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Office of Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement (OLAAA) Massachusetts Department of Education

Designing and Implementing Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Programs in Low Incidence Districts March 2006

Background

State and federal laws require that publicly funded students in our schools who are not proficient in English or whose native language is not English, and who are not currently able to perform grade-level academic work in English receive instruction that is designed specifically to assist them both in learning English and in learning subject matter content. These students are referred to as limited English proficient (LEP) students or as English language learners (ELLs).

When a new student enters a school district, it is the district's obligation to determine if the student is LEP. State law, G.L.c.71A, requires that most LEP students be educated in a Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) program. An SEI program consists of both *sheltered subject matter instruction in English* and *English language instruction*. This requirement applies to all districts that enroll LEP students, regardless of whether there is one LEP student or hundreds of LEP students enrolled in the district.

Districts that enroll small numbers of LEP students, "low incidence districts," face unique challenges in implementing the law and working effectively with what is often a new group of students in the district. As noted above, these districts have the same legal obligation as "high-incidence" districts, but implementation on a smaller-scale will look different than large-scale implementation. To assist low-incidence districts with these challenges of smaller-scale implementation, the Department has prepared the Q and A that appears below. Following the Q and A are three scenarios illustrating how three low-incidence districts in Massachusetts have sought to implement SEI in their districts.

1. How do I know if a student is limited English proficient-LEP?

All schools in which publicly funded students are enrolled must determine if such students are limited English proficient (LEP). This includes charter schools, collaboratives and vocational-technical schools and DOE-approved private schools, as

well as district schools. In order to identify LEP students, districts should administer a Home Language Survey to all students when they enroll in the district. Once the district has a list of students who speak a language other than English at home, the district is required to use English proficiency assessments in speaking, listening, reading and writing to determine whether each child is LEP, and the appropriate placement of each LEP student by English proficiency level.

Districts that currently have no LEP students are still responsible for administering a Home Language Survey to each newly enrolled student in the district, and must have testing materials available to use in order to determine LEP status.

Our state's English language proficiency assessments, the Massachusetts English Proficiency – Reading/Writing (MEPA R/W) and the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral, (MELA-O) are not to be used for initial identification of LEP students. More detailed implementation guidance on the initial identification of LEP students is available at http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/identify_lep.html.

2. What type of instruction should LEP students receive?

State and federal laws require that LEP students receive instruction that is designed specifically to assist them both in learning English and in learning subject matter content. This requirement is not based on a minimum number of students in the district. A school or district with only one LEP student must have an appropriate program for that student.

Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) is the required program model for most LEP students unless the student has received a waiver in accordance with G.L. 71A or is enrolled in a two-way bilingual program.

Sheltered English Immersion has two components,

- English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, and
- Sheltered content instruction.

3. What is English as a Second Language instruction?

English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction (also known as English language development or ELD) is explicit, direct instruction about the English language intended to promote English language acquisition by LEP students and to help them “catch up” to their student peers who are proficient in English. It includes learning outcomes in speaking, listening comprehension, reading and writing. ESL/ELD instruction is a required part of an academic program for LEP students. ESL instruction should be based on an ESL curriculum and appropriate ESL/ELD textbooks and other materials.

ESL instruction addresses social and academic vocabulary, grammar and syntax commonly used in both social and academic communication, habits and norms of social and academic interaction in American schools, and strategies that promote second language learning and content learning. In effective ESL classrooms, learning takes place when there is sustained verbal interaction, often in small groups, as the

students complete carefully designed academic tasks that include speaking, listening, reading and writing. Effective ESL instruction is often characterized by the use of thematic units, project-based instruction, and language instruction closely aligned with grade-appropriate content standards.

4. Who is qualified to provide English as a Second Language instruction?

Only a teacher with an ESL license or an ELL license is qualified to instruct ESL/ELD classes.

5. How much ESL instruction should a LEP student receive?

In June 2005 the Department issued guidance on the number of hours of ESL instruction that LEP students at various grade and English proficiency levels should receive. http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/sei/MEPA_guidelines.doc This guidance explains how districts should use the MEPA results, and other data, to design an instructional program for LEP students, based on their English proficiency level. For example, LEP students with beginning and early intermediate levels of English proficiency will require much more English language instruction than students at higher proficiency levels.

The Department recommends that beginning and early intermediate level LEP students receive 2.5 hours to a full day of ESL/ELD instruction and students at the intermediate level receive 1-2 hours of ESL/ELD instruction daily.

6. What is sheltered content instruction?

Sheltered content instruction is instruction that includes approaches, strategies and methodology that makes the content of the lesson more comprehensible to students who are not yet proficient in English. Although it is designed for LEP students who have an intermediate level of proficiency in English, LEP students with less than an intermediate level of proficiency can benefit from sheltered content instruction.

Sheltered content classes are characterized by active engagement by LEP students. Such classrooms are characterized by lesson plans that include language objectives that address the linguistic requirements of the content to be taught (e.g. content vocabulary) and content objectives based on standards from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Features of sheltered content instruction include:

- frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion between teacher/student and among students that encourage elaborated responses by students about lesson concepts.
- supplementary materials that support the content objectives and contextualize learning. Examples of these materials include hands-on manipulatives, pictures, visuals, multimedia, demonstrations, adapted text, and graphic organizers.
- the teaching of vocabulary and the teaching of content.
- the use of speech appropriate for students' English proficiency level.

- a clear and explicit explanation of academic tasks.
- content that is adapted, including texts, assignments, and assessments and presentation of content in all modalities within the student’s English proficiency level.
- regular opportunities for students to practice and apply new language and content knowledge in English.

More complete information about sheltered content instruction can be found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/sei/>,
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/resources/sheltered.html>
 or http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/news03/FAQ_drft.pdf.

7. What skills and knowledge are needed by teachers to effectively teach LEP students in sheltered content classes?

The essential element in sheltered content classrooms is a teacher qualified to deliver sheltered content instruction. Sheltered content instruction is not “just good teaching” or generic “differentiated instruction.” To shelter content instruction effectively, a teacher must have knowledge of second language acquisition, English language development, the relationship between culture and language learning and language use, sociolinguistics and non-traditional assessment of content learning.

In June 2004 the Commissioner issued a memorandum that described the skills and knowledge needed by teachers to teach LEP students in sheltered content classes. These skills and knowledge were organized into four categories:

- Category 1: Second Language Learning and Teaching
- Category 2: Sheltering Content Instruction
- Category 3: Assessment of Speaking and Listening
- Category 4: Teaching Reading and Writing to Limited English Proficient Students

The guidance document is found at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/news04/0615qualifications.pdf>

8. Who is licensed and qualified to deliver sheltered content instruction as required by Ch. 71A?

Teachers who have the skills and knowledge outlined above are considered qualified. Specifically, teachers are considered qualified if they are:

- dually certified in either ESL or ELL and the particular subject matter area, or
- dually certified in elementary education and ELL or ESL, or
- possess an elementary license or a subject matter license AND have completed professional development that is aligned with the skills and knowledge, as defined by the Department, in the four categories above.

9. How long should an LEP student be enrolled in SEI or another English learner program?

A student is considered limited English proficient until the student can perform grade level classroom academic work in English. This determination must be based on English proficiency and academic achievement data and may not be based on time in school, state or country. A result of “*Transitioning*” on the MEPA tests suggests a student may no longer be limited English proficient (LEP), but this decision should also be informed by district student learning data. For more specific guidance on when to transition an LEP student out of an English learner program, consult the following document: http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/sei/MEPA_guidelines.doc

The language in G.L. c. 71A may not be interpreted to suggest that there is a cap or limitation on the amount of time an LEP student may participate in a sheltered English immersion program.

Examples of Programming for LEP Students in Low-Incidence Districts

Many low incidence districts face the challenges of new limited English proficient (LEP) student populations, and the requirement to implement sheltered English immersion (SEI) for these students. To assist districts in thinking about how to approach these challenges, we present below three scenarios of low-incidence districts that are engaged in planning and implementing sheltered English immersion for LEP students. These scenarios are composites of actual practices found in low-incidence districts in Massachusetts.

One challenge faced by all low-incidence districts is that of leadership and expertise within the district. It is essential that an individual with expertise in the field of English language learner education be involved in program planning. This may mean hiring an ESL teacher or a consultant in order to meet and plan with administrators. We also suggest that low-incidence districts meet regionally to share expertise and problem-solve together. Department staff is available to attend such regional meetings if requested.

District 1

Demographics: In this small school district in Western Massachusetts, there are two school buildings: an elementary (pre K-6), and middle and high schools combined (7-12) with a total of 637 students in the entire district. During the 2003-04 school year, there were seven limited English proficient (LEP) students, during the 2004-05 school year there were three LEP students, and only one LEP student for the 2005-06 school year.

Identifying LEP students: The home language survey is given to all new students in the district, and for any student whose first language is other than English, the district uses a variety of screening instruments including the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM) and the Language Assessment Scales (LAS). The district currently contracts with the ELL director and an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher from a neighboring community to administer these screening instruments. The district is taking steps to ensure that it is assessing students in all skill areas: reading, writing, speaking, and listening during its screening process as outlined in the Department’s Advisory on this

topic. (Web link: http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/identify_lep.html)

Program Design: To date, the district has focused its energy on the elementary level. The district has identified one teacher at each grade level (K-6) to form an “ELL team.” In this way they are preparing themselves to work successfully with LEP students at all grade levels.

ESL Instruction: Currently the district has only one LEP student enrolled at the elementary school. Currently this student is receiving 2.5 hours of ESL instruction per day from a retired elementary school teacher.

Sheltered Content Instruction: Professional development was provided to the “ELL Elementary Team” last year on Second Language Learning and Teaching (Category 1) by a speech language therapist who was licensed in ESL.

This year, all members of the ELL Elementary Team have received MELA-O training (Category 3). The district is now trying to plan Category 2 training for this summer or next fall for this ELL Team. It has contacted the Collaborative in the region and is working with the Collaborative to arrange Category 2 Training.

Assessment: The district's speech language therapist is certified as a Qualified MELA-O Trainer (QMT) and oversees the administration of the MELA-O and MEPA exams.

Next steps: *Arrange for Category 2 training for ELL Elementary Team.*

District 2

Demographics: In a South Shore district of 4,700 students, there is a small but growing population of LEP students. During the 2004-05 school year, the district had 36 LEP students, increasing to over 50 for the 2005-06 school year. These students were distributed over four elementary schools, a middle school and a high school. A variety of languages are spoken in the district including Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Kikuyu, Gujarati, Portuguese, Spanish, Sinhala, and Kiswahili.

Identification: A home language survey is administered to all students new to the district. If the language spoken in the home is not English, licensed ESL teachers administer the IPT oral test and the LAS R/W to determine if the student is LEP or not.

ESL Instruction: One full-time and one part-time (.7) teacher travel to each of four elementary schools that enroll LEP students and both secondary schools to provide English as Second Language (ESL) on a pullout basis. All middle and high school LEP students receive ESL during a regular 46-minute period every school day. Elementary students receive 40 minutes daily from two to four times per week depending on their English proficiency level.

The district's goal for next year is daily ESL for all LEP students. To accomplish this, the district will hire additional ESL staff to have 2.5 full time equivalent teachers

available in 2006-07.

Program Design: The district's program design is still in development.

- *Elementary* The district is considering consolidating ELL classrooms and services at two of its four elementary schools; currently ELL students at all levels are spread out over all four elementary schools.
- *Middle School* The district would like to have a full-time ESL teacher at the middle school, but this may not be possible. The district will make a final decision on this in the fall. It may be possible to do this if it consolidates its ELL programming in 2 elementary schools as described above. Under consideration is sending four math teachers to professional development for sheltering content instruction (Category 2).
- *High School* Again, the district would like to have a full-time ESL teacher at the high school, but this will depend on the distribution of LEP students at different grade levels next fall. Also, there is very little sheltered content instruction going on at the high school, and the district knows it must urgently address this need.

Sheltered Instruction: Two staff members were trained as trainers for the Category 1 curriculum developed by the Department and the Education Alliance at Brown University, *An Introduction to Second Language Learning and Teaching*. This team then conducted Category 1 professional development for elementary teachers serving LEP students in October and November 2005.

Regarding Category 2 training (Sheltering Content Instruction), one middle and one high school teacher attended Department- sponsored training, *Enriching Content Classes for Secondary ELLs* (Category 2) this year. However, the district realizes that it must plan to train more secondary teachers to deliver sheltered content instruction. Therefore, the district has identified teachers in core content areas at each grade level and schools in which LEP students will be enrolled. These content teachers will be trained in Category 1 (Second Language Learning and Teaching) by the district Category 1 training team. Also, this team will receive Category 3 training in Assessment of Speaking and Listening (MELA-O) over the next school year. Finally, in Summer 2007 the district intends to train this same group of teachers in Category 2.

Next steps: Hire additional ESL teacher. Plan Category 2 training for targeted (ELA and mathematics) secondary teachers.

District 3

Demographics: There are 28 LEP students in this South Shore school district that enrolls nearly 3000 students. There are three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Many languages are spoken, with Arabic and Russian being the most prevalent.

Identification: The district sent a home language survey to the parents of all of its students in September of 2005. It has assessed those students whose survey indicated a language other than English spoken in the home, using an age-appropriate oral interview, the Basic Inventory of Natural Language (BINL), and the LAS-R/W. These assessments are conducted and evaluated by the district's ESL Coordinator/Teacher. At the same time, the district established a process for administering a home language

survey and assessments, if necessary, to new students enrolling in the district.

Program Design:

Elementary The district has selected one of the elementary schools as the site for its SEI program. As part of implementing this program, it is in the process of training one classroom teacher at each grade level (1-6) to provide SEI by requiring the teachers to complete professional development in Categories 1 and 3. During the summer of 2006, the district will enroll these teachers in Category 2 training.

Middle School At the middle school level, the district has identified one cluster at each grade level - sixth, seventh, and eighth. These teachers have received Category 3 (MELA-O) training, but the district knows that this is insufficient, and is planning Category 1 or Category 2 training for the summer.

High School At the high school level, the district has identified two teachers in mathematics, science, and social studies for training to provide sheltered content instruction. At this point, they have received only Category 3 (MELA-O) training. Therefore, they are not yet able to shelter content instruction. As described above for the middle school teachers, the district is planning professional development in Category 2 for these teachers for this summer or next fall.

ESL Instruction: English language development instruction is provided to each of the 28 LEP students by a licensed ESL teacher, who spends two hours at the elementary school providing small group instruction to nine LEP students; one hour at the middle school providing one class period of ESL to ten LEP students; and two hours at the high school providing two class periods of ESL to nine LEP students. All LEP students receive at least one full hour of ESL per day.

However, after examining the MEPA results for these students and consulting the Department's June 2005 guidance, the district realizes that the ESL instruction is not adequate. They have concluded that their current approach to ESL instruction is not leading to significant progress by most of its LEP students in learning English. There are too many different proficiency levels within one class, and the amount of ESL instruction for beginner and early intermediate students is not sufficient.

Next steps: Increase hours of ESL instruction. Plan Category 2 training for secondary teachers.

Please note: This document is intended to answer many of the questions that are frequently asked of the staff in the Office of Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement (OLAAA). As such it is to be considered and used as general implementation guidance.

For additional implementation guidance, please call the Office of Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement at 781-338-3535.

For legal guidance, please call Program Quality Assurance: 781-338-3700 OR Office of Legal Counsel: 781-338-3400.