PREFACE

This book is a practical implementation guide for administrators, teachers, and leadership teams charged with improving the instruction and achievement of English language learners (ELLs) in their districts, schools, and classrooms. The driving forces behind this work are our experiences as teachers and administrators, our ongoing review of research in the field, and the knowledge we have gained working with educators in scores of diverse school districts in rural communities and small towns as well as in large suburban and urban school districts.

Implementing Effective Instruction for English Language Learners provides step-by-step guidance for district-wide committees, school leadership teams, and teacher teams committed to ensuring that the ELLs in their classes, schools, and districts are successful and reach high content and language development standards. All of our recommendations are grounded in research-based principles that inform pedagogically sound, well-implemented instructional programs for ELLs. These include programs that provide content-area instruction exclusively in English (e.g., sheltered English immersion, ESL) or in two languages (e.g., dual language, transitional bilingual programs).

Implementing Effective Instruction for English Language Learners identifies twelve key practices that are found in all quality instructional programs for ELLs. These practices are organized into a flexible framework that is based on two fundamental assumptions. First, improving instruction and achievement for ELLs is a systemic challenge that requires strategic planning and action on the district, school, and classroom levels over time. Second, ELLs are everyone's responsibility, including school and district administrators, coaches and professional development providers, mainstream teachers and support staff, and ESL and bilingual specialists. Using the 12 Key Practices Framework, educators can improve the instruction and achievement of ELLs in any K–12 context.

The Power of the Twelve Key Practices Framework

We know that when teachers and administrators collaborate to implement the twelve key practices into carefully planned comprehensive language education programs,[1] ELL students have optimal opportunities to be successful at school. We also know that the challenges of implementation are best addressed through collaborative teams at the district, school, and classroom levels over time.

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[1] We use the term *comprehensive language education program* to refer to the carefully-planned content, literacy, and ESL instruction that ELLs receive, including their instruction in mainstream classes.

The 12 Key Practices Framework requires educational leaders to look at instruction for ELLs in relation to the larger school and district vision, mission, and goals for all students with attention to how ELL education fits into the overall district and school organizational culture. The framework is divided into four parts that provide the overarching structure of the book: (1) shared practices at the district, school, and classroom levels, (2) common classroom practices for all ELL teachers, (3) core instructional practices of every program for ELLs, and (4) effective program configurations. The 12 Key Practices Framework and corresponding checklist provide a common language and a common practice for ELL-focused professional learning communities as they plan, implement, monitor, evaluate, and improve as necessary the ELL services and professional development they provide.

1. Shared practices at the district, school, and classroom levels

The first four key practices are big picture practices, and they provide a strong foundation and organizational structure for effective ELL instruction in any K–12 system.

- Key Practice 1 is about **equity** and shows how to create enriching school and classroom environments that affirm linguistic and cultural diversity at every level of implementation.

- Key Practice 2 is about **collaboration** and outlines how teams working at different levels of decision-making can adapt and apply the key practices in locally appropriate ways.

- Key Practice 3 emphasizes the need to implement **balanced student assessment systems** that use multiple measures of formative assessment data to complement state-mandated standardized test scores of ELLs' academic achievement and English language proficiency. This key practice shows educators how to gather and use information about students' strengths and needs to identify and appropriately place ELLs, and to use evidence of their growth and achievement in content, language, and literacy to inform instruction and guide program and professional development.

- Key Practice 4 is about **embracing an additive bilingualism perspective** and emphasizes the difference that a language-as-resource orientation makes in educating ELLs. This key practice shows teachers how to draw on the linguistic and cultural resources that ELLs bring with them to school to make grade-level academic content comprehensible, scaffold literacy, and support academic English language development.

When administrators, teachers, and leadership teams make their district, school, and classroom-level decisions about instruction for ELLs with equity, collaboration, authentic assessment, and a resource orientation toward linguistic and cultural diversity in mind, they create a district and school environment that makes effective instruction for ELLs possible.

2. Common classroom practices for ALL English language learner educators

The next four key practices are common teaching practices that enhance instruction and maximize learning in all classes (not just in ESL or bilingual education classes).

- Key Practice 5 is about **big ideas** and shows teachers how to target the enduring understandings that are aligned with core state content standards in ways that are comprehensible for ELLs at all stages of language and literacy development.
- Key Practice 6 is about **meaningful vocabulary-building instruction** and demonstrates how to pre-teach and reinforce key content vocabulary across the curriculum.
- Key Practice 7 is about **activating prior knowledge** as a means of building a comprehensible context for ELL learning.
- Key Practice 8 is about **structuring student interaction** during content, literacy, and ESL instruction in ways that engage ELLs in academically challenging, language-rich classroom activities all day every day.

When all teachers who have ELLs in their classes target the big ideas, teach key vocabulary, activate and build on students' prior knowledge, and structure engaging learning opportunities, ELLs can and do learn academic content, develop literacy, and acquire the academic English they need for school success.

3. Core instructional practices of every program for ELLs

These three key practices are at the heart of every effective instructional program for ELLs. Regardless of program model, the core instructional goals for ELLs are academic achievement and English language and literacy development. Equitable education for ELLs therefore must include (a) ESL instruction that targets the oral and written academic English needed for school success, (b) meaning-based literacy instruction, and (c) comprehensible content-area instruction in all subject areas. While ESL instruction is an integral component of all comprehensive language education programs, ELLs cannot reach high content and language development standards in isolated ESL or bilingual classes or programs. Content,

language, and literacy teachers and specialists must share responsibility to ensure that every ELL can reach the same high content and language standards as all other students in developmentally appropriate ways.

- Key Practice 9 focuses on the **English as a second language component,** which includes daily content-based second language instruction that targets the oral and written English that ELLs need for school success. All state English language development (ELD) standards divide language into four domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and many state systems have created separate ELD standards that focus on (1) social and instructional language, (2) the language of language arts, (3) the language of math, (4) the language of science, and (5) the language of social studies.

- Key Practice 10 is about **meaning-based literacy instruction** in English and explains how to teach literacy skills within the context of comprehensible texts. This key practice also highlights the relationship between English literacy and home language literacy and emphasizes the importance of including literacy instruction in an ELLs' home language whenever feasible.

- Key Practice 11 is about **comprehensible academic content instruction** and shows teachers how to make grade-level content-area concepts and skills accessible to ELLs at different stages of oral and written English language development.

There are many different ways that districts and schools can organize their instructional programs for ELLs. However, administrators, teachers, and leadership teams must remember that equitable instruction for ELLs includes content-based ESL instruction, meaning-based literacy instruction, and comprehensible content-area instruction in every subject area. This instruction must be aligned with state content and language standards and configured in ways that are locally appropriate given consideration of the number of ELLs in the school, the languages they speak, the number of ESL teachers, and the languages used for instructional purposes.

One of the distinguishing features of the 12 Key Practices Framework is that we do not ask administrators, teachers, and leadership teams to carefully consider specific program models until they have carefully considered how to implement Key Practices 1–11 in relation to their district and school context. However, we know that when teams understand Key Practices 1–11, they are prepared to consider the most effective ways to configure a comprehensive language education program that improves instruction and achievement for the ELLs in their districts, schools, and classes.

4. Organizing the key practices into effective program configurations

Key Practice 12 is about **program configuration,** and it shows administrators, teachers, and leadership teams how to plan and implement effective comprehensive language education programs in any K–12 system. This key practice explores the strengths and challenges of different options available to districts and schools given consideration of

- the size of the ELL population relative to the overall student population
- the number of languages spoken by ELLs
- the differences in program configurations at the elementary and secondary levels, and
- the languages used for instructional purposes (English-only, bilingual education).

We know that there is no one-size-fits-all program model that is appropriate for ELLs in every educational context. In all districts and schools there are diverse ELL student populations that will change over time. Changes in school personnel, board members, and material resources will also occur. In addition, there will be changes in state content and language development standards, new mandates, and revised accountability requirements. However, when administrators, teachers, and leadership teams use research-based principles, flexible frameworks, and templates and checklists to guide their work, they can improve instruction and achievement of ELLs in their districts and schools.

Using the 12 Key Practices Framework on the Local Level

The opening chapter of this book introduces the 12 Key Practices Framework and Checklist in their entirety. After reading this introductory chapter, administrators, teachers, and leadership teams can use the 12 Key Practices Checklist that is included at the end of the chapter to review their current practices for ELLs at the district, school, and classroom levels. This checklist invites educators to identify the degree to which they implement each key practice, and they can use this information as a form of baseline data. Implementing effective instruction for ELLs is a dynamic, recursive process, and teams are encouraged to revisit the entire checklist again at different points in their planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating cycles in order to gauge improvement and plan professional development.

Each subsequent chapter focuses on one key practice in isolation, but each practice should always be considered in relation to the rest of the key practices. Moreover, each part of the book focuses on a particular level of planning and implementation, and each level should be considered in

relation to the other levels. Teams are encouraged to begin by reading the entire book and then to return to specific key practices as necessary.

We have worked to make each chapter as clear and easy to use as possible. Each chapter begins with the title of the focal key practice, which is followed by a directive statement that tells teams what to do in order to reach this key practice. Each key practice directive is then followed by a bulleted list of implementation guideposts. Next we include a statement of the big ideas of that key practice, which are the enduring understandings that readers should take away from that practice.

Each chapter is organized around the implementation guideposts, and each section suggests specific planning processes, strategic how-to information, tasks, and examples that demonstrate how the key practice may be implemented. Each chapter concludes with Questions for Reflection and Action that are related to the big ideas of the chapter. This section provides questions and activities that ask administrators, teachers, planning teams, and study groups to relate the big ideas of the focal key practice to their context. These questions for reflection and action are intended to stimulate critical thinking and concrete action planning. At the end of each chapter we include a short list of Recommended Readings, additional templates called out in the chapter that can guide planning and implementation, and one section of the Key Practice Checklist that encourages users to assess current practice and note areas in need of improvement. We also include a glossary of terms at the end of the book.

Throughout this book we share "Reflections from the Field" vignettes that exemplify the topics discussed in the text. Many of these vignettes relate "a ha!" moments that we have experienced as teachers and as professional developers. We also include experiences, events, and stories that teachers have shared with us about their learning experience as they work with linguistically and culturally diverse students. Finally, as an important supplement to the book, we have posted Frequently Asked Questions, a Glossary of Teaching Strategies, and downloadable Templates at caslon publishing.com/pd-resources/twelve-key-practices.

Acknowledgements

for rural school districts. Sue thanks her colleagues at the University of Illinois at Chicago for their heart-felt commitment to diverse learners in city schools. Special thanks to Flora Rodriguez-Brown, who taught Sue so much about involving parents in their children's learning. Tammy thanks the staff at the WIDA Consortium, especially Mariana Castro, Maureen Keithley, and Robert Kohl, for helping broaden her perspective. By collaborating with these professionals and working with administrators and teachers in various states, we have gained confidence that our twelve key practices are relevant and useful in large and small school districts across the country.

We also would like to thank several contributors to this book: Michelle Cubero, Jeanette Gordon, Margo Gottlieb, Doris Reynolds, Megan Salgado, Cristina Sanchez-Lopez, Shalley Wakeman, and Magali Williams. We are very grateful for their willingness to share their knowledge and write up their stories. Special thanks to our mentor and editor, Rebecca Freeman Field, who guided us through the writing and revision process.

For their love, patience and unwavering support, we want to thank our husbands, Rog and Rob, for understanding our goals and supporting our task in every way. Sue would like to thank Grace, Jack, Emily, Sam, and Harper for being the best grandkids on the planet. Tammy thanks the Marrah clan and the King family, especially for the thoughts and prayers from Joey and Hope.

Lastly, we thank the makers of trail mix and the staff at Macy's on State Street for the sustenance to keep working and the place to have our "*Macy's moments*," the term we use to describe our working retreats in the not-so-secret basement food court.