

How to Increase the Academic Achievement of LEP Students

As we begin a new academic year, and instructional decisions are being made to drive curriculum and instruction for limited English proficient (LEP) students, keep in mind the following recommendations for program characteristics that make a significant difference in the academic achievement of LEP students:

- Programs that focus on academic, language, and cognitive development within a socio-culturally supportive environment. (Collier, 1995)
- Programs that emphasize an active, hands-on approach to learning, where students use English as a tool to accomplish meaningful tasks. Study skills and learning strategies should be actively taught in all subject areas.
- Implement programs that teach English through academic content and focus on teaching learning strategies, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving skills by using the following strategies:
 - activation of students' prior knowledge
 - fostering an environment where all students' languages and cultural backgrounds are respected
 - use of native language support to facilitate learning
 - cooperative learning
 - interactive and discovery learning
 - use alternative methods of assessment

To maximize LEP student achievement, the perception of ESOL classes as remedial must be changed and ESOL instruction must be an integral part of the school curriculum taught by highly qualified personnel.

Given the importance of linguistic, academic, and cognitive development in the native language, schools must provide strong native language support to students through the use of bilingual teachers and paraprofessionals. Teachers must allow students to process new concepts and skills in their native language in order to facilitate the transfer to English.

Sources:

Collier, V.P. (1995). Acquiring a Second Language for School. Directions in Language & Education. National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Cummins, J. & Hallman, C.L. (1987). Empowering Minority Students Teacher Training Monograph Number 5. Teacher Training Project for Bilingual and English to Speakers of Other Language Teachers. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida.