

## **SUMMARY OF BEST PRACTICES IN ESOL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

### **What does the research say about second language acquisition and school achievement for English language learners?**

The most significant variable in students' degree of academic achievement in their second language is the amount of formal schooling they received in their native language. This held true across all other variables, including students' native language, country of origin, and type of program. Knowledge (concepts) and skills transfer from the first language to the second language.

### **How long does it take for ELLs to acquire English?**

There is a difference in the amount of time required for acquisition of conversational English (2 years) and for academic proficiency in English (5 or more years). The amount of formal schooling in the native language affects the length of time it takes to reach academic proficiency on a level with native speakers.

- For students with no formal schooling in their own language, it takes 7-10 years to reach age and grade-level norms of native speakers.
- For students with 2-3 years of schooling in their native language, it takes 5-7 years to reach native speaker proficiency levels as measured by standardized tests and performance assessment measures in content areas.

### **What type of programs and program characteristics make a significant difference in academic achievement for ELLs?**

- Programs that focus on academic, language, and cognitive development within a socioculturally supportive environment. (Collier, 1995)
- Programs that emphasize an active/experiential approach to learning, not a transmission approach.
- Programs that
  - ✓ Teach the second language through academic content
  - ✓ focus on teaching learning strategies, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving skills
  - ✓ use the following strategies:
    - activation of students' prior knowledge
    - respect for students' home language and culture
    - use of native language support to facilitate learning
    - cooperative learning
    - interactive and discovery learning
    - use alternative methods of assessment

### **For students without a background of formal schooling in their native language, and considering the research on best practices, what can schools do to foster academic achievement for all students?**

- 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.

- Develop an active/experimental approach to teaching and learning, where students use English as a tool to accomplish meaningful tasks. Study skills and learning strategies are actively taught in all subject areas.
- Foster an environment where all students' language and cultural backgrounds are respected.
- Change the perception of ESOL classes as remedial, and make them an integral part of the school curriculum taught by quality personnel.
- Encourage ELLs' participation in all school activities.

*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 Languages Teachers. Gainesville, FL; University of Florida.*