

**Summary of Second Southeast Regional Forum for State Representatives of
ELL and Special Education Programs**

“Enhancing Services for English Language Learners with Special Needs”

**Marriot Hotel, Baton Rouge, LA
April 22, 2004**

Participants

Patricia Todd	Arkansas	Lisa Copeland	Georgia
Cindy O’Riley	Arkansas	Frank Smith	Georgia
Alisia Ramirez Hartz	Arkansas	Charlette Green	Georgia
Thanhvan Auderson	Oklahoma	Michelle Sykes	Louisiana
Diana Dean Sewell	Louisiana	Delia Cerpa	SERRC
Trese Evans	Mississippi	Mona East	SERRC
Jan Enstrom	Alabama	Alba Ortiz	SERRC Consultant
Dorothea Walker	Alabama		

Background

The Southeast region states are experiencing an increase in the population of English Language Learners (ELLs). Consequently there is a need to appropriately identify, assess and provide an array of services to ELL with disabilities.

The Louisiana Department of Education and the Southeast Regional Resource Center jointly hosted the LA ELL Summit and the SERRC Second ELL Forum. The purpose of the summit and forum was to provide to districts and invited state teams from Region 3 information on Legislation, IDEA and NCLB, Title III and other relevant titles to ELLs. Other topics included brain research regarding second language acquisition and research based best practices on identification, assessment, instruction and collaborative planning for service delivery.

At the LA ELL Summit, there were large group presentations from Joan McCarthy, OSEP; Kathleen Leos, OELA; Diana Sewell and Michelle Sykes, Louisiana Department of Education; Janice Sardina, University of New Orleans; Dr. Eric Lopez, University of New Mexico; Josephine De Leon, University of New Mexico; Susan Howell, Teacher of the Year; Alba Ortiz, University of Texas Austin. After the large group presentations, District and State teams reflected on what they learned, what is already in place, and they began to develop action plans.

Followed by the Louisiana ELL Summit, state teams from the Southeast Region spent one day engaged in a deeper discussion of what they learned at the Summit, state issues and current practices to address the needs of ELLs with a statewide systems perspective. State teams were composed of representatives from special education, ESL/ESOL/Bilingual, and regular education.

Welcome, Introductions

Delia Cerpa welcomed participants. She prefaced the Forum by saying that SERRC is committed to continued TA support in the area of English Language Learners needs. She highlighted the importance in making the connection between knowing about the law, developing state guidelines and policies; she emphasized the need to consider personnel training on research based best practices on educational gains for all students.

Ms. Cerpa introduced Dr. Alba Ortiz, Consultant from the University of Texas and Mona East, Technical Assistant Specialist from SERRC. She asked state teams to introduce themselves briefly. More in-depth introductions followed as State teams presented state profiles highlighting the status of ELL Special Education in their state and challenges they are facing.

State Profiles: Successes & Challenges

State I

- Collaborative atmosphere in planning
- Support by Superintendent
- Superintendent's support is critical
- Recognition that we serve all kids
- NCLB opportunities
- Conditions that favor change (focus on disproportionality)
- Institution of Higher Education will train 2100 students who will then train others on ELLs concerns
- Are "on the verge" of major changes
- More inclusion of parents (e.g. family literacy coordinator; ELL supports for families), a specialized parent mentor program – serve as liaison between parent and school is an employee, not an advocate; a move away from conflict/adversarial to collaborative relationship.
- Have moved to include general education in disproportionality training efforts
- 55,000 + ELLs - 2 % receive special education

Challenges

- Need to raise awareness and eliminate informed policies (e.g., don't refer for two years).
- Need to focus on identification of gifted students (including "language different" students)
- Institution of Higher Education will train 2100 students who will then train others on ELLs concerns
- Are "on the verge" of major changes
- Have not been getting numbers of ELL/ESDL teachers – many are experienced special pathologists, special educators, and ESL

- Have separate guidelines, ESOL, and Special Education; will work on integrating with special and regular education

State II

- Revised ELL manual; has a special education “blurb” special education input needed
- Monitoring for disproportionality is a strength; however, it limits time to work on other issues
- Awareness training is being planned, will incorporate ELL information
- Has focused on African Americans; may be able to use this work to support efforts related to ELLs; need to expand away from focus on racial issues (e.g. training related to culture). Also need to apply language focus to African Americans by using ELL information to support African Americans.
- Challenges:
 - A need for change of minds/hearts
 - Include dialect awareness training
 - Need clarification of rules (e.g. NCLB)
 - Need to include higher education in professional development activities
 - What is the role of higher education?
 - Higher education needs more expertise in this area
 - Secondary education (e.g. team implementation, the collaborative approach)
 - We view problem as child-centered (focus on positive behavioral supports may help change this)
 - Infusing diversity information into all training, as opposed to “special” sessions
 - Getting accurate counts (legal status related to undocumented immigrants)
 - Bringing folks to the table - collaboration
 - Need to build a common language; communication system between ESL, special education and regular education programs
 - Turf issues (roles, responsibilities, fear of losing jobs)
 - Helping people see the whole picture
 - Combining ESL and Special Education documents, resources paperwork requirements
 - Lack of personnel, need a plan on what and who conducts the training?

State III

- Existing guidelines for ELLs (need to incorporate special education)
- Collaboration across units
- Recognize the need
- 2500 (?) in the system
- Less than 1% are in special education (underrepresented)
- 26 ESL endorsed teachers in state (don’t know if they’re teaching)

- ESL academies have been successful. They are opened to K - 12 special education teachers
- Pool of teachers available – many retired teachers have established a practitioner’s committee

Challenges and needs

- Need to provide reading academies with ELL highlights
- Hard time getting data
- Get to the root cause of under-representation and address it.
- Need accurate count of teachers; from the 26 that are ESL endorsed, and the number teaching.

State IV

- Has an English Language Development focus
- Have integrated and collaborative ELLs Special Education guidelines
- NCLB opportunities (e.g., “children with similar needs”)
- Great collaboration at state level across units
- Took parents to the OELA Summit
- Parent involvement in all steps of process is mandated

Challenges

- Prone to accept bilingual education, but need resources
- Undercounts/contradictory counts
- Need a common language
- Have to share expertise
- Train teachers to do more systematic interventions upfront
- Importance of training interpreters/translators
- Use NICHY translated resources

State V

- ESL handbook (half page for special education)
- Defined competencies bilingual education/ESL certification
- Special education task force asking questions about ELL
- Working with CCSSO to conduct research on accommodations for ELLs with disabilities for state assessments
- No state law/mandates for ELLs: Focus on federal law
- Have funds for ELLs - \$600 per child
- Use home language survey
 - Yes – automatically qualifies
 - Below 35% on achievement test – qualify but need to assess language proficiency; LAS and IPT
- Have received Title III funds and receive L1 development. Now under Title III focus has shifted to English proficiency. Criteria for “limited” may have been broadened
- Now have 33,000 ELLs identified. Some American Indian children are now not qualified in 540 districts; 130 ELLs; Spanish speakers are the largest group.

Challenges

- Need teacher training (NCLB has helped create impetus for this training)
- Districts may not have programs for ELLs; NCLB has helped address this issue
- Teacher assistants (paraprofessionals) are the primary teachers of ELLs
- IHEs don't include training specific to ELLs
- Have 100 teachers so far
- If instruction separates listening, speaking, reading and writing, students may not be taught to read/write; need to use multiple methods. [integrated approaches]
- ESL and Special Education have not worked closely; it is now a priority
- Set up a task force (ELL/Special Education) [invite TA centers, regional labs and SERRC, Delia]

State VI

- One state staff member focused on ELL; no one is Special Education
- 15,000 ELLs, population keeps increasing
- 722 endorsed teachers in to date
- Has state guidelines “document” supported and developed by special education and ESL task force
- Statewide inservice was conducted to implement state guidelines
- Adequate awareness of ELLs with disabilities
 - Training modules for paraprofessionals and classified staff (under direction of Teachers)
 - Better identification of ECE students is a need
- Have made progress in instruction
- Are involving Special Education Teachers in Academies
- Have co-ops – Training of Trainers related to:
 - New guidelines
 - ESL strategies
 - Using scantron process to assess what's being done (implementation of training)
- ESL academies (700 certified teachers)
- Now including special education teachers
 - 12 day/12 hour day
 - LZ acq/assessment/culture/ESL methodology
 - Next semester/year complete an applied project
 - Pay tuition/may move up pay scale
 - Need to take Praxis on teaching
- Same standards; alternative assessments for ELLs (4, 6, 8, 11th) [3 years in the U.S. don't have to take English tests]
- Alternate assessment for ELLs and disabilities
- Use a portfolio approach

Challenges: Need for greater knowledge regarding issues

- The more you know, the more you need to know
- Amount of reading instruction, especially after 3rd grade: critical issue for struggling readers
- Focus on NCLB requirements for testing
- Need support programs for these students: These programs should include compensatory and developmental focus
- Creating a collaborative relationship with general education
- Changing the paradigm for Special Education and ESL (support versus primary responsibility)
- Level of resources committed to these students (ELLs and ELLs with disabilities)
- Involvement of other centers (e.g., comprehensive centers, equity centers)
- Racism/prejudice
- Politics
- ESL Models as currently implemented need improvement
- Have helped develop standards and are providing professional development
- Focused on districts receiving Title III funding
- Need to evaluate outcomes
- Need a Forum on unbiased assessment
- Need drop-out information
- Lack of resources to implement bilingual education; do English only (ESL)
- Some districts require endorsement, certification to work with ELLs
- Need technical assistance providers

Roles Alike: Discussion

During lunch, role participants networked and discussed celebrations and issues specific to their roles.

Regional Issues

From the above discussions the following regional issues and needs were identified:

1. Reading, access to the general education curriculum {for student and teacher training}
2. Collaboration with general education
3. Collaborative pre-service & inservice training; collaboration with Institutions of Higher Education (IHE)
4. Collaborations among IHEs across the region and within departments at individual IHEs
5. Cultural diversity piece existing all across the board; cultural responsive training is needed
6. Issues and best practices for ELL with severe and profound disabilities
7. Implementation of guidelines addressing needed systemic changes
8. Training module for translators

Regional Planning

Delia Cerpa reviewed the regional issues identified by the participants. Based on the above identified issues, future activities will be developed for and with the SERRC Regional Workgroup, with a targeted focus on results accountability and use of Annual Progress Reports (APR) as a planning tool.

Presentation of the BEST-ERA Model/Collaborative Service Planning

During the entire discussion of state issues challenges and strengths, Dr. Alba Ortiz provided armchair guidance and suggestions. This was followed by the BEST- ERA Model presentation where she highlighted important points relevant to the participant's discussion.

Reference: Determining Eligibility for Bilingual Exceptional Students; Early Intervention, Referral, and Assessment (found in best practice section of participants' notebook).

Individual States' Action Plan

Utilizing the planning tool that teams received during the LA ELL Summit and the ERA Model Collaborative planning tool, state teams developed a plan to implement upon return to their agencies. Plans reflected the use of the rich information received at both the LA Summit and the SERRC Forum.

Reference: Coordination of Programs, Personnel, and Services for ELLs: Prevention, Early Intervention, Referral, Assessment, Placement, and Instruction (found in the planning section of the participants' notebook).

State Teams Planning Reports

State teams shared with each other action steps they will take during the next 3 months, 6 months and a year.

One state will meet with their new ESOL/ Bilingual director to continue their collaborative approach at the state level and identify critical approaches and activities to implement in the state. They will arrange a conference call with Delia to discuss follow up steps and how SERRC could best assist.

Another state will have Dr. Alba Ortiz at one of their training meetings and share plans with Delia. Dr. Eric Lopez will present two sessions on evaluating ELL students with suspected disabilities at the MEGA Conference in July. After his presentations, a committee will be formed to work on developing a plan for assessing ELL students suspected of having a disability. The committee will work on this during the next school year.

Another state had a regional/state team with them. Regional members plan to implement their state guidelines and will come up with an implementation plan for their district.

At the state level, the CSPD Coordinator plans to collaborate with the state ESL Director to plan a Special Education / ESL strand in their Summer Institute and continue their collaborative approach.

Another state plans to complete final revision of the State guidelines, and follow up with districts and support their plans to developing training to implement guidelines. They scheduled a follow up training; Catherine and Dr. Collier will be the trainers on adaptation and modification strategies and possibly Dr. Sam Ortiz on more in-depth identification and assessment. With SERRC's assistance, this state team plans to develop a training module for translators

Another state plans to do training on awareness of needs of ELLs, identification and instructional strategies by October. Possibly include training during the Summer Statewide Conference.

Another state has good ideas to take back to the special education director. They have a grant that can be utilized for implementing some of these ideas.

Another state reported that, although unable to attend the Summit and ELL Forum, the SERRC staff had a conference call with the Special Education Director regarding plans to conduct training in the areas of unbiased assessment, language assessment, and other LA ELLs initiatives.