

Facilitating Professional Learning Communities That Support Struggling Readers Who Are English Learners in the Southwest

Purpose

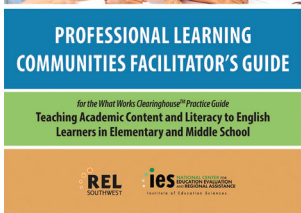
The *Professional Learning Communities (PLC) Facilitator's Guide* assists PLCs in applying evidence-based strategies to support struggling readers who are English learners.

Research Base

The *PLC Facilitator's Guide* aligns with the *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School* educator's practice guide, produced by the What Works Clearinghouse, Institute of Education Sciences.

The practice guide presents four evidence-based recommendations:

- 1. Academic vocabulary:** Teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities
- 2. Content-area instruction:** Integrate oral and written English language instruction into content-area teaching
- 3. Structured writing instruction:** Provide regular, structured opportunities to develop written language skills
- 4. Small-group intervention:** Provide small-group instructional intervention to students struggling in areas of literacy and English language development



- ★ Activities and content for 8 PLC sessions
- ★ 31 handouts
- ★ 23 videos

Benefits for Educators

- ▶ Evidence-based strategies to help K–8 English learners acquire academic language and literacy skills
- ▶ Collaborative professional learning experience for reading, discussing, sharing, and applying the practice guide's key ideas and strategies
- ▶ Activities and content for eight 75-minute PLC sessions
- ▶ Systematic five-step cycle that encourages PLCs to debrief, define, explore, experiment, and reflect and plan

1		Debrief Ask team members to share the instructional strategies and activities that they implemented in their classrooms and to explain how students responded, both orally and in writing. Next, ask members to share how they might change or adapt their lessons to increase student learning.
2		Define Session Goals Identify the focus and the specific goals of the session.
3		Explore New Practices and Compare Them to Current Practices Access team members' prior knowledge and experiences related to the topic of the session. Move into new learning by discussing specific features of each recommendation along with the supporting evidence. Compare current practices with newly learned concepts.
4		Experiment with Newly Learned Strategies Collaborate with team members to practice applying activities and strategies that were addressed in the practice guide.
5		Reflect and Plan Guide team members in thinking about how the new learning relates to their previous knowledge and practice. Then, as a group, plan how the activities and strategies studied will be implemented in members' classrooms prior to the next PLC session. Remind the team members to be prepared at the start of the next session to share their experiences in implementing the strategies.

Testimonials From PLC Facilitators:

- ★ "Resources are invaluable . . . videos are super"
- ★ "The recommendations, the videos, and the graphic organizers . . . refocused my thinking and clarified the best methods for helping ELLs"
- ★ "Excellent resources for creative, effective PLCs"
- ★ "The resources and research base was most effective"
- ★ "The presentation of research evidence, including the degree of evidence for each of the focus recommendations" [about what was most helpful]

Video Series

- ▶ **4 introductory videos** cover the practice guide recommendations
 - ▶ **19 classroom videos** show actual instruction at three grade levels: 2–3 (combination), 4, and 6–8 (newcomers)
 - » Pre-Teaching Vocabulary*
 - » Activities to Promote Word Learning
 - » Providing Review
 - » Word Parts and Cognates
 - » Using Videos to Anchor Instruction
 - » Completing a Graphic Organizer
 - » Using Graphic Organizers in Writing*
- * Most popular topics

Success

- ★ Series titles account for the top 5 most watched videos on the Institute of Education Sciences's YouTube channel.

Conclusion/Scholarly Significance

The *PLC Facilitator's Guide*, along with the companion educator's practice guide, is intended to foster a deeper understanding of how scientifically based research on educating English learners may be applied to classroom practice. The research on effective instruction for English learners provides the basis for the guide's content, while the PLC format provides teachers with a structure for shared learning and improvement as they apply evidence-based concepts to classroom practice.

This PLC model is a key component of coherent and high-quality professional development (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). Through this evidence-based and collaborative approach, the *PLC Facilitator's Guide* helps educators align the needs and learning goals of English learners with school curriculum and school- and districtwide change efforts.

Professional Learning Communities Facilitator's Guide: Reference List

Baker, S., Lesaux, N., Jayanthi, M., Dimino, J., Proctor, C. P., Morris, J.,...Newman-Gonchar, R. (2014). *Teaching academic content and literacy to English learners in elementary and middle school* (NCEE 2014-4012). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/19>

Desimone, L. M., Porter, A. C., Garet, M. S., Yoon, K. S., & Birman, B. F. (2002). Effects of professional development on teachers' instruction: Results from a three-year longitudinal study. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(2), 81–112.

Dimino, J. A., Taylor, M., & Morris, J. (2015). *Professional learning communities facilitator's guide for the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide: Teaching academic content and literacy to English learners in elementary and middle school* (REL 2015–105). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southwest. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southwest/plc.asp>