Every student has the right to
a high quality, differentiated, standards-based,
culturally responsive education.

English Learners in Your School and What You Need to Know and Do to Support Them

Are you an educator who supports students identified as English learners (ELs)? This book is designed to facilitate action-focused conversations among educators, linguistically diverse families, and stakeholders who want to do what's best, what is just, and what is required for the ELs they are responsible for. This book serves as a guide to help school leaders, and those who want to assure that ELs receive an equitable educational experience, to become linguistic equity advocates and catalysts for change by connecting the federal mandates to actionable steps needed to create and sustain equitable schools with ELs.

Although a number of books have been written for school leaders of ELs, this book provides a fresh perspective that is aligned to the civil rights mandates issued by the U.S. Department of Civil Rights, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the U.S. Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition. This guidance is especially important for educators who are responsible for creating, sustaining, and managing highly effective learning communities for linguistically diverse learners. This book will help you move from awareness to action.

There are a number of asset-based terms and acronyms to describe students who are learning English as a new or additional language. Some of those acronyms include DLL (dual language learners), MLL (multilingual learners), and bilingual/biliterate students. For the sake of this text, in an effort to use the terminology currently used in federal guidance, the term *EL* is used.

Common Acronyms in English Language Teaching

DLL	Dual language learner
EL/ELL	English learner/English language learner
ELD	English language development
ELP	English language proficiency
ENL	English as a new language
ESOL	English to speakers of other languages
HLS	Home language survey
L1	First language or home language

L2	Second language
M1	Monitored Year 1, the first year after reaching proficiency
M2	Monitored Year 2, the second year after reaching proficiency
MLL	Multilingual learner
PHLOTE	Primary home language other than English
PL	Professional learning

Scenario: Awareness and Action for *All ELs*

A family enrolls their 7-year-old twins Amed and Qamaan into a U.S. public school for the first time. They indicate they speak Somali at home on the home language survey. The boys are administered a screener (a form of assessment) for their level of English proficiency and are eligible for language support. The parents are notified by a letter written in English that their children are eligible for language support services. This school does not offer an English/Somali bilingual program model, but they do offer a daily segment of English as a second language (ESL). The parents sign the required documents and assume their child will be offered language support in addition to general education. Unfortunately, the twins are never scheduled for language support and instead are placed into a general education second-grade class.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What happens now?
- What was supposed to happen, and why might the process have failed?
- Depending on your role, what would you do?

The aforementioned scenario describes a disconnect between when students are identified as ELs and the process by which they will begin to receive services. Although the students were identified within the expected time frame, it is not clear as to who needed to be notified, besides the parents, and how the person would be notified about new students eligible for language support. This scenario highlights not only the importance of who ELs are in your school but also the need for coherent procedures to ensure that services are provided.

Knowing Your ELs

Whether you are in a district with a high population of ELs or in a rural district with a relatively low number or ELs, understanding the complexities and rich

diversity the population represents within a learning community is imperative. During a meeting with an elementary school principal, I quickly came to the realization that far more work was needed to support the school's EL population. The school, located in the northeastern part of the United States, was in a small town with a large EL population, mostly Spanish speakers. My contract with the district was for a limited number of days, and the district had already predetermined that this particular school was not its priority because of a number of other partnerships and programs being implemented. However, I believe that *all* schools with ELs are priorities. During the conversation, I asked the principal the number of students identified as EL in the school. He responded that he wasn't exactly sure. This was an unexpected response; school leaders must know specifics about their EL population and how to support those students. Though some school leaders know this information, there are others who do not. Without this information, discussions about school improvement efforts and student achievement are futile. The first step toward creating an equitable learning environment is knowing how ELs are defined and who the ELs are in your school.

English learner—The term "English learner," when used with respect to an individual, means an individual—(a) who is aged 3 through 21; (b) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school; (c) (i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (ii) (I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and (d) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual—(i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards; (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society (U.S. Department of Education, Non-Regulatory Guidance, 2016, p. 43).

State and local definitions of ELs may differ slightly. School leadership teams need to know how your state defines this population and the significance of such definitions. The more you engage in action-focused conversations that help build context around your particular population of ELs, the better and more sustainable your student achievement efforts will be. Essentially, there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to this work: Your context matters!

Urgency in Action

The National Center for Educational Statistics reports 4.8 million ELs in U.S. public schools (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). From a data perspective, national statistics about

Figure 1.1 Components of Leadership Practices for Linguistic Equity

Leadership Practices for Creating and Sustaining Linguistic Equity	
Meaningful Engagement and Shared Dialog with Teachers, Families and Staff	
Linguistic Civil Rights Language as a Right Federal Laws and Mandates	**Leading for Equity Knowledge Base** Culture as is relates to the community, district, school and students
Instructional Expertise Culturally Responsive Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment	**Staff Capacity Building** Hiring, Professional Development and Evaluation
Programs & Services Castañeda Three-Prong Approach, Implementation of Appropriate Program(s) Resources and Staffing, Effectiveness of Student Outcomes	**School Culture** Building trust, transparency, appreciation for linguistic diversity and community outreach

Source: Adapted from Callahan, DeMatthews, and Reyes (2019).

EL populations are alarming. They have been for a long time and remain so. Take, for example, the national graduation rates for ELs. In 2015–2016, the U.S. Department of Education reported graduation rates for ELs as 66.9%, nearly 20 percentage points lower than the 84.1% reported for all students. ELs were approximately 1% higher than only one subgroup—students with disabilities. The same year, only 2.8% of high school ELs participated in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Testing (ACT) exams, compared to 97.2% of non-ELs. These gaps exist across a number of content areas, yet we can get a false sense of security by believing that we are "doing what we can with what we have." I encourage you to examine the issues from a wide lens first, and then more granularly, as a way to be proactive and informed decision makers.

The need for school leaders to be more prepared for ELs has been the battle cry for decades. In her book on advocating for ELs, Staehr Fenner (2014) affirmed that "school administrators also find themselves unprepared to lead their teachers to teach ELs" (p. 13). Successfully supporting the academic achievement of ELs requires a "whole school" approach, because the needs of the students extend beyond just language as a potential barrier to understanding content. Misconceptions about linguistic diversity, racial identity, cultural diversity, citizenship, and how one might feel included (or excluded) within a learning community can pose persistent challenges that affect ELs' language instruction and overall sense of belonging. Though research on effective principal characteristics and the principal's role in

increasing student achievement exists, there has been very little research on supporting principals' depth of knowledge around linguistic equity. Callahan, DeMatthews, and Reyes (2019) provide a framework for linguistic equity "as [the] core of effective leadership practices: (a) instructional expertise, (b) teacher/staff capacity building, (c) programs and services, and (d) school culture" (p. 282). Figure 1.1 provides an illustration of the components of linguistic equity.

Additionally, to create a catalyst for change, school leaders must first confront their own biases and knowledge gaps about minority student populations (Bryan, Cooper, & Ifarinu, 2019, p. 199; Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 5). Such self-reflection is necessary before school leaders are able to create and sustain inclusive school communities for all students, particularly ELs. This reflection allows educators to acknowledge the beliefs, behaviors, and practices they have that may interfere with student interactions. Hammond (2015) refers to this as doing the "inside-out" work (p. 53). Dormer poses questions to school leaders that get at the heart of matter:

> What happens when uninformed teachers make statements or engage in actions that are perceived as threatening or discriminatory to immigrant families or international students? And what is the result of ELLs spending a majority of their school time in high stress conditions as a result of a pervasive lack of understanding of the realities of language acquisition? And what about the potential for linguistic, racial, and ethnic divisions in schools when a culture embracing diversity is not fostered? (Dormer, 2016, p. 2).

Dormer (2016) is asking about the conditions—in this case, high stress that we either create or that exists as part of school communities. In order to combat these conditions and create ones that are more conducive to learning, supporting ELs by creating a sense of urgency is imperative. For that sense of urgency to be sustained long term, it must be woven into the fabric of the school community. Soto's (2012) research on EL shadowing affirms how the achievement gap between traditionally marginalized groups of children (e.g., Latino, African American, and ELs) compared to native English speakers is a moral and ethical imperative (p. 4). Failing to address achievement gaps sets the stage for these violations. Forte and Faulkner-Bond (2010) affirm, "Where failure to meet the needs of these students amounts to a violation of such rights, school systems much adopt practices to correct that violation or prevent students from experiencing discrimination" (p. 2). Without an understanding of key approaches for supporting ELs, decisions could be made, albeit unintentionally, allowing practices that create flawed or problematic learning contexts for linguistically diverse learners.

State- and district-level responsibilities for linguistically diverse students date back to the 1920s (Forte & Faulkner-Bond, 2010, p. 2). Civil and constitutional rights are the foundation for the legislation that follows.

Table 1.1 Landmark Cases

***Mendez v. Westminster School District* (1946)**	Mexican-Americans filed a lawsuit against the Westminster School District in Orange County, California for segregation practices, such as having "Mexican Schools" for Mexican students.
***Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)**	Supreme Court case in which the justices unanimously ruled racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional.
***Title VI of the Civil Rights Act* (1964)**	Districts must take affirmative steps to ensure that English learners can meaningfully participate in their educational programs and services.
***Lau v. Nichols* (1974)**	Supreme Court case in which Chinese-American students in San Francisco filed a lawsuit against the district for proficiency English as a graduation requirement although the district was not providing support for students to become proficient in English.
***Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981)**	Fifth Circuit Court ruling that established a three-part test to evaluate bilingual programs. Local education agencies must provide English learners with English language development programs that are based on sound educational theory, provided with staff and resources in a manner "reasonably calculated" for program success, and evaluated regularly and revised where needed.
Plyler v. Doe (1982)	Supreme Court case that ruled states are required to provide free public education to students regardless of citizenship status.

Table 1.1 illustrates a timeline of landmark cases involving equity and access to education for ELs. All of these cases build on the U.S. Constitution 14th Amendment Equal Protection Clause (1868), which says that "no state shall deny any person equal protection under the law, which includes discriminatory practices and the provision of equal opportunity."

Decades later, with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, federal law for the first time held schools accountable for ELs' progress toward proficiency in English and academic achievement in content areas. Although ELs are highlighted as part of the mandate, the law does not come without challenges, in particular regarding interpretation and implementation. Some of the challenges with ESSA and EL accountability include knowing how your state determines the size for an EL subgroup, how the state determines proficiency in English, how and what goals will be used to determine success rates, and the maximum number of years allowed to reach proficiency. Because states have autonomy over how these areas are described and implemented, monitoring and cross-comparisons are difficult.

The 2015 "Dear Colleague Letter" issued by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education identified 10 common Civil Rights issues. These issues included failing to do or provide the following for ELs:

- Identification and assessment of language needs in a timely manner

- A service model that is educationally sound and research based

- Sufficient staff for language programs

- Equal opportunity for ELs to participate in school- and district-wide programs

- Avoiding unnecessary segregative practices and program models

- Identifying ELs with disabilities and including their language needs in evaluation and services offered

- Meeting the needs of ELs who waive language support programs

- Monitoring of ELs who have reached proficiency

- Monitoring and evaluation of language programs and student progress

- Communication with parents

(U.S. Department of Justice & U.S. Department of Education, 2015, p. 8)

In addition to identifying ELs and programmatic concerns, school leaders must also recognize the social, emotional, academic, and language needs of ELs, which are quite diverse. ELs are not a monolithic group. Their experiences in U.S. public schools are as diverse as their cultural backgrounds. For example, an EL in an urban school district with a large population of ELs may have more resources and more access to effective program models than a student in a rural school district with a small population of ELs. ELs' ages upon entering U.S. schools, their prior lack of experiences with school, the preparedness of their teachers, and the service models they are afforded are all contributing factors to their success in school.

Take, for example, a small subgroup of ELs who are also identified as students with interrupted formal education (SIFEs). This label most often applies to those who are newly arrived to the United States during adolescence and could be immigrants or refugees. Typically, SIFEs have needs that are not met in traditional ESL programs. Some of those challenges include no or limited literacy skills in their native language; being older, more mature than the students in the programs in which they are placed; and social emotional needs that have not been addressed. Although not all SIFEs are ELs, those who are may "literally run out of time to complete the requirements for high school graduation before the state-determined time to attend public school" (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2017, p. 12). The sense of limited time to meet the needs of secondary ELs has been noted in a research conducted by Short and Fitzsimmons (2007), who indicate that ELs in middle and high schools must do double the work, learning English and content simultaneously while ultimately being held as accountable as their native-English-speaking peers.

Assets-Based, Culturally Responsive Schools

For school leaders to understand and act upon the civil rights aspects of supporting ELs, they must be unbiased and committed to assuring linguistic equity and access for all learners in their schools. Part of developing this level of awareness is understanding one's own culture and the culture of an American school. Schools have a culture that may be different from the home culture of the linguistically diverse students they serve. Similarities or differences between the two cultures can be a huge place of impact, depending on how school leaders manage their schools. This largely depends upon approaches used to bring home and school cultures together. If a deficit-based approach is used, one that asserts the need to fix home cultures, then efforts will be wasted. Having a strength-based approach "requires a shift in our thinking from what we believe is lacking in our students to the many strengths and assets that they and their families already possess" (Zacarian & Staehr Fenner, 2020, p. 7). Students depend on their schools to provide them with academic learning experiences that they'll need for life. Hammond (2015) eloquently affirms that "dependent doesn't mean deficit" (p. 13). Just because ELs are dependent on their school communities to provide them with basic

Figure 1.2 Example District Approach to Supporting ELs
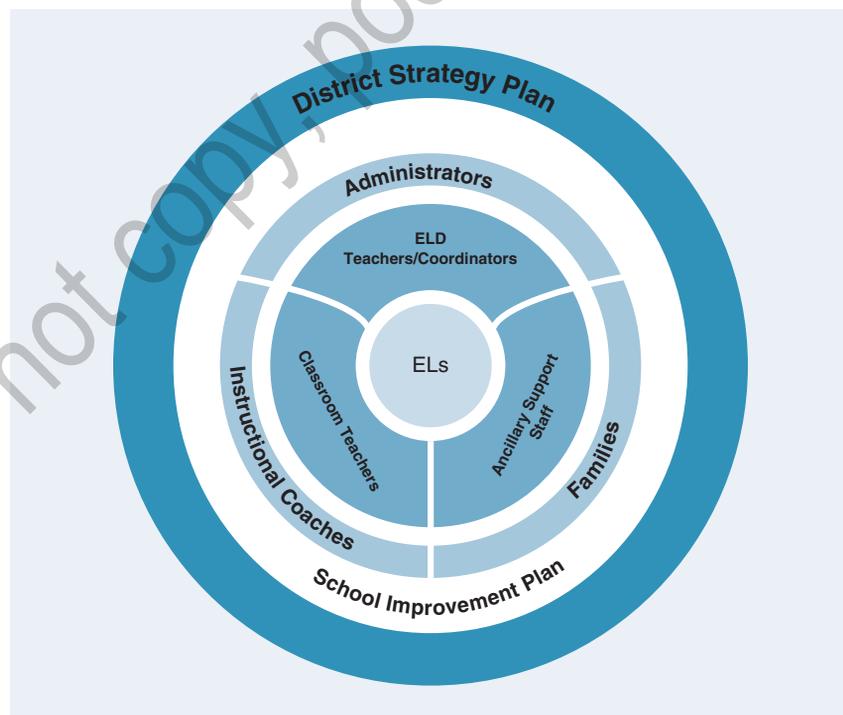
educational experiences, it doesn't mean they aren't engaging in other experiences that are of high importance and maturity, both moral and faith-based, within their communities and culture. Take, for example, a middle school that has small population of Muslim, Arabic-speaking ELs who are fasting during Ramadan. Would those students have to sit in the cafeteria during lunch time or could they meet in the media center instead? Regardless of the percentage of ELs, the size of the district, and the culture of the school community, ELs should be authentically included, recognized, and celebrated.

Figure 1.2 represents one district's approach to supporting ELs. Notice how the students, in the center, are supported by not only classroom teachers but also coordinators and ancillary staff members. Instructional coaches, administrators, and families are included around this core. Dove and Honigsfeld's (2018) research states the importance of educators not working in silos but rather collaboratively, with a focus on their EL population. This importance is underscored when you accept that "all teachers are teachers of ELs and responsible for supporting [ELs'] social-emotional well-being, acculturation, language development, and overall school success" (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018, p. 3). It cannot be only the designated EL teachers who work to support ELs; EL student success—and therefore school and district success—hinges on all teachers working in unison.

Supporting ELs: Eight Important Questions

In order to begin action-oriented conversations about supporting ELs, school communities need to address the aforementioned considerations in a structured and systematic approach. This approach begins with the following questions:

Eight Questions that all School Leaders must be able to Answer about English Learners

1. How many students are identified as English learners in your school?
2. In which grade levels are your English learners?
3. What are their English language proficiency levels?
4. How many, if any, English learners are dually identified (i.e., English learners who are also gifted and/or have learning disabilities)?
5. How many teachers in the school are certified/endorsed to teach English learners?
6. What is the primary program model(s) of instruction in the school?
7. How many English learners have reached proficiency ("exited")?
8. How many of your English learners are being monitored once they have reached proficiency?

The remainder of this chapter examines each of these questions and the importance of answering them. These important questions serve, throughout this book, as the basis for further exploration of how school leaders can create and sustain effective learning communities for ELs.
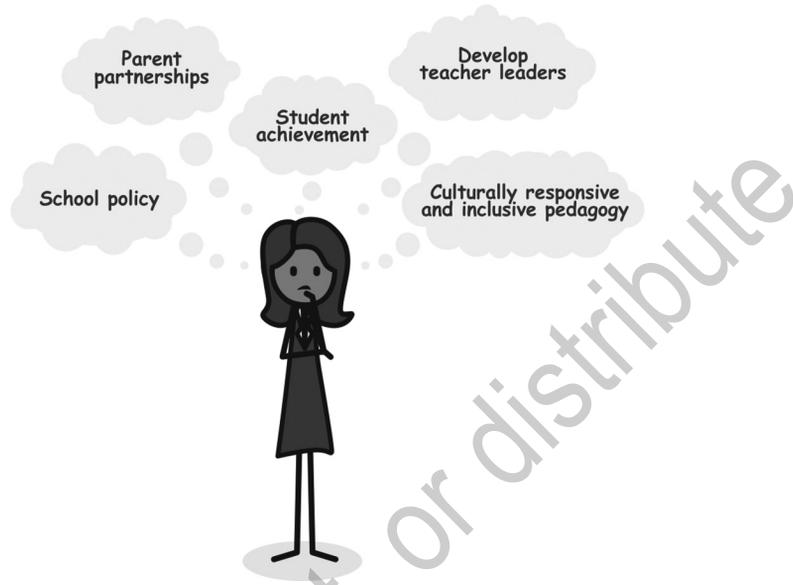

How Many Students Are Identified as ELs in Your School?

Determining the number of ELs in your school first requires an understanding of how students are identified as ELs. An example, provided in Figure 1.3, of an enrollment experience could look something like this: Families are asked to complete registration materials, such as a home language survey, which asks questions about the language(s) that are spoken in the home. If a family indicates that they speak another language besides English at home, their child may be eligible for language support services.

The flow chart in Figure 1.3 illustrates the steps involved in the identification process. What parents self-report on the home language survey is just the beginning; it is not what determines eligibility. If a language other than English is reported, then an English language screener must be administered. If English is the only language reported, there is no requirement to assess the student's English language proficiency. Depending on the state and/or district guidance, if a student has scored on the screener within the range needed to be eligible for language support services, he or she thereby acquires the label "English learner."

Once students are eligible for language support services, their parents or guardians could be presented with options for support. Though parents or guardians may waive or opt out of services for their child, there is no opting out of their children's participation in the annual English language proficiency exam.

Figure 1.3 Student Identification Flow Chart
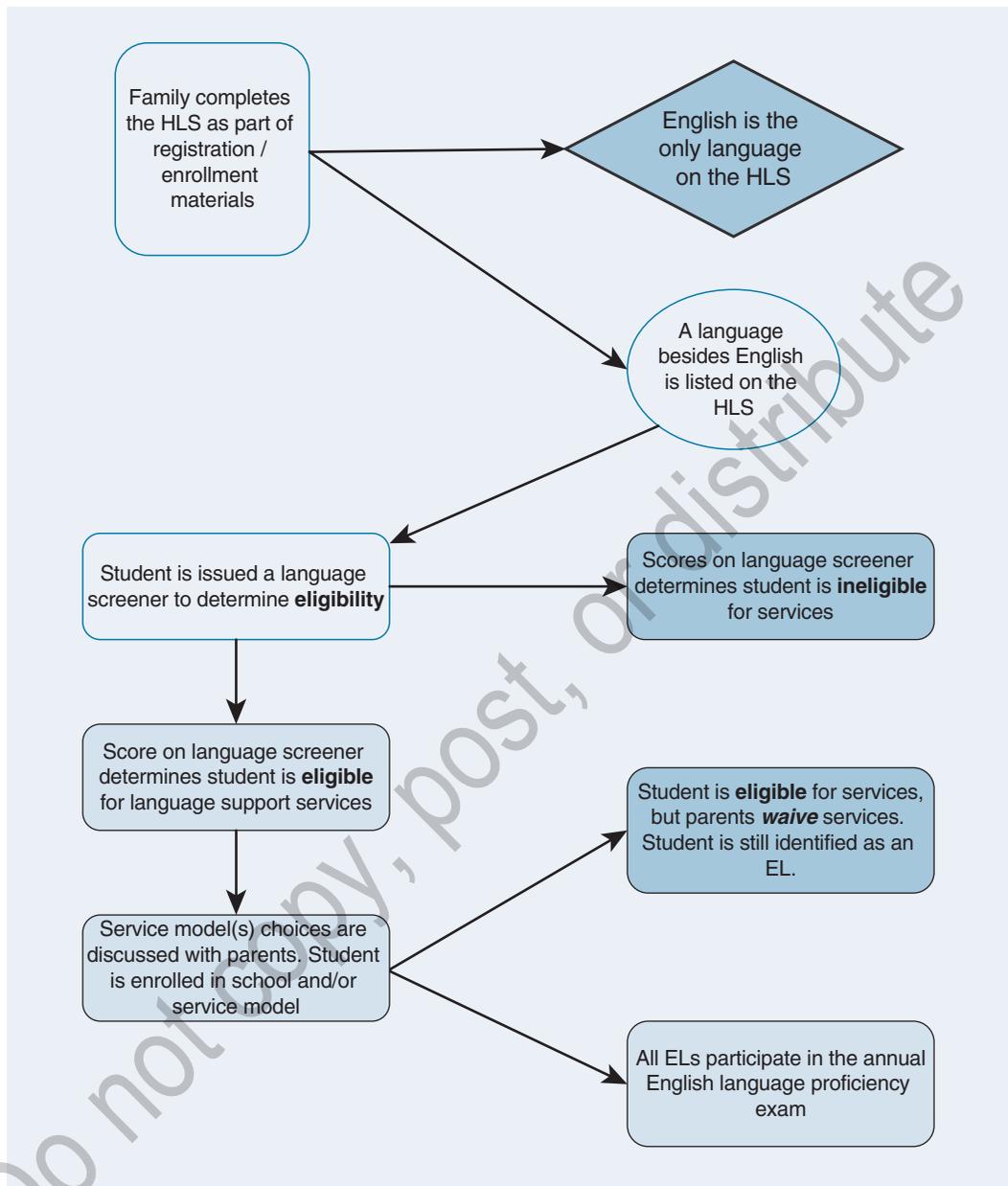
EL = English learner, HLS = home language survey.

Parents will be presented with options for program model choices, such as a bilingual or dual language model, or having a segment of time for English language development. This presentation of program choices is a critical time to educate parents and guardians about these options, because the misconceptions and misunderstandings about the services being offered can lead to confusion. (e.g., are dual language models the same as bilingual models?) For this reason,

having interpreters available, especially during this process, is beneficial to all involved.

As a precursor to determining the number of ELs in a school, school leaders will want to answer the following questions:

- How many families indicated a language other than English as their primary home language?

- How many students were administered the English language proficiency screener?

- How many of the students who were administered the English language proficiency screener were eligible for language support services? How many were not eligible?

- How many of the students who were eligible for language support services waived or opted out of services?

The answers to these prequestions provide more context for determining your population of ELs. Until one is able to clearly identify their population of ELs, critical thinking about the needs of these students will remain vague. Once you know the number of ELs in your school, you are on your way to creating a truly inclusive learning community.

In Which Grade Levels Are Your ELs?

This question helps school leaders to have a clear picture of where the ELs are within the school community. Perhaps the ELs are evenly distributed across all grade levels, or perhaps they are clustered within a few grade levels. You may even have only one or two ELs in a particular grade level. Mapping where your ELs fall within grade levels allows you to begin appropriately supporting student achievement.

Table 1.2   Example Student Population: School A

Grade	Number of English Learners
K	34
1	28
2	22
3	17
4	11
5	5
Total	117

Table 1.3   Example Student Population: School B

Grade	Number of English Learners
K	16
1	9
2	3
3	0
4	1
5	0
Total	29

Tables 1.2 and 1.3 depict the EL population of two sample schools. Note that School A has a significantly larger population of ELs and a relatively even distribution of ELs across grade levels, whereas School B has a much smaller number of ELs (or zero) in select grade levels. These distributions could have implications with respect to planning for PL within the respective schools. Within a given year, School A leaders may take a school-wide approach to professional development (PD) with a focus on ELs. School B, however, may opt to support select grade levels, for example, kindergarten, in which the highest number of ELs are housed. Having a bird's-eye view of the students helps to form a macro to micro perspective of the population. This view also helps track trends in the population, such as decreases and increases over time.

What Are Their English Language Proficiency Levels?

School leaders and teachers need a clearer understanding of the process of becoming proficient in English. I've found that some educators believe that once students are identified as ELs, those students are consigned to this status throughout their schooling. This is not true. Although students may be learning English their entire lives, they can reach a level of English proficiency and be exited from the language support program. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that our students reach the highest level of English proficiency possible. Ideally, we'd like for students to become highly proficient in their native language and English, because the research is clear that maintaining and developing proficiency in a student's first language helps support learning a new language. There is no doubt that school leaders with a knowledge of second language acquisition, especially understanding how students develop proficiency, will be better equipped to support ELs. A good starting point for learning about language development is evaluating *your* level of proficiency in another language. You can do this by answering the following questions.

Proficiency Questionnaire		
1. Do you speak another language besides English as your **first** language?	Yes	No
If yes, what is your first language? _____		
2. Did you formally study a **second** language in high school and/or college?	Yes	No
		(Continued)

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(Continued)

<table>
<tr><td>If yes, what language did you study? _____</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>3. Think about your proficiency in your **second** language. In which domain of language (listening, speaking, reading, writing) are you **most proficient**?_____</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>4. Think about your proficiency in your **second** language. In which domain of language are you **least proficient**? _____</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>5. Do you consider yourself **proficient** in your **second** language?</td><td>Yes   No</td></tr>
</table>

online resources
Available for download from **resources.corwin.com/justiceforels**

What these questions reveal about you as a language learner may or may not be new information for you. The questions encourage you to think about your own experience learning and gaining proficiency in a new language. They also encourage you to reflect on how you learned the new language. What was that experience like? Was it interactive, memorable, stressful, fun, challenging, and/or rewarding? Thinking back, was the experience what you wanted it to be? If not, what would you change about learning a new language? Perhaps it involved all of those emotions. For example, a school leader might answer the Proficiency Questionnaire the following way.

Proficiency Questionnaire: Sample Responses

<table>
<tr><td>1. Do you speak another language besides English as your **first** language?
   a. What is your first language? _English_</td><td>Yes</td><td>(No)</td></tr>
<tr><td>2. Did you formally study a **second** language, e.g., French or Spanish in high school and/or college?
   b. What language did you study? _French_</td><td>(Yes)</td><td>No</td></tr>
</table>

3. Think about your proficiency in your **second** language. In which domain of language (listening, speaking, reading, writing) are you **most proficient**? _Listening_

4. Think about your proficiency in your **second** language. In which domain of language are you **least proficient**? _Writing_

5. Do you consider yourself **proficient** in your **second** language?　　Yes　　(No)

Though the details of this leader's learning experience with French are missing, we know that this respondent self-identified as having a higher proficiency level in listening and a lower level in writing, and that she does not consider herself proficient in French. This example illustrates a key point about language development—that one can fall at different levels across the domains of language listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Similarly, a student's overall proficiency in English can be segmented by language domains.

An understanding of proficiency levels across grade levels will also increase your capacity to support your school's ELs. Recall that Table 1.2 showed the grade level distribution of the 117 ELs in Example School A. Figure 1.4 shows these students' English proficiency levels using a three-level scale of beginner, intermediate, and advanced.

Almost half of the students here are at the beginner level, slightly less than half are at the intermediate level, and the smallest number of students is at advanced level. With this information, school leaders can disaggregate each proficiency level by grade level. How many beginner, intermediate, and advanced level students are in each grade level? (See Table 1.4 for an example.)

In School A, there are 56 students at the beginner English language proficiency level. This information alone will assist school leaders in a number of areas, specifically with PD plans, curriculum, and instructional models. Presenting the data from a macro to micro perspective moves the conversation beyond instructional strategies: It also helps educators become intentional practitioners, those who are able to justify the "what" and "how" of the content being taught and expected from students at various levels of English language proficiency (Cooper, 2013).

Figure 1.4 Example Student English Proficiency Levels: School A

■ 12% Advanced ■ 39% Intermediate ■ 49% Beginner
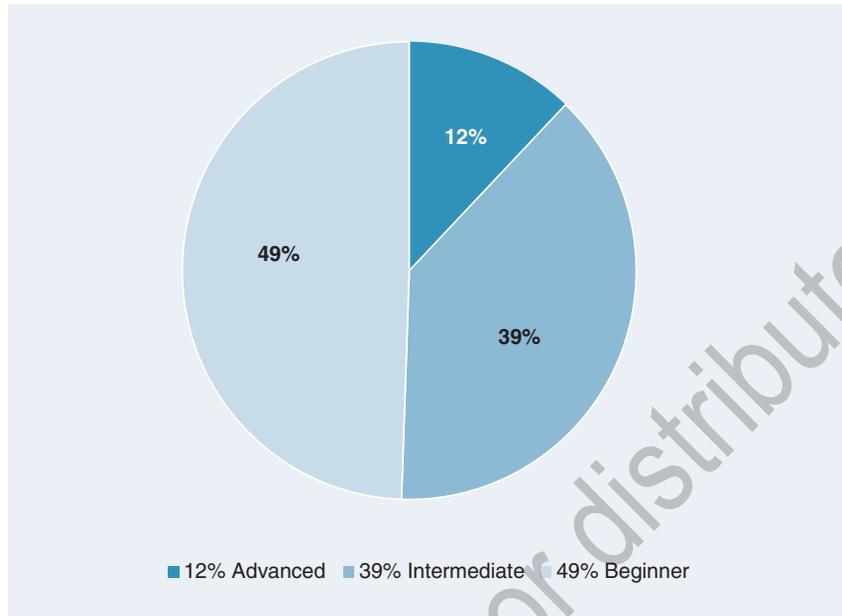
Table 1.4 Example Student English Proficiency Levels by Grade: School A

Grade	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Total
K	22	12	0	34
1	19	9	0	28
2	11	11	0	22
3	2	6	9	17
4	2	3	6	11
5	0	4	1	5
Total	**56**	**45**	**16**	**117**

The standards and assessments being used by your state work in tandem with how your state describes proficiency levels. For example, if your state is part of the WIDA Consortium (2012), then you would use the WIDA levels. Knowing what terms and phrases to use to describe proficiency can help educators understand second language acquisition and also allow them to plan curriculum and assessments with a focus on ELs. Table 1.5 shows some common English language descriptors used in the United States.

Table 1.5 Common English Language Descriptors Used in the United States

U.S.-Based Standards and Assessments	Member(s)	Language Descriptors
AZELLA	Arizona	Pre-Emergent (PE), Emergent (E), Basic (B) Low Intermediate (LI), High Intermediate (HI)
ELPAC	California	Levels 1–3; Novice, Intermediate, Initially Fluent
ELPA21	Arkansas, Iowa, Louisiana, Nebraska, Ohio, Oregon, Washington, West Virginia	Levels 1–5; Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate,
LAS Links	Mississippi	Levels 1–5; Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate, Proficient, Above Proficient
NYSESLAT	New York	Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding, Commanding
TELPAS	Texas	Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced, Advanced High
WIDA	Alabama, Alaska, Bureau of Indian Education, Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, U.S. Virgin Islands, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming	Levels 1–6; Entering, Emerging, Developing, Expanding, Bridging, Reaching

Further information and discussion around language proficiency descriptors can be found in Chapter 2. Where are you located, and what is the assessment used to determine ELs' progress and attainment of proficiency? What proficiency descriptors are used in your state?

How Many, if Any, ELs Are Dually Identified?

Dually identified ELs—those who have learning disabilities and/or are gifted—are in the unique position of either being over- or underidentified. Some educators are surprised to find out which ELs are dually identified.

> I completed 5 of the 7 steps in order to investigate our population of ELs, identifying the number of ELs, grade, levels of [English language proficiency], dually identified, and students who are exited and monitored. I sent out the spreadsheet to my administrators and BAM! I got a huge response from everybody; they were surprised and kind of shocked with the breakdown. Especially out of 60 ELs, 26 are dually identified. **(High School Teacher, New Mexico)**

Aside from knowing the number of dually identified ELs, it is important to know the primary categories of disability. For example, if a school has a certain number of ELs with disabilities, how many have auditory processing disorder? Dyscalculia? Nonverbal learning disabilities? Sometimes, dually identified ELs are misdiagnosed as having a language processing disorder. Significantly, some educators have difficulty identifying the difference between a language disorder and the natural stages of second language acquisition. For example, is the EL displaying signs of selective mutism (an anxiety disorder), or is she in a "silent period"—a normal phase of language development?

Hamayan, Marler, Sánchez-López, and Damico (2013) state three areas that lead to the misidentification of special needs among ELs: (1) assessment practices, (2) an influence of the medical model when addressing educational issues, and (3) funding bias toward special education (p. 2). Once educators learn more about their dually identified population of ELs, they can collaborate more closely with their special education department.

It is the job of the special education team to coordinate special education student services with stakeholders. In one instance, a special education team leader confessed to me that she had not seen nor did she know how to analyze English language proficiency data. Understanding English language proficiency score reports was essential to her role in coordinating meetings to determine student eligibility for special education services. The same is true for determining eligibility for gifted programs. Programmatic pieces for dually identified ELs can no longer function separately from each other. Conversations about program models, appropriate services, and outcomes should be revisited once more educators are included, informed, and aware of students.

How Many Teachers in the School Are Certified/Endorsed to Teach ELs?

Whether they use bilingual, dual language, or ESL program models, schools suffer from a nationwide shortage of teachers who are prepared and qualified to teach ELs (Mitchell, 2018). This shortage also directly impacts general education settings. By completing a certification audit in their school, school leaders can have a quantitative measure of what licenses and endorsements their teachers hold. This information can also support PD initiatives or justify changes in initial PD plans. The following example from an executive director

of elementary education in Georgia illustrates the problem with shortages in qualified EL teachers and increases in the EL student population:

> In 2016, in order to ease overcrowding in nearby schools, the school district initiated a process of redistricting the school attendance zones of multiple schools. As a result of this redistricting, our high school's enrollment increased from approximately 1300 students during the 2015-16 school year to approximately 1650 students during the 2016-17 school year. Of these approximately 350 additional students that enrolled in our school, most came from homes where English was not the predominant language spoken. Most of our new students' families from this redistricting process had recently immigrated to the United States from Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, and other Central American countries.

> As principal, in anticipation of this significant demographic shift in learner profile that our school was about to embark on, I knew that we needed to engage in proactive steps to build the capacity of our staff to serve the educational needs of students who were not proficient in English. At the time, out of 110 teachers on our school's faculty, only two had an ESOL endorsement associated with their teaching certification. [We had] our lone full time ESOL teacher and one of our Physical Education teachers. Additionally, over the course of the prior school year, my own formal and informal classroom observations of all 110 of our teachers demonstrated to me that our faculty had minimal understanding and limited efficacy with classroom instruction to support the genuine learning needs of students with limited English proficiency. (**Norman C. Sauce III, Ed.D. Executive Director of Elementary Education, former high school and elementary principal, Georgia. If Personal Communication, October 9, 2018**)

This school leader proactively responded to an increase of linguistically diverse learners. With only two staff members prepared to teach ELs, a school-wide PD plan with a focus on ELs was essential to the students' academic success. Simply ignoring this increase of ELs would have sent the message to staff to maintain the status quo—teaching to the middle. Instead, a clear message was sent to acknowledge the change in student population. In response to this change in population, the school helped prepare teachers to better understand and become more effective with their new students.

A certification audit may also encourage partnerships with other schools, districts, or institutes of higher education to support their own PD initiatives. For example, a principal of a high school in the southeast United States with a high number of ELs offered the ESOL endorsement to her staff on-site. The endorsement was offered by the Metropolitan Regional Educational Service Agency that served districts in the school's region. For a number of years, she encouraged staff members to earn their ESOL endorsements. Ultimately, she increased the number of staff members who were prepared to teach ELs by

assisting them in obtaining ESOL endorsements and by sponsoring a cohort model that met at the school. The decisions made by these school leaders are two examples of concerted efforts by leaders to meet the needs of the students. These outcomes also helped to support learning communities in becoming more cognizant of the learners they serve.

Now that we know the importance of having qualified teachers of ELs, here are the steps for conducting a certification/licensure audit:

1. Survey the staff: Ask which licensures/endorsements they hold or are in the process of earning.

2. Ask which additional licenses/endorsements they would be interested in earning, if any.

3. Work with Human Resources to check licenses/endorsements of staff members.

4. Cross-analyze the results from the staff survey with the Human Resources audit.

5. Look for gaps in knowledge as they relate to teacher preparedness to teach ELs.

By conducting a certification audit, school leaders are assuring that they are not making decisions based on assumptions about PD needs; decisions will be made based on the needs of the staff and students, specifically ELs. The ultimate goal is to have as much specific information as possible in order to make the best PD plans that support student achievement.

What Is the Primary Program Model(s) of Instruction in the School?

Program models

A number of recommended language support program models exist. Often, program models are inherited from previous school administration; it would be optimistic to assume that school leaders are able to fully implement language programs from the ground up. Regardless of how a program model came to be, it's extremely important for a school leader to fully understand the model(s) that has been implemented in his or her school. Padron and Waxman's (2016) study asserted that "if bilingual/second language programs are to be effective in assisting children achieve academic success, then the school leadership must encourage and support the goals of the program" (p. 129). Bilingual and/dual language program models have had long-term proven results of academic student success. Although ideal, in certain contexts, these models may not be sustainable for a number of reasons. That does not mean that linguistic equity cannot be achieved nor does it mean that new and innovative models won't be effective. The more important

question is whether program models are producing their intended results. (See Chapter 2 for more details about program models.)

Think about it: Can you fully articulate the language support program model in your school? I asked this question to a small group of ESOL teachers recently, and everyone was reluctant to answer. A few responded with hesitant answers in the form of a question, like, "We're pulling students out, right?" One teacher chimed in by confirming hers was a "block schedule" of time where students receive language support. When I asked what language instruction looked like during the block schedule, again, participants were reluctant to answer. Finally, one teacher described her class as a review of material being taught in other classes, including help with homework.

This question, "Can you fully articulate the language support program model in your school?", can be used to examine the instructional approaches used by school communities to primarily support English language development. Some common models include those in Table 1.6. (For a more extensive discussion of outcomes for these programs, see Chapter 2.)

School leaders must know and be able to articulate their English language program model as well as describe the vision and mission of the program.

Table 1.6 Common Program Models in the United States

Program Model	Description
ESL (English as a second language)	ESL class may be scheduled as a block class or multiple classes (e.g., ESL I, ESL II).
Cotaught	ESL and general education teachers coteach within a general education setting.
Small Group Push-In	ESL teachers serve students in their general education classes by working with selected ELs individually or in small groups for a specific period of time (e.g., daily or on specified days).
Small Group Pull-Out	ESL teachers serve a small group of students outside of their general education classes for a specific period of time (e.g., daily or on specified days).
Bilingual Education	Two languages are used to develop proficiency in the target language. This model typically uses each language for a certain percentage of the day. (e.g., an 80/20 model would use English for 80% and the second language for 20% of the day.)
Dual Language	Two languages are being taught to develop proficiency in both languages. This model can include native English speakers and ELs.
Sheltered Instruction	Content courses are taught by teachers who have been trained to differentiate instruction so that ELs have access to content concepts.

Curriculum

Curriculum is the other piece of EL program model that is important for school leaders to understand. Think about the curriculum being used in your school. Is this curriculum being used to teach ELs and, if so, to what extent is it being differentiated through a language learning lens? For example, a district purchases a new curriculum. There are some areas that address ELs, but these usually appear in the margins of the curriculum guide and are presented as "quick tips" or "strategies." The curriculum does not go deep enough to address content and language development. This leaves teachers frustrated and requesting more strategies, more differentiated teaching materials, and more time to plan and create informal assessments for teaching ELs. Do any of these requests sound familiar?

Program assessment

Ubben, Hughes, and Norris (2016) state, "The ELL programs need to provide a challenging curriculum, use appropriate language development components, and incorporate good assessment approaches" (p. 175). The need for both formal and informal English language program evaluations allows school leaders to understand the day-to-day inner workings of their school's language program vs. a one-time audit event for compliance.

Here are some questions to help you informally evaluate your EL program model:

- What are your strengths as a department/program?

- What are some of your recent successes?

- What do you want ELs to be able to know and do as a result of participating in this program?

- How do your efforts align with the district's goals, mission, and vision?

- How are your efforts as a department communicated to stakeholders?

This situation presents a number of variables with no quick solutions. One must first recognize the mother's sense of urgency around understanding her child's progress. Retention of an EL is already problematic because we don't know if it is primarily the content, the student's level of English, the instruction received, or all of those factors that led to the child being retained in the first place. The principal's decision will have implications, regardless of the choice. The question is: Which choice is best for the student in both the short and long term? Will the parents feel validated by the principal's decision, or will they feel marginalized? In order for the principal to make the best decision for the student, he or she would have to take into account

the parent's wishes, include the teachers, and have some evidence that supports the final decision.

How Many ELs Have Reached Proficiency?

Understanding how ELs in your district and school are considered proficient in English is equally as important as knowing who your ELs are. In PL sessions that I facilitate, this question comes up almost every time: "How do you define proficiency in English in your state?" Educators that I encounter are not usually able to answer that question. Looks of confusion, doubt, and silence usually follow.

The ideal English learning path would lead to an EL becoming proficient in English while maintaining his or her native language. However, this goal (proficiency) requires definition. If the majority of educators don't know or understand what the goal is, or the process to get there, then how can they be prepared to help students reach proficiency? Thus, a clear understanding of your state's exit criteria is essential knowledge for ensuring that ELs are properly identified, supported, *and* exited from your program.

Based on their English language assessments scores, for students who have not reached proficiency but who were close, additional guiding questions should be raised:

- How close were they to reaching proficiency?

- Was the format of the testing an issue? For example, if the language assessment is administered online, did the student demonstrate any frustrations with navigating the online platform?

- What is the program model that was applied? Did the student opt out of services?

- Who are the student's teachers, and have they analyzed this student's English language proficiency?

- What types, if any, of differentiated instruction have been utilized?

You can see here that progress toward proficiency is just as important as reaching proficiency. By that, I mean we can celebrate those who have reached proficiency just as we can those who are making progress. For both groups, what next steps will be in place to continue supporting the student appropriately? In order to answer these questions and move forward, conversations around supporting all students, but especially those who are at high levels of English proficiency, are necessary.

Once ELs have reached proficiency, they are exited from their language program and moved to a status often referred to as "monitored"; they may still need additional support with certain content areas, just as native-English-speaking students might.

How Many of Your ELs Are Being Monitored Once They Have Reached Proficiency?

In their 2015 "Dear Colleague Letter," the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education state that state education agencies and school districts must "monitor exited students to ensure they were not prematurely exited and that any academic deficits incurred in the language assistance program have been remedied" (p. 8). What monitoring looks like depends upon what systems and structures your district has in place. When students are moved to monitored status, they are sometimes referred to as M1 or M2 (for Monitored Year 1 or Monitored Year 2). In some districts, students are monitored through their report cards, collaborative meetings, data management systems, or a combination of those. Monitoring does not have to be an elaborate process, but there must be a process in place. Though the U.S. Department of Education mandates that monitoring must occur, it does not mandate any particular monitoring model or program to monitor students.

The worst-case scenario (which, unfortunately, is not uncommon) is one in which school leaders and teachers are not aware of a former EL's monitored status at all. In such cases, efforts to continue supporting former ELs are not part of conversations around student achievement. A major myth that exists is that once ELs reach proficiency, they no longer need support. This is not true. Consider your general education native-English-speaking student. Many of these students need various supports at different points of their educational career. The same is true for students learning English; for example, former ELs may struggle with abstract concepts as part of an algebra or a chemistry course. Depending on their learning

experiences, learning style, motivation to learn, and the like, they, too, may need support to continue having access to content. The issue here may not be their level of English proficiency but rather their understanding of advanced content concepts.

Figure 1.5 School Level English Language Development Plan

Building Level English Language Development Plan

School_____ SY_____

Principal_____

How will you service the students at level 1 and 2 English level proficiency in your building to ensure they receive intensive instruction in English language development over and above content?

How will you service the students at level 3 and 4 English level proficiency in your building to ensure they receive instruction over and above the content in order to give them the opportunity to gain the skills needed to score proficient? (5)

How will you progress monitor the development of your students' English Language proficiency?

Explain how you plan to include the ELD teacher and data in your content level PLC conversations.

Who will be at the IEP meeting when an EL also has a disability in order to address the language proficiency support/needs and what information will be shared with the team?

List two specific Professional Development needs for your administration, clerical staff, or instructional staff the MCS department can provide to ensure an equitable educational learning environment for your students and families.

Source: Karen Gracia Brown

Table 1.7 Common Civil Rights Issues Aligned to the Eight Questions for School Leaders of English Learners

Common Civil Rights Issues	Eight Questions for School Leaders
Identification and assessment of language needs in a timely manner	1. How many students are identified as ELs in your school? 2. In which grade levels are your ELs? 3. What are their English language proficiency levels?
A service model that is educationally sound and research based	6. What are the primary program model(s) of instruction in the school?
Sufficient staff for language programs	5. How many teachers in the school are certified/endorsed to teach ELs?
Equal opportunity for ELs to participate in school- and district-wide programs	2. In which grade levels are your ELs? 6. What are the primary program model(s) of instruction in the school?
Avoiding unnecessary segregative practices and program models	2. In which grade levels are your ELs? 6. What are the primary program model(s) of instruction in the school?
ELs with disabilities are identified and their language needs are included in evaluation and services offered	4. How many, if any, ELs are dually identified?
Meeting the needs of ELs who waive language support programs	1. How many students are identified as ELs in your school? 2. In which grade levels are your ELs?
Monitoring of ELs who have reached proficiency	7. How many ELs have reached proficiency ("exited")? 8. How many of your ELs are being monitored once they have reached proficiency?
Monitor and evaluation of language programs and student progress	6. What are the primary program model(s) of instruction in the school?
Communication with parents	Questions 1–8

*EL = English learner

Bringing It All Together

Some districts have begun the work of moving beyond compliance by supporting principals at the school level. This requires a closer look at what happens within each school and allowing for creative approaches to challenges. Table 1.7 shows how the questions on page 11 are directly aligned to the common civil rights issues. After being asked those questions, one district leader created a document called the School *Level English Language Development Plan* to guide conversations with school principals who have ELs in their schools (Figure 1.5). This document allows for more explicit

Figure 1.6   A School Leader's Depiction of Answers to the Eight Questions
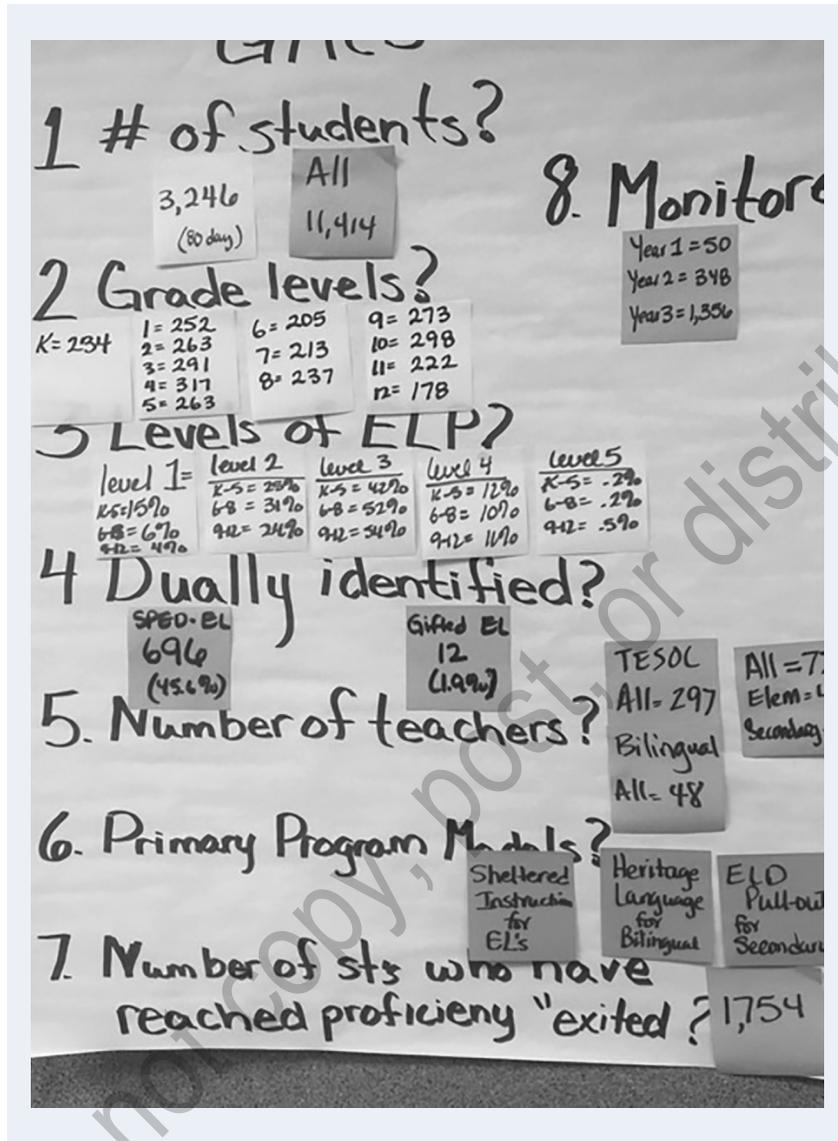
explanations of how ELs are being supported, as opposed to the more typical checkbox approach for compliance. This document also supports principals in thinking about developing a sharper understanding of EL programs within their schools. Figure 1.6 depicts how one school leader organized her answers to the eight questions on chart paper as part of a PL exercise for school leaders. In the next chapter of the book, we look closer at the issues related to program models for ELs and how we can support school leaders in understanding and advocating for what is in place at their schools.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS ....

1. Which of the eight questions on page 11 were you able to answer *before* reading the chapter?

2. Which questions could you answer *after* reading the chapter?

3. Which questions did you find most challenging to answer? Why?

4. How will answering these questions begin to help you as a school leader?

5. How will answering these questions begin to help instructional coaches, teachers, and support personnel in your school?

6. Who else needs to be part of the question/answer process?

7. What are the next steps you will take to create more awareness in your school?

8. What new questions have come about as a result of this inquiry?

9. How will you go about prioritizing the areas in need of attention?

10. What additional supports, if any, will you need in order to complete your action plan?

FURTHER GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT RESOURCES ....

Websites

- Colorín Colorado (www.colorincolorado.org)

- English Learner Success Forum (www.elsuccessforum.org)

- National Association of English Learner Program Administrators (www.naelpa.org)

- National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (ncela.ed.gov)

- U.S. Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition (ncela.ed.gov)

Blogs

- Colorín Colorado (www.colorincolorado.org/blog)

- Corwin Connect (corwin-connect.com/category/english-language-learners)

- ELLEvation EL Community (ellevationeducation.com/ell-community/type/blog)

- EXC-ELL (exc-ell.com/blog)

- SupportEd (getsupported.net/blog)

- Zacarian Associates (zacarianconsulting.com/newsletter)
- TESOL International Association (blog.tesol.org)

Additional Readings

- *Language Magazine* (www.languagemagazine.com)
- Regional Education Laboratory Program (ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects /english_learners.asp)
- Understanding Language (ell.stanford.edu/papers/practice)

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