

INTRODUCTION

Statutory Requirements For Language Transition Support Services (LTSS)

In June 1999, the Connecticut General Assembly revised the State's bilingual education statute. Among the provisions of Section 10-17 e-j, inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.) are the following:

- the tenure of students in required bilingual education programs is limited to 30 months;
- program students must be assessed annually in English for growth in language proficiency and academic achievement;¹
- program students must meet the English mastery standard (established in 1999-2000);² and
- students who have not met this standard at the end of 30 months must be provided with LTSS.

Students in LTSS must be assessed annually until they meet the English mastery standard. Upon meeting the standard, students will no longer qualify for LTSS.

The goals of LTSS, therefore, are to enable such students to:

1. continue progressing in content-area achievement and English academic proficiency;
2. meet the English mastery standard on the annual assessment; and
3. function successfully in the mainstream program.

The research shows that it may take English language learners (ELLs) 5 to 7 years to develop the cognitive academic language proficiency in English that will enable them to score on a par with native English speakers on standardized tests in English.³ It is anticipated, therefore, that many students leaving the bilingual education program after 30 months will need the extra time and support of LTSS to attain these goals. Given these time frames, educating ELLs is clearly the shared responsibility of bilingual, ESL and mainstream teachers.

Purpose of the guidelines. The revised bilingual education statute was first implemented in school year 1999-2000. Therefore, school districts will be required to implement LTSS for the first time in 2002-2003 for students who have not met the standard on the annual assessment in 2001-2002. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide school districts with assistance in designing and implementing the required LTSS. Three areas are covered in this document: services, resources and professional development.

¹ English proficiency for Grades K-12 is tested with the Language Assessment Scales; academic achievement is tested with the Developmental Reading Assessment for Grades K-3 and with the Connecticut Mastery Test for Grades 3-12.

² See *Questions and Answers: the Bilingual Statute*, available at www.state.ct.us/sde/; click on "curriculum" and then on "bilingual/ESL."

³ See **Research Basis for LTSS** on page 4.

What Are Language Transition Support Services (LTSS)?

The State's bilingual education statute is suggestive rather than prescriptive regarding LTSS:

If an eligible student does not meet the English mastery standard at the end of 30 months, the local or regional board of education shall provide language transition support services to such student. Such services may include, but need not be limited to, English-as-a-second-language programs, sheltered English programs, English immersion programs, and tutoring and homework assistance. Families may also receive guidance from school professionals to help their children make progress in the native language [Section 10-17f (d), CGS].

Since entering students have received 30 months of schooling in a bilingual education program, LTSS should be a **bridge** that provides a smooth transition to the mainstream program. These services are intended to move students from where they are, upon first receiving LTSS, to where they need to be in order to function successfully in the classroom in English according to their age and grade level.

To reach this level of functioning, LTSS must enable students *to continue progressing* in such areas as English literacy, academic language development and content-area achievement. Such instruction must involve a *combination of services*, such as sheltered content classrooms/classes and mathematics/numeracy support. The section on **Setting Up LTSS** (see page 7) will outline in greater detail the content and format of the services that should be offered.

The statute also indicates that families of students in LTSS *may* receive guidance from school professionals in helping their children make progress in their native language. The research literature presents ample evidence that literacy skills in the native language substantially support the development of reading and writing skills in English.⁴ Therefore, districts should seriously consider providing parents with such guidance.

How Can The Effectiveness Of LTSS Be Ensured?

The following implementation procedures should help to increase the effectiveness of LTSS:

- combining the expertise of a *districtwide* team of bilingual, ESL and mainstream teachers in planning and providing LTSS under the direction of principals and bilingual/ESL education administrators;
- reassigning and/or adding additional staff members and resources as needed;
- using formats such as resource rooms, homework assistance and summer school to augment the main mode of instruction, namely, the integration of LTSS throughout the various periods of the students' day;

⁴ Collier, V.P. and Thomas, W.P. (1999). Making schools effective for English language learners, Part 3. *TESOL Matters*. 9(6): 1, 10; Connecticut State Department of Education (2000). *Connecticut's Blueprint for Reading Achievement: The Report of the Early Reading Success Panel*. Hartford, CT: Author, pp. 16-17.

- ongoing professional development in the theory, research and practical strategies associated with educating English language learners (ELLs) for the wide range of school staff members that will provide LTSS;
- determining instructional needs systematically on a student-by-student basis and matching them with the appropriate services; and
- ongoing monitoring and assessment of student progress by a *school-based* team of qualified individuals.

Achievement of the three LTSS goals for students (see page 1) will be the ultimate indicator of LTSS effectiveness. In terms of instruction, students receiving LTSS must be given maximal opportunities for working directly and actively with the various content areas in English, in addition to dedicated ESL instruction by a wide range of well-trained staff members. This document will provide guidance for establishing, implementing and maintaining LTSS.

Other Stipulations Regarding LTSS

As school districts began implementing the revised bilingual education statute enacted in 1999, a number of questions arose regarding the implementation of LTSS. These are addressed in the document titled *Questions and Answers: the Bilingual Education Statute*⁵ and are summarized as follows:

- Students will receive LTSS until they meet the standard on all required tests of the annual assessment in the same academic year.
- Students receiving required LTSS are included in the count of students used to calculate the district's annual bilingual education state grant.
- Bilingual education state grant funds may be used to support LTSS, including professional development for LTSS staff members.
- LTSS are mandatory for students who qualify for such services in schools in which a bilingual education program is required.
- Students that qualify for such services and who are transferred to schools that do not have a bilingual education program may not have formal LTSS available to them; however, these students must be provided with the services that are part of LTSS that address their learning/instructional needs.⁶

It is crucial that students who qualify for LTSS be placed in situations that will afford them the strongest possible educational services for meeting their learning needs.

⁵ Available at www.state.ct.us/sde/

⁶ See *Statutory Requirements for Educating English Language Learners (ELLs) Not Served in Required Programs of Bilingual Education*, available at www.state.ct.us/sde/; click on "curriculum" and then on "bilingual/ESL."

Research Basis For LTSS

Students who qualify for LTSS have completed 30 months of English language and academic studies in a required bilingual education program. However, they have not met the standard on the annual assessment, which includes the CMT.

Such an outcome is consistent with research findings showing that it takes 5 to 7 years for English language learners (ELLs) to score on a par with native English speakers on standardized tests.⁷ Hakuta, Butler and Witt, for example, maintain that it takes 3 to 5 years to develop oral proficiency in English. However, it may take 4 to 7 years to acquire academic English proficiency, i.e., the ability to use English in academic contexts. In their view, one year is not a realistic time period for children to acquire English.⁸ Others disagree and maintain that children can benefit from instruction in English before they have attained full proficiency in English.⁹

Virginia P. Collier and Wayne P. Thomas have found that after 2 to 3 years of exposure to English, ELLs “achieve around the 10th percentile as a group” while their native English-speaking peers score around the 50th percentile. To close this 40-percentile gap, ELLs “must accomplish more than 1 year’s achievement for 6 years in a row (e.g., 15 months’ growth per 10-month school year for 6 consecutive years).”

Meanwhile, the researchers point out, “Native English speakers are not sitting around waiting for ESL students to catch up with them! They are continuing to make 1 year’s progress in 1 year’s time in their English development and in each school subject.” To stay at the 50th percentile native English speakers “must achieve 10 month’s gain [per 10-month school year]¹⁰ on the tests given across the curriculum.”

Collier and Thomas have found that “typical programs across the United States have not succeeded in closing this achievement gap (from the 10th to the 50th percentile)” even though “former ESL students continue to make good progress with each year of school.”¹¹

Researchers agree that ELLs need substantial educational support to acquire English literacy, according to *Connecticut’s Blueprint for Reading Achievement: The Report of the Early Reading Success Panel* (2000), whether or not they first learn to read in their native language. Beginning English readers, in particular, need: 1) an adequate base of oral language competence in English; 2) to develop the same kinds of comprehension competencies as do all readers, including learning vocabulary, background knowledge, comprehension strategies and inferencing; 3) to acquire word-identification competencies; and 4) to have the same kinds of

⁷ Cummins, J. (1981). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. In *Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework*. Los Angeles, California State University; Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center. Also, Collier, V.P. (1989). How long? A synthesis of research on academic achievement in a second language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 23(3): 509-530.

⁸ Hakuta, K.; Butler, Y. and Witt, D. (2000). How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency? *The University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute, Policy Report 2000-1*.

⁹ Rossell, C. and Baker, K. (1996). The educational effectiveness of bilingual education. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 30: 7-74.

¹⁰ Brackets added.

¹¹ Collier, V.P. and Thomas, W.P. (1999). Making schools effective for English language learners, Part 1. *TESOL Matters*, 9(4), p. 6.

home experiences with literacy as do other children, thereby making the development of family literacy a high priority.¹²

For students who learn to read in their native language, researchers recommend that they do so while learning spoken English and that they be supported in transferring native language reading skills to English. If students are learning to read in English only, teachers should focus initially on developing spoken English, use print materials to develop oral language (e.g., by reading to the child), phonological awareness, and basic print concepts prior to the onset of formal reading instruction in English.¹³

Enrichment programs are needed to accelerate academic growth to close the achievement gap. Collier and Thomas maintain that “we must not only help our students acquire the English language but also help them accelerate their academic growth.” They propose that “effective enrichment programs” for ELLs would “take a minimum of 5 to 6 years to close the achievement gap in second language.”¹⁴ Enrichment programs add “to what the students already know,” whereas remedial programs attempt to fix “what is viewed as a problem.” Enrichment programs accelerate academic growth for ELLs through such strategies as team teaching, discovery and cooperative learning.¹⁵

Academic language, as well as interpersonal communication skills, must be taught. Researchers emphasize the need for developing students’ academic language in English.¹⁶ This consists in the specialized vocabulary and discourse of the various content areas and of academic functions such as comparison and analysis. Communication skills take about 1 to 2 years to acquire, whereas academic proficiency takes from 5 to 7 years, according to Cummins.¹⁷ Many students who have communication skills only in English make slow progress in academic achievement. Very often the cause lies in the failure to provide such students with explicit instruction in English academic language in specific content areas. Bilingual, ESL and mainstream teachers need to share the task of teaching ELLs academic language.

The principle of *comprehensible input*¹⁸ must be used to make content-area instruction in English more accessible to ELLs. Teachers employ this principle by making their oral and written language understandable to students, using such strategies as speaking more slowly and emphasizing key words. They also provide ample *contextual clues* (e.g., graphic organizers and other visuals) for the meaning of the language that they use in their lessons. Comprehensible

¹² Connecticut State Department of Education (2000). *Connecticut's Blueprint for Reading Achievement: The Report of the Early Reading Success Panel*. Hartford, CT: Author, pp. 16-17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁴ Collier, V.P. and Thomas, W.P. (1999). Making schools effective for English language learners, Part 1. *TESOL Matters*. 9(4), p. 6.

¹⁵ Collier, V.P. and Thomas, W.P. (1999). Making schools effective for English language learners, Part 2. *TESOL Matters*. 9(5): 1, 6.

¹⁶ Cummins, J. (1979). Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age questions and some other matters. *Working Papers in Bilingualism*, 19: 121-129. Also, Chamot, A. and O'Malley, J.M. (1994). *The CALLA Handbook: Implementing the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, pp. 39-55.

¹⁷ Cummins, J. (1979), *op. cit.*, pp. 121-129.

¹⁸ Krashen, S.D. (1981). Bilingual education and second-language acquisition theory. In California State Department of Education, *Schooling and Language Minority Students: A Theoretical Framework*. Los Angeles, CA: Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center, pp. 51-79.

input strategies, together with the teaching of academic language and learning strategies,¹⁹ are integral components of *sheltered content instruction*.²⁰

Accelerating the academic achievement and English language and literacy development of students in LTSS requires intensive instruction and enriched learning experiences in a supportive environment throughout each student's school day. In addition to closing the achievement gap, such an approach will benefit not only ELLs but *all* students. The remainder of this document provides guidelines in the following areas:

- setting up LTSS;
- LTSS resource requirements; and
- professional development.

¹⁹ Learning strategies are “techniques used by effective learners to help them learn more expediently,” such as “self-monitoring and asking questions for clarification.” See Becker, H. (2001). *Teaching ESL K-12: Views from the Classroom*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle, pp. 13-16.

²⁰ For more on sheltered content instruction, see Genesee, F., ed. (1999). *Programs for Linguistically Diverse Students*. Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence, pp. 3-7.