

English Language Learners

Ivannia Soto

The Story of Whittier Union High School District, CA

A Case Study



Student Population:

13,000

Latino Population:

88%

Free/Reduced Lunch:

72%

Continuation school:

1

High schools:

5

Alternative schools:

2

The Context: About the District

Whittier Union High School District (WUHSD) is a 9-12 urban district located in the city of Whittier (population 80,000) about 10 miles from downtown Los Angeles, CA. The district is comprised of five comprehensive high schools, two alternative schools, and one continuation school serving a total of 13,000 students. Students enter the district at grade 9 from five local feeder districts. The racial make-up of the district is about 88% Latino, with single-digit percentages of African American, Asian, and White students. About 72% of all WUHSD students qualify for free-reduced lunches. Superintendent Sandra Thorstensen, Ed.D., has led the district since 2002. Although the district as a whole demonstrates moderate academic success, there are individual schools with higher populations of students in need.

One in ten WUHSD students is an ELL and 95% of these are students who have received all required English Language Development (ELD) services but have still not been redesignated as fluent in English. They are called Long Term English Learners (LTEL) and typically receive no additional services after finishing the required coursework.

Standard English Learners (SEL) are students who speak Chicano English or African American English instead of Standard English. These students have never received language services at school and need specific instruction in academic English in order to improve their performance. Ivannia Soto's Corwin services over the last two years have focused on those two student groups.

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Demographics of the 2 Focus Schools in WUHSD

	California HS	Whittier HS
# of 9-12 Students	2953	2164
% of Students on F/R	72%	72%
# of ELL Students	297	171
# of SEL Students	About 50	About 50

Data Source: 2014-15 CA School Accountability Report Cards

The Challenge

LTEL and SEL students in California, particularly at the secondary level, are considered to be extremely vulnerable in trying to attain academic success. Their vulnerability is due to the fact that (1) neither group is consistently identified across the state; and (2) neither group is receiving consistent services related to academic language development.

LTEs: At the present time, CA has no statewide standards for the redesignation of LTEs to RFEP. Each district determines its own criteria for redesignation.

SEs: The state of California does not have a definition for SEs at this time. However, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has done pioneering work in identifying these students and developing some curricular programs for them. LAUSD defines an SEL as a student in grades 6–12 (not ELL) who may be performing poorly academically because their home language is heavily Chicano English or African American English. Because the SEL designation is only used by individual districts, there is no redesignation process for these students. Most receive no services during their secondary time in school.

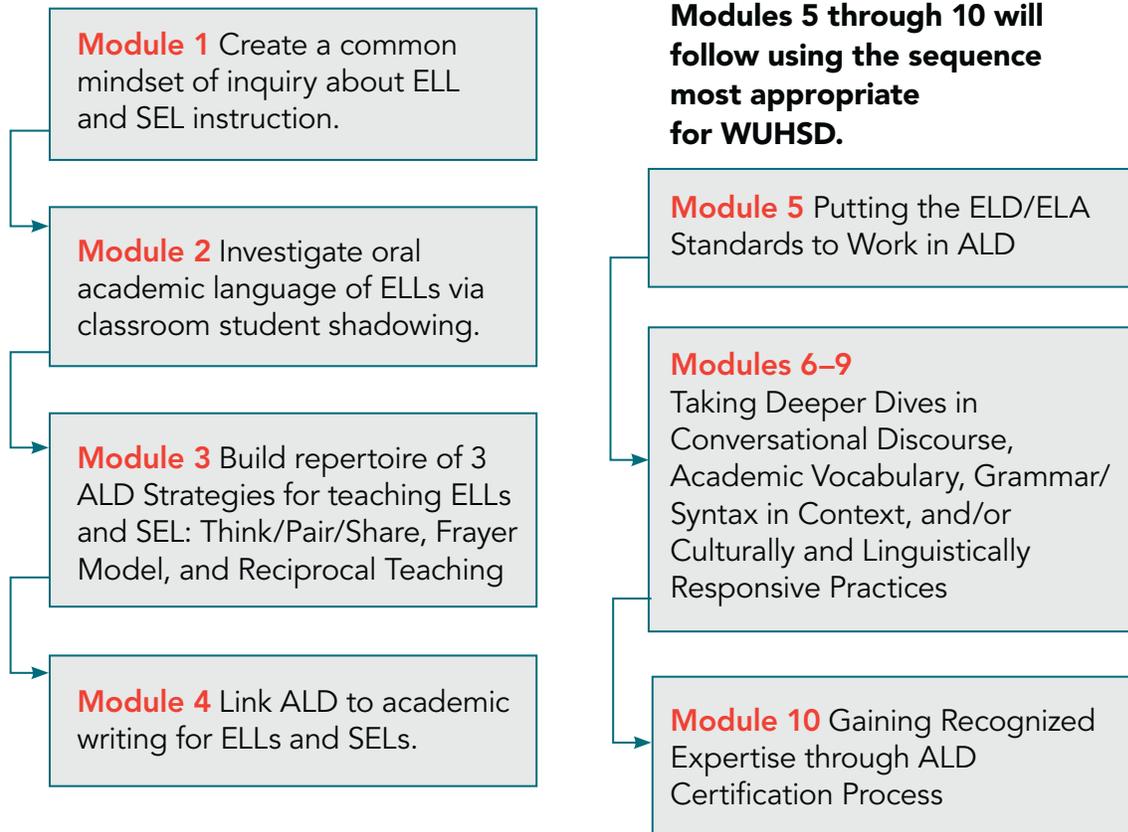
Bringing the Two Groups Together: As can be seen from the descriptions above, LTEs and SEs are often underserved at the secondary level – or if they are receiving some services, the two student groups are separated into two paths for services. This is problematic as both groups of students have a number of language and cultural characteristics (and needs!) in common. Ivannia Soto's Academic Mastery model was established to provide research and services for these student groups in tandem.



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Implementation

Soto's ALD Mastery model is based on a three-year partnership, resulting in ALD Certification for teacher leaders who choose to move on to that level. Currently, there are 20 cohort 1 and 2 teachers who have signed on for ALD Certification. The model's four core training modules were begun in 2014-15 school year across the five comprehensive high schools, for a total of 120 teachers from across content areas trained across the district.



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Key Outcomes

- At the district level, WUHSD highlighted ELL and SEL instruction in both of its major three-year planning documents: the Local Control Accountability Plan, and the ELL Master Plan.
- Ten teachers, from across all five comprehensive high schools, have completed year one of ALD certification. ALD Certification teachers have been videotaped while using think-pair-share, the Frayer model, or reciprocal teaching in their classrooms. They have also opened up their classrooms to other teachers and assisted in sharing best practices with their peers. They will complete the last year of ALD certification in 2016-17.
 - ALD certification teachers also piloted the shadowing app. Since this group had already learned to shadow using the paper-pencil version of the protocol, they piloted the app by shadowing SEL students, as the district will begin to highlight this group in their professional development efforts in 2016-17.
- **LTEL Parallel Course Pilot Phase 2015-16:** This project began in a pilot phase in 2015-16 in two Whittier high schools: California HS and Whittier HS. The three participating teachers and ICLRT developed a pilot curriculum course for 9th grade, which they tried out in a total of five classrooms during the 2015-16. The course was designed as a parallel course to 9th grade English, and the participating teachers taught both courses to the same group of students. A total of 75 LTEL students participated – these were ELL students who (1) had been in US education for five years or more, (2) had taken all the required ELD coursework in elementary/middle school, and (3) still had not been reclassified as RFEP. ICLRT assisted the teachers during the year with professional development and strategies, consisting of the ICLRT ALD Conference in August 2015 and specific sessions with the teachers during 2015-16. WUHSD also provided academic mentors (11th/12th grade students) for the students in the pilot course. In the past year, the majority of this cohort of students passed their classes with a “C” grade or better and 96% of students were on target for graduation with 25 or more credits. We will continue to track these students longitudinally, as well as additional cohorts of students, as new parallel courses are added for LTELs at each of the high schools.



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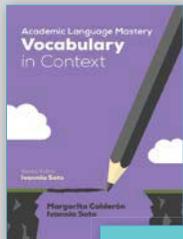
Next Steps

- Add a second cohort of ALD Certification teachers, who will begin their first year of ALD certification in 2016-17.
- Provide differentiated follow-up professional development support for each high school, according to need and goals of the school site and school team.
- Continue to track the progression of the LTEL students in the parallel course longitudinally. Add several more parallel courses within the district in 2016-17.
- Use the shadowing app with SEL students, in order to create awareness around this group of students.

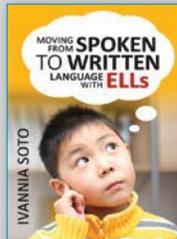
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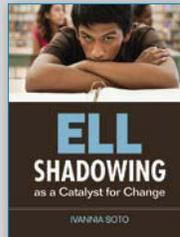
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