## Teaching Literacy in English to K-5 English Learners

**Author:** What Works Clearinghouse; U.S. Department of Education

**Summary:** "Teaching Literacy in English to K-5 English Learners" discusses the importance of teaching English learners to read in English while they are developing oral proficiency, and how this helps them increase vocabulary, speak in English, and learn other subject-matter content. Specifically, it recommends and explains successful practices in 5 different areas based on solid research: assessment, small-group instruction, vocabulary instruction, academic English development, and cooperative learning.

**Hide research findings and policy recommendations**

**Tags:**[**Comprehension**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/comprehension/); [**Instructional Programs**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/programs/); [**Language Proficiency**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/proficiency/); [**Reading**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/reading/); [**Transfer of Literacy Skills**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/skillstransfer/);[**Vocabulary**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/vocab/);

**Target Population:** Elementary School

**Research Questions the Report Poses:** What are the best methods to teach literacy to elementary school English language learners?

**Findings:**

* English learners can learn to how to read in English at about the same rate as native speakers. This was not known five or ten years ago.
* English language development and comprehension needs to be improved, by introducing academic English as early as kindergarten or pre-K.
* The importance of richer vocabulary instruction than most that found in conventional reading books is critical.
* It is very productive for kids to work with their peers, and with a structured procedure, as early as kindergarten, working in groups of either two or four, assuring they know what to do.
* The most effective professional development is for grade-level teams to meet in small groups, discuss articles, and immediate determine how they apply to their own schools and programs specifically.
* The approach suggested here appears to work with all current models about language instruction.
* There is no need to delay beginning reading instruction, as long as the instruction reflects current research findings.

**Policy Recommendations:**

* Conduct formative assessments to screen for reading problems and monitor progress.
* Provide intensive, small group reading interventions for English learners at risk for reading problems.
* Provide extensive and varied vocabulary instruction throughout the day.
* Develop academic English competence beginning in the primary grades.
* Schedule regular peer-assisted learning opportunities, including structured language practice.
* [**Read the Full Report**](http://dww.ed.gov/Literacy-in-English-K-5/topic/index.cfm?T_ID=13)

Teaching Literacy in English to K-5 English Learners. U.S. Department of Education: Doing What Works. Washington, D.C.

## Teaching English Language Learners: What the Research Does — and Does Not — Say

**Author:** Claude Goldenberg

**Summary:** This thorough review offers a comprehensive summary of existing research on issues related to the education of ELLs. Dr. Claude Goldenberg focuses on two major reviews of research, one by the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth, and the other by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE). Topics covered include: bilingual education, oral language development, reading instruction, curriculum, instructional methods, assessment, and accommodations.

**Hide research findings and policy recommendations**

**Tags:**[**Bilingualism / Biliteracy**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/biliteracy/); **[Comprehension](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/comprehension/" \o "Comprehension)**;[**Differentiated Instruction**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/differentiated/); [**Language of Instruction**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/language/);[**Language Proficiency**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/proficiency/); [**Phonological Awareness**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/awareness/); [**Transfer of Literacy Skills**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/skillstransfer/); [**Vocabulary**](http://www.colorincolorado.org/researchbykeywords/vocab/);

**Target Population:** All

**Research Questions the Report Poses:**

* What is the state of our knowledge regarding policies and practices of instruction of ELLs-what do we know and what remains unanswered?
* From the current body of research, what conclusions can we make about effective policies and practices?

**Findings:**

* Most ELLs actually were born in the U.S., though most of their parents were born elsewhere.
* By far, the majority of ELLs-80 percent-are Spanish speakers. This is an important fact to bear in mind, since Spanish speakers in the U.S. tend to come from lower economic and educational backgrounds than either the general population or other immigrants populations. Consequently, most ELLs are at risk for poor school outcomes not only because of language, but also because of socioeconomic factors.
* A majority of ELLs (60%) are in essentially all-English instruction. Of these 12% receive no additional support or services, 50% receive some "LEP services" (Limited English Proficient), and 40% receive some instruction incorporating native language.
* Teaching students to read in their first language promotes higher levels of reading achievement in English, probably due to "knowledge transfer" across languages, though it is not automatic.
* What we know about good instruction and curriculum in general holds true for ELL s., ie benefits of explicit instruction of phonics, writing, and comprehension; contextual explanation of vocabulary; cooperative learning; interactive teaching.
* Effects of "culturally-accommodated instruction" are uncertain.

**Policy Recommendations:**  
Instructional modification for ELLs:

* Make English texts accessible by choosing familiar content.
* Build vocabulary in English.
* Use the primary language for support.
* Support ELLs in English-only settings also.
* Assess knowledge and language proficiency separately.
* Add time for ELLs to learn (extended day, after school, extended year, summer school, extra years to earn a diploma).
* Promote productive interaction between ELLs and English speakers.
* [**Read the Full Report**](http://www.aft.org/pdfs/americaneducator/summer2008/goldenberg.pdf)

Goldenberg, C. (2008). Teaching English language learners: what the research does&mdash and does not&mdash say. American Educator, Retrieved from http://www.aft.org/pdfs/americaneducator/summer2008/goldenberg.pdf