addition to receiving explicit instruction of English language structures by an English Language Development (ELD) teacher.

Keeping english learners with their peers ensures they receive grade-level instruction.

GRADE-LEVEL, STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION

ELs need access to grade-level, standards-based instruction. Standards-based instruction starts with the **Louisiana Student Standards**. These signal a fundamental upward shift in the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students must develop to be college-and-career ready in the 21st century. This shift also signals an increase in language demands across content areas, particularly for ELs, and which are addressed in the development and design of the **Louisiana Connectors for English Learners**.

The Connectors are the bridge that supports engagement in the content standards despite the limitation of English proficiency. Intended to be a supplement to content standards, they provide guidance and knowledge in the progression of language acquisition and provide support to teachers in the design of instruction based on students' English proficiency. Although language does not necessarily develop in a linear fashion, it does develop in predictable stages.
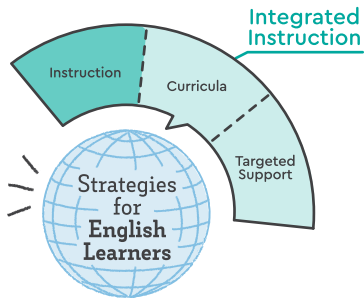
A CLOSER LOOK: STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION: WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?
• Every day, teachers ensure that content, language objectives, and learning outcomes are based on standards and are developmentally appropriate
• Grade level expectations and evidence outcomes are taught to mastery level
• 21st Century Skills are in place (critical thinking and reasoning, information literacy, collaboration, self-direction, and invention)
• Proficient work samples and exemplars are shared and measured against a rubric and standards

ACTION	RESOURCES
• Design and provide appropriate language scaffolds by language domain and proficiency level	
• Support the linguistic needs and abilities of ELs as they move through the 5 stages of proficiency	• **LA Student Standards**
• Release scaffolds as students progress	• **Connectors for ELs**
• Place emphasis on Academic Language discourse and written expression	• **ELP Level Descriptors**

CONTENT-BASED LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Strategy One describes an inclusive approach to meeting the needs of ELs and requires all teachers to support language development through their specific content by embedding language scaffolds into their lessons and differentiating tasks based on students' proficiency levels. Content-based instruction is an instructional model that aligns with Strategy 1, the Connectors for EL, and meets **Civil Rights Requirements**. **Content-based language instruction is an approach that supports English learners' access to rigorous standards-based content. It utilizes subject matter concepts as the context for language learning, allowing development of English proficiency in all four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in a purposeful and meaningful manner.** This is in contrast to pull-out models where language is often taught in a decontextualized and simplified manner.This approach aligns with the overall efforts teachers are making to raise the rigor in language and content instruction to ensure all students achieve the expectations of the Louisiana Student Standards.

A CLOSER LOOK: CONTENT-BASED LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

CONTENT-BASED LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?	
• Intentional, meaningful, and purposeful teaching occurs consistently, and content and language objectives are clearly supported by lesson delivery	
• Teachers are using effective instructional strategies and providing ample opportunities for students to use learning strategies	
• Teacher explicitly links new concepts to students' background & past learning	
• Key vocabulary is emphasized and reviewed	
• Adaptation of content to all levels of student proficiency	
KEY ACTIONS	**RESOURCES**
• Use sheltered instruction strategies in lesson delivery and student tasks • Teach content with added language supports	• Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) **Sheltered Instruction** • Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition **(CARLA)** • Quality Teaching for English Learners **QTEL**

Successful implementation of **Content-based Language Instruction** requires teachers to have knowledge of and use **sheltered instruction strategies**, a set of strategies that facilitate student's access to content, similar to principles of **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**. Developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics, its goal is to embed English-learning opportunities into academic lessons, allowing students to simultaneously develop academic content skills and English language proficiency. These strategies help teachers modify their use of English by adjusting the language demands of instruction. They also work with students from any language background and are applicable in all environments where students learn through their second language. Providing sheltered instruction is an **essential practice** of equitable and effective instruction for English learners.

A CLOSER LOOK: SHELTERED INSTRUCTION

SHELTERED INSTRUCTION: WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?	
• Explicitly link concepts to students' backgrounds and experiences	
• Explicitly link past learning and new concepts	
• Emphasize key vocabulary (e.g., introduce, write, repeat, and highlight) for students.	
• Use a variety of techniques to make content concepts clear (e.g., modeling, visuals, hands-on activities, demonstrations)	
• Provide hands-on materials and/or manipulatives for students to practice using new content knowledge	
• Provide activities that integrate all language skills (i.e., reading, writing, etc.)	
KEY ACTIONS	**RESOURCES**
• Teach grade-level content in English • Use Sheltered Instructional strategies with fidelity • Tailor English language for students' level of English proficiency	• Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) **Sheltered Instruction** • Quality Teaching for English Learners **QTEL**

HIGH QUALITY CURRICULAR RESOURCES

Choosing high quality instructional resources that align with content standards and assessments ensures that teachers are successful in delivering grade-level, standards-based instruction. English learners thrive in an environment where instruction is predictive and delivery is consistent. Utilizing high quality curricular resources helps teachers maintain a predictive structure by covering the learning domains in a sequenced, progressive manner with embedded scaffolds to meet students' learning styles and English proficiency levels.
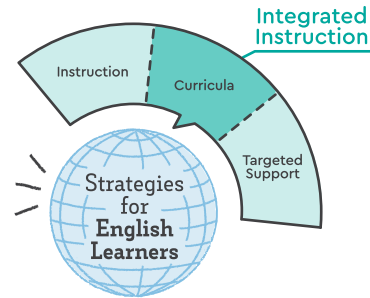
A CLOSER LOOK: HIGH QUALITY CURRICULAR RESOURCES

### CURRICULAR RESOURCES: WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

- Use appropriate and varied primary and supplemental materials and tools to support different learning styles and needs
- Provide guidelines on how to scaffold activities to support English learners at various proficiency levels
- Contain meaningful, connected tasks that build student knowledge
- Include ongoing assessment to monitor children's progress and inform future learning activities

ACTION	RESOURCES
- Plan daily lessons in accordance to scope and sequence - Use a combination of student-focused and teacher-directed strategies, including whole group, small group, and centers - Employ high-yield strategies in delivery of lessons - Match embedded scaffolds to student needs	**LA Student Standards** **Connectors for ELs** **Curricular Resources** **ELA Guidebooks 2.0** **Curriculum** **Planning Resources**

ADDITIONAL TARGETED SUPPORT

Using a multi-tiered system of support approach with ELs to identify who are at risk of failing and to provide interventions to meet their needs ensures that ELs are less likely to fall behind and will continue to thrive in the classroom. When students demonstrate difficulties, the provision of small-group intensive interventions targeting their instructional needs, and then monitoring their progress ensures that instruction is modified to their individual needs.
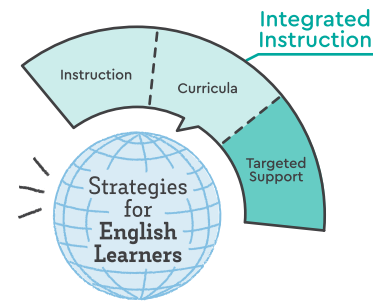
ELs require additional instructional time in English. One way to provide this additional instructional time is through the use of English Language Development classes (ELD). ELD classes, either in push-in or pull-out models, are necessary to accelerate English learning. Keep in mind that the purpose of language learning is engagement in content towards mastery of content. The shift in this focus will result in a greater need of collaboration among content teachers and ELD specialists to ensure all instruction is aligned. The work of the ELD teacher in this approach is integrated with content teachers to leverage the necessary English language skills (vocabulary, grammar, and syntax) for learning across disciplines.

A CLOSER LOOK: ADDITIONAL TARGETED SUPPORT

ADDITIONAL TARGETED SUPPORT: WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?	
• Multiple opportunities are provided for learning, including: whole group, small group, and 1:1 instruction, during class or as pull-out groups to meet individual needs	
• Group configurations support language and content objectives	
• Teachers differentiate instruction for students through flexible grouping, sheltered instruction, tiered assignments and scaffolds for learning in collaboration with support staff	
KEY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
• Schedule additional supports outside of content instruction.	
• Teach a language-driven curriculum aligned to high utility academic language (forms and functions) and core discipline practices.	• **Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)** • **Sheltered Instruction** • **Teacher Resources**
• Maintain same level of rigor as the general education program.	

STRATEGY 2: PROGRESS MONITORING IS AN ONGOING PRACTICE TO SUPPORT AND ACCELERATE INSTRUCTION

Effective **progress monitoring practices** support and accelerate instruction so ELs can achieve advanced levels of English proficiency and exit EL status. Progress monitoring using aligned assessments and student work as data points will inform and facilitate instruction decision making and measure students' progress. Progress monitoring is not just the process of collecting data from various sources, but more importantly it's teachers collaborating, discussing student work, and analyzing results to decide what's next.

> *Effective monitoring ensures students' needs are being met and ultimately leads to English learners EXITING EL status.*

PROGRESS MONITORING USING ALIGNED ASSESSMENTS

Equitable and effective progress monitoring is an ongoing practice to help measure student's progress toward mastery of content standards and English attainment. Teachers check for students' understanding of learning by using a variety of assessment methods, anecdotal notes, pre and post tests, interims, benchmarks, and summative tests.

Formative Assessment: The process of progress monitoring through formative assessment is essential for ELs. Students' second language learning moves forward on an ongoing continuum and teachers need to receive continuous feedback during instruction to adjust teaching and learning, as a way to improve students' achievement in content and language development. Appropriate use of formative assessment leads to specific desired changes for teachers and students, including: improved teacher understanding of the relationship between content and English language development in the context of instruction, increased teacher knowledge of students' progress relative to learning goals, and improved EL student engagement in learning and assessment.

Setting clear learning goals:
- *What do I want the student to learn? (content objective)*
- *What language structures will students need to access and demonstrate learning? (language objective)*
- *What does successful learning look like? (criteria)*
- *What student behaviors or product will show evidence of success? (product)*

A CLOSER LOOK: **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT: WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?	
• Provide students clear, specific, and timely feedback about their learning in individual/group conferences by: referring to models and examples, asking open-ended questions, taking anecdotal notes, and defining actionable next steps • Students incorporate the feedback by revising their work • Students are self-directed with their learning and develop the ability to self-assess their learning progress	
KEY ACTIONS	**RESOURCES**
• Set learning targets • Use learning trackers to monitor student progress • Implement the use of LEAP 360 to guide instruction • Create pre/post assessments • Reteach and Enrich • Provide access to tiered interventions	• **LEAP 360 One Pager**

Summative Assessment: The English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) will assist teachers in making instructional decisions and give EL program coordinators the ability to evaluate the effectiveness of EL programs and supports.

Results of the ELPT are reported by domains and scale scores within domains. Drilling down to the scale scores level provides teachers with a strong measure of the student's progress in language acquisition and highlights the areas of strengths and weaknesses. Informed by these results, teachers are better equipped to address areas of need and will be able to provide language supports appropriately to accelerate learning.

Students will be reclassified and **EXITED** from EL status when they achieve a **PROFICIENT** determination on the English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT).

A CLOSER LOOK: **ELPT SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT: WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?	
• Four domains: reading, writing, listening and speaking • Students access online training tools to practice • Fully aligned to the LA Connectors for ELs • Reports that detail their proficiency level in each domain • Instructional decisions on an individual level	
KEY ACTIONS	**RESOURCES**
• Test all students identified as English learner through screening process • Draft an individual learning plan identifying learning targets • Modify supports based on results • Exit students. Determined "Proficient" on ELPT and reclassify as non-EL status	• **Assessment Guidance** • **FAQs** • **ELPT Assessment Guide** • **Online Training Tools**

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

Effective PD engages teams of teachers to focus on the needs of students. It ensures teachers continue to strengthen their practice as they learn new strategies, share successful practices, and problem solve together. Productive planning sessions involve teams of teachers, **including ELD** teachers, collaborating to design instruction that meets individual needs by continually adjusting learning targets and setting expectations of next steps toward progress or remediation as needed.

ELD teachers are often an untapped resource for content area teachers. As educators with expertise in language acquisition and development, these professionals can contribute to teacher capacity in this area if they are recognized as collaborating partners, rather than as individuals with sole responsibility for "fixing" language learners. **Developing school cultures and instructional practices that acknowledge the need for all teachers to take responsibility for ELs** will require a shift in teacher thinking, and the development of a culture of achievement and collaboration. Collaborative school cultures for ELs place an emphasis on the **inclusion of ELs in content classes**, while having high expectations for staff involvement with these students and teacher development in linguistically responsive pedagogy. Enlisting a teacher with expertise in the instruction of ELs to take on a formalized instructional coaching role where the teacher has the ability to influence school culture and classroom practice can potentially impact ELs positively.

A CLOSER LOOK: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COLLABORATION: WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?	
• Build on foundation of skills, knowledge, and expertise • Engage participants as learners • Provide practice, feedback, and follow up • Measure changes in teacher knowledge and skills • Measure changes in student performance	
KEY ACTIONS	**RESOURCES**
• Include ELD teachers in learning • communities to enhance capacity for maintaining/improving the program • Give ELD specialists and content teachers adequate and structured time to collaborate • Contract with an external partner to train teachers on Sheltered Instruction strategies and knowledge of language acquisition • Create a school-wide master schedule that allows for teacher collaboration	• **Effective PD** • **Content Leader**

STRATEGY 3: TWO-WAY IMMERSION INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL
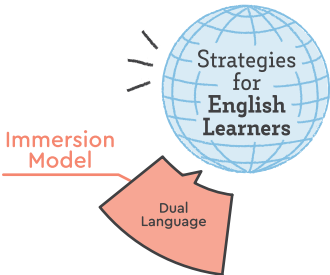
For school systems or schools that enroll large concentrations of ELs with one common language, the strategies described in this document should be implemented within a Two-way Immersion instructional model. **Research** demonstrates compelling evidence that the **best instruction**, the one that will **close the achievement gap** for ELs, is instruction through a well implemented Two-way Immersion instructional model.

The research on the cognitive effects of bilingualism continues to grow at a rapid pace, spurred in large part by ongoing advances in brain imaging technology. It is now clear that bilingualism confers a number of cognitive benefits, including cognitive flexibility and creative thinking, communicative sensitivity, metalinguistic awareness, and enhanced executive function. Once you know another language, it also becomes easier to learn additional languages. Individually, bilingualism is associated with stronger identity formation and the development of cross-cultural competence, i.e., the ability to know oneself and how to relate with others.

Research has consistently noted that students educated bilingually perform as well as, or better than, comparable students educated monolingually on English achievement indicators and have language and literacy capabilities in another language as well.

LEAs across Louisiana that serve an established, one common language, minority community should strongly consider offering parents the choice to enroll their children in **Two-way Immersion programs** with the goal of maintaining and further developing their heritage language while learning English as a second language, and becoming fully bi-literate individuals in the process.

A CLOSER LOOK: TWO-WAY IMMERSION

TWO-WAY IMMERSION: WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?	
• Classes should be composed of 50 percent native English speakers and 50 percent native Spanish speaker	
• Start at Pre-K/K and build one year at a time with 90 percent of instruction in Spanish and 10 percent in English, decreasing Spanish Instruction and Increasing English instruction by 10 percent each year thereafter	
• Two-way immersion instruction is continuous for at least 6 years	
• Access to standards-aligned high-quality curriculum in content-areas and Spanish literacy	
• Instructional practices aligned with current understandings of bilingual and literacy development	

KEY ACTIONS	RESOURCES
• Develop program one grade level at a time	
• Follow **Guiding Principles for Dual Language Education**	
• Provide PD for all staff members on program structure	• **Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)**
• Provide PD on dual language instructional strategies	• **Research: The Power of Bilingual Education**
• Ensure language of instruction is kept separate	
• Implement systems that ensure ongoing language proficiency progress monitoring in both languages	

CONCLUSION

The call to action is now! Louisiana is focused on changing the trajectory of struggling populations, English learners being one of these. To close the achievement gap and open doors of opportunities for English learners, schools and school systems **must implement** strong, **equitable and effective instructional programs** where structures are in place to provide access to a well implemented, multi-tiered system of supports within a school-wide culture of excellence. The integration of content and language teaching is critical for English learners to develop the academic skills necessary to be successful in meeting high standards. However, teaching must be adapted for these students to access grade-level content material and to develop the specific academic language required in school settings. The strategies described above emphasize components that are researched-based and proven, when implemented well, to change the educational outcomes of English learners.

> *Did you know?*
>
> *In the U.S., 80% of English Learners in K-8 schools and 60% in 9-12 schools are native-born, U.S. Citizens. (nces.ed.gov)*

Rigorous, on-level, quality curriculum and instruction,

- Embedded language supports across disciplines,
- Aligned additional academic supports for struggling students,
- Explicit English language development instruction with emphasis in academic language (**CALP**), and discourse, and
- Aligned school learning communities.

NEXT STEPS: School systems and school leaders must assess their current practices and programming for their EL population and make adjustments where necessary to align with the strategies and practices described in this guidance document and consult the Department **supports** and **external partners** for expert help.

APPENDIX A

SCAFFOLDING

Go To Strategies

Scaffolding a lesson means breaking up the learning into pieces and then providing a specific action or tool for each part to facilitate student understanding. Scaffolding requires teachers to have a deep understanding of where children are in the learning process and what they can do by themselves. Teachers can plan for modifications or strategies to offer competent assistance so students achieve the next learning goal. In other words, scaffolding is a means by which students receive support from their teachers in various forms in an effort to promote skills and understanding, with the ultimate goal of acquiring independence through the careful reduction of support as students' progress.

There are three main areas to scaffold:

1. **Verbal**: Focuses on language development, such as paraphrasing, "think-alouds," use of cognates, and sentence starters/frames.

2. **Procedural**: Focuses on grouping techniques, and engages students in oral language processing before being held accountable or sharing in front of others, such as working in groups and role-plays. Another option is to allow high proficiency students to work independently and then pull together a group of low-proficiency students to work on the same content with more direct teacher support.

3. **Instructional**: Focuses on tangible elements that support learning, such as graphic organizers, manipulatives, word walls, and text modifications (e.g., excerpting and or summarizing non-essential passages to reduce length and adding visuals to support comprehension). Additional supports for students in demonstrating their learning include using a sentence or answer frames, preparing team rather than individual presentations, or allowing ELs to use language according to their level of proficiency, such as allowing students with low language proficiency to demonstrate understanding through drawings.