



# ***What Makes for Quality Education for English Learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?***

What Needs To Be Included and What Actions Can We Take:  
Lessons Learned from the Past and New ideas for Today

## **Open Space Report: New York City**

As a convener, we would like you to put together a short report from your group describing the following. When you're finished, please type in this report in one of the laptops and hand in this sheet. Thanks!

- 1. Names of group members** – Colleen Kubinski (leader, CT), Kerri Whipple (ND), Anne-Marie Morris (NY), Molly Faulkner-Bond (DC), Judy Haynes (NJ), Lucy Glasson (OCR), Anna (??) NYC
- 2. Issue/Topic/Activity** –Providing EL services in low-incidence/small population districts
- 3. Highlights of Discussion/Recommendations/Next Action Steps**

### **Low-Incidence districts and small populations**

- Group attendees = from CT (2x), NY, ND, DC
- ‘Low incidence’ as a strange term, because it is based on percentages, not on actual numbers.
  - Small population districts are different still – if you have only 40 students, you are never going to have a bilingual program, you become the sole coordinator for your district’s ELs
  - On the other hand, you could have 1000 students and still be ‘low-incidence,’ based on percentages – but you still need to have multiple staff, a program, etc.
- Challenge in small districts is that also often they are more heterogeneous, and they may not have Spanish majority populations (more resources available in Spanish).
  - Title III is difficult for small/low-incidence districts to implement.
- An other attendant has ~6% EL population, which is still almost 500% growth from 3 years – still small population overall, but large now relative to how it was.
- Low-incident states often have pockets of homogeneous ELs within specific districts (e.g., all Hudderites, all new Americans, etc.), but state must plan PD and programs that try to fit all.

- Often see one person stretched very thin to cover all EL needs within the state
- ‘Why do international families settle in small places’ – gas station workers, restaurant workers, casino workers, resettled refugees, ‘IBM’ families, children of the nannies in the community, day laborer families
  - This is critical to understanding and serving low-incidence communities – must understand who your students are, where they come from, why they are here
- Challenges in low-incidence districts = ignorance, funding
  - Have to really focus use of funds/resources (e.g., PD, curricular materials, etc.)
  - Not realistic to necessarily be able to educate the whole community/staff, even if this would be preferable
- Sometimes most challenged districts = those with fewer than 20 students – no requirement from the state to have a specific kind of program, no receipt of funds, no oversight from the state
  - State laws often affect this – some states have rules that you must have a program if you have more than XX number of kids; lower than that, no one checks, no requirements.
- High fluctuations in population in low-incidence districts. A few students can make a huge difference – a shift from 10 to 25 students makes a difference!
- How do you get administrators to understand that this is a civil rights issue?
  - In one sense, Civ Rights is a great way to force people to pay attention to ELs and services, even if they don’t receive funds or have any other incentive.
  - RESC – Regional Educational Alliances
- CT RESC Alliance = has created some great resources for EL instructors in their state.
  - CT district created ‘desk cards’ with basic information about who ELs are, basic strategies to use, etc.
  - Printable off internet; give the cards to all teachers who have ELs, and give them sticky notes w/ info about each student that teacher has
  - ‘Sign out’ the card to the teacher (rather than give) and say you will collect at the end of the year. Tell teachers that this counts as data documentation, and must report information to state.
  - Google – ‘CT RESC Alliance’ – also, [www.Capellct.org](http://www.Capellct.org) – have great materials online, under resources

- RESC Alliance also created a generic PPT for all educators to use at Board of Ed meetings that they can adapt for their own use, so that they can spread awareness/information to others.
- Another state offered courses online via their state DOE website.
- Technology = a big resource/tool for low-incidence districts – can connect isolated teachers.
  - Could it be used to share actual teachers – sometimes districts are so far apart, it would be better to be able to beam the ESL teachers to the students online?
  - Or to allow teachers to beam into meetings – often teachers in these districts must be in multiple schools; would ease their travel burdens if they could beam into meetings.
  - Webinars , Skype, e-mails, etc.
  - Social networking can also help teachers to stay in touch and share ideas across districts – particularly because low-incidence teachers may be isolated and not have anyone around that they can speak to. Collaboration can really help.
  - One district runs a monthly meeting for ESL teachers who are isolated – they come together from surrounding schools and districts.
    - Regional chapters of organizations such as TESOL and NABE can also help.
    - Doing this regularly (e.g., quarterly, every 6 weeks, etc.) can really help. ‘Mini-conferences,’ meet and greet, etc.
    - Sometimes, moving the state-wide conferences to somewhere that is less central can help people to come out who might not otherwise show up. Try to move the conference around from time to time so that it’s easier for different people from different regions.
- Possibly collaborate with institutes of higher ed?
  - Grad students may be available to do research, to provide support to teachers, to give info, etc.
  - International students may be able to provide translation services, or the university may have the resources in order to serve those students
- Common statement in state meetings = “all of our teachers are well-trained at differentiation, so we don’t need to have a program” – how to deal with this?

- Look at testing data for the ELs and see how they're doing – except that the data for those ELs who are not doing well may not be big enough to actually make a difference in the numbers
- Have states have a resource that summarize 'Your Obligations under Civil Rights' (maybe start by making sure that STATE people understand what their obligations are) – administrators or teachers can download and show to other coworkers (CT has these, but still a challenge to get these into people's hands)
  - Need to get the message out to non-EL-centric organizations – e.g., state-level administrator conferences, national elementary school principals, etc.
  - Need to get administrators on board
  - Federal organizations need to be more watch-dog
- EL coordinators can push these things through from the bottom up, but really we need top-down action as well in order to make this work.

**Action plan for low-incidence/small EL population districts -**

1. Must know what compliance is/means/looks like –
  - a. Ensure that administrators and leaders understand the law, the consequences, their responsibilities.
  - b. Ensure that teachers and principals can also access this information, to share with peers and colleagues.
2. Must get buy-in for compliance
3. Must provide supports to teachers and administrators to actually achieve compliance
  - a. See resource ideas listed above – online resources (RESC Alliance, etc.), higher ed resources, opportunities for collaboration among teachers, etc.
  - b. Must ensure that mainstream teachers receive PD about serving ELs, because ESL specialist may not be able to be in the building all the time – so others need to understand the students' needs –
    - i. sometimes, changing the language can help – 'struggling learners,' instead of ELs. Many of the strategies are the same.
4. Must ensure that students are receiving the supports that they need
  - a. State policy mandating a certain amount of ESL service per day/week?

- i. Hard and fast rules can be counterproductive for some students, though sometimes without rules, people don't do everything.
- b. RTI-esque model, where students are being monitored constantly to look for issues/challenges – if language monitoring is pulled into this, this could help to ensure that ELs are getting the help that they need
  - i. Some people might wonder whether RTI is appropriate for ELs – would need to be designed

**4. Available Resources**

CT RESC Alliance website

"The Administrator's Guide to Federal Programs for English Learners" (Thompson Publishing publication)

**5. Follow-up requests**

More efforts at the national level to educate administrators and practitioners about ELs in non-EL-centric groups (e.g., national association of elementary school principals, NASTID, state-level administrator conferences, etc.) This information needs to reach people outside of OELA, NCELA, TESOL, NABE, etc. Federal leadership is critical here.