Findings from the Literature: Instructional Practices Supporting ELL Children

Presentation to First 5 LA and LAUP
August 17, 2010

Goals of UPCOS-3

- Review current program quality and instructional practices that support ELL children
  - Thorough review of observation measures
  - Descriptive study of current ELL practices in LAUP
    - Focus groups with coaches, teachers, FCC providers
    - Questionnaire for teachers and providers
    - Classroom observations
- Identify enhanced program practices supporting ELL children
  - Literature review of ELL practices

Agenda

- Describe types of practices reviewed
- Brief overview of reviewed practices with strongest evidence base
- Describe findings on current practices within programs to support ELLs

Types of Instructional Practices Reviewed

- Specific instructional practices
  - Language of instruction
  - Explicit, intentional phonics instruction
  - Explicit, intentional vocabulary instruction
  - Whole language, process-based, balanced instruction
  - Reading and sharing books with children
  - Culturally focused approaches
  - Peer strategies
  - Instructional and visual supports
- Screening and assessment
- Curricula
- Family-program partnerships
### Number of Studies Reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Practice</th>
<th>Studies with Young ELLs</th>
<th>Studies with Preschool ELLs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language of instruction</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit, intentional phonics instruction</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explicit, intentional vocabulary instruction</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole language, process-based, balanced instruction</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and sharing books with children</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally focused approaches</td>
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<td>Instructional and visual supports</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Screening and assessment</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricula</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Research Consensus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Practice</th>
<th>Evidence Base</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language of instruction</td>
<td>12/8 Strong research support over a number of studies; similar findings with preschool ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit, intentional phonics instruction</td>
<td>19/2 Strong research support over a number of studies; similar findings with non-ELLA; minimal evidence with preschool ELLs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explicit, intentional vocabulary instruction</td>
<td>7/2 Suggestive findings, based primarily on research with older ELLs; similar findings with non-ELLA; minimal evidence with preschool ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole language, process-based, balanced instruction</td>
<td>10/3 Suggestive findings, with limited evidence from rigorous studies; similar findings with non-ELLA; minimal evidence with preschool ELLs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading and sharing books with children</td>
<td>10/2 Suggestive findings, with limited evidence from rigorous studies; similar findings with non-ELLA; minimal evidence with preschool ELLs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary of Consensus of the Research in Each Area

- **Culturally focused approaches**: 7/3 Suggestive findings based primarily on rigorous designs; similar findings with non-ELLs; minimal evidence with preschool ELLs
- **Peer strategies**: 12/2 Strong research support across a number of studies, including studies with rigorous designs; similar findings with non-ELLs; minimal evidence with preschool ELLs
- **Instructional and visual supports**: 2/2 Minimal but suggestive findings; based primarily on research with older ELLs; similar findings with non-ELLs; minimal evidence with preschool ELLs
- **Curricula**: 30/5 Relatively strong support across a number of studies for the instructional elements of curricula; evidence base for individual programs varies.
**Language of Instruction**

- **Number of Studies Reviewed:** 38 (12 with preschoolers)
- Relatively strong research support over a significant number of studies
- **Implications**
  - Providing instruction in the home language supports development of skills in both English and the home language.

**Explicit and Intentional Phonics Instruction**

- **Number of Studies Reviewed:** 19 (2 with preschoolers)
- Relatively strong research support over a significant number of studies; similar findings with non-ELLs
- **Implication**
  - Teaching children phonics skills such as letter sounds and sound blending supports literacy acquisition.

**Reading and Sharing Books with Children**

- **Number of Studies Reviewed:** 10 (2 with preschoolers)
- Suggestive findings, with limited evidence from rigorous studies; similar findings with non-ELLs
- **Implication**
  - Providing book-reading experiences in English and children’s home languages supports children’s interest in reading, print concepts and knowledge, and vocabulary.

**Peer Strategies**

- **Number of Studies Reviewed:** 12 (2 with preschoolers)
- Relatively strong research support over a number of studies, including studies with rigorous designs; similar findings with non-ELLs
- **Implications**
  - Providing structured and well-planned paired opportunities for ELLs to interact and practice language with peers with more developed English abilities supports English language development and social inclusion.
  - Non-ELL children may be taught strategies for engaging and interacting with ELLs.
  - Providing opportunities for ELLs to focus on literacy content in homogeneous, small-group settings supports literacy acquisition.
Evidence-Based Curricula

- WWC provides information on the evidence base of various curricula for school-aged ELLs (ELL topic area) and, in some instances, preschool ELLs (early childhood topic area).
- Number of Curricula Reviewed: 13 (3 have evidence base with preschoolers)
- Relatively strong evidence base across number of studies on instructional elements of curricula; evidence for individual curriculum varies
- Implications
  - Curricula that include small-group activities, with an emphasis on direct and explicit instruction of phonological awareness, phonics, and/or vocabulary skills, may be most supportive of children’s learning.
  - Peer strategies may involve peers with more advanced skills who serve as tutors or buddies.

Key Messages from the Research

- We identified few studies evaluating practices with preschool ELLs, and few met rigorous research standards.
- Children make developmental progress when teachers use their home language in the classroom.
- Children make progress in phonics and vocabulary when teachers use direct, explicit instruction.
- Direct, explicit instruction may be more effective when embedded in meaningful teacher-child exchanges.