

**Study of Practices for English Learners (SPEL)**  
**SCHOOL Interview: Staff Member with Primary Responsibility for English Learners**  
Anticipated Interview Date: March 2021

<b>District and School Name:</b>	<b>Interviewer:</b>
<b>Interviewee(s):</b>	<b>Date/Time:</b>

**Note to interviewer:**

- *Before the interview, the study team reviewed the district 2020-2021 reopening plan if publicly available and filled in relevant characteristics in the highlighted sections.*
- *Instructions to interviewers appear in italics.*
- *Numbered and lettered questions are all meant to be asked. Bulleted items are possible responses and may be used as probes—the interviewer would not necessarily ask about all of these.*
- *Because some questions are open-ended, the respondent may answer a later question while answering an earlier question. Unless the respondent has fully answered all aspects of the later question, the interviewer should still ask that question but acknowledge that the respondent has already mentioned information relevant to it.*
- *Depending on the site and respondent, some participants could offer varying levels of detail for each section. Use the questions and probes as a guide but let participants respond according to their knowledge and relevant background for each section.*

## Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is [name] and I am part of the study team from the American Institutes for Research. Just as a reminder, this interview is for a *Study of Practices for English Learners* which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education (the Department). The Department is interested in learning more about the approaches, policies, and supports used to serve English learners (ELs) in the 2020-2021 academic year in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will ask you questions about your role, your district context, and your district policies and approaches for instruction of ELs.

Before our interview today, I sent you an informed consent document. As noted in this document, our reports will combine data from a variety of respondents from your district to describe the district in a case study. Do you have any questions about the information provided in the consent form about this study or your participation? To capture the large amount of data your responses will provide and ensure accuracy in our reporting, we would like to record this interview. The audio record may be shared with others within our study team for purposes of analysis but will not be shared outside the study team. The data from this interview, including the audio recording, transcript, and notes will be stored on a password-protected computer network and destroyed at the conclusion of the study. Is it okay if we record this conversation?

We know that you are very busy, so we have tried to collect as much information as possible through a review of available documents. We will sometimes refer to that information during the interview to confirm that our information is correct.

This interview will take about 60 minutes, including time for follow-up. Do you have any questions before we begin?

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## SCHOOL CONTEXT

1. **To start off, could you briefly describe your role in the school, particularly as it relates to serving ELs? What are your primary responsibilities? How long have you been at this school and in this role?**
2. **Could you describe the English learner population at your school?**
  - What are the most prevalent languages spoken at home? Approximately how many different languages are spoken?
  - Has your school experienced recent changes in the size of the EL population or the composition of the types of English learners enrolling in the school?
  - Are there certain categories of English learners that your district(s) finds more challenging to serve?
    - o Listen for: newcomers, refugees, long-term ELs, students with home languages other than the dominant languages (Spanish), high school, middle school, elementary school
3. **How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the EL students and families in your school and community?**

**Listen for:**

- € Rates of COVID-19 infection, loss of family members, family members placed at risk of infection (e.g., essential workers)
- € Job loss
- € Economic insecurity (e.g., housing and food insecurity)
- € Immigration issues (e.g., privacy concerns with online learning)
- € Lost instructional time/learning loss
- € Linguistic isolation (i.e., limited opportunities for students to practice English)
- € Barriers to remote learning (e.g., lack of technology/internet access, crowded living conditions)
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

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## EL INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

4. **In reviewing your district 2020-2021 reopening plan, we noted that your district intended to offer the following modes of instruction [full distance learning, hybrid learning, full in-person learning, independent study].**
  - a. **What delivery modes were offered at the start of the year?  
Over what period(s) of time were these modes of instruction used?**
  - b. **What modes of instruction are schools in your district offering now?**
  - c. **Have the offerings varied by grade level or student group at any point?  
If so, how?**
5. **At the start of the academic year, what process or tools did your school use to identify, assess, and place EL students?**

**Listen for:**

- € Administered standardized English language proficiency assessment (ie WIDA, ELPA21, etc) in person
- € Administered standardized English language proficiency assessment online or virtually
- € Administered district developed language assessment
- € Administered student questionnaire

- € Administered home language questionnaire/family interview
- € Drew on reviews of past school work and past assessment scores
- € Virtual observational data
- € Assessment of current work

**Probe if not mentioned:**

- What, if anything, did your school do well with regard to identifying, assessing, and placing EL students?
- What, if any, challenges did your school face in identifying, assessing, and placing EL students that were unique to the 2020-2021 context, and how did you address those challenges?

**6. Did teachers or coaches in your school engage in efforts to evaluate EL student content understanding or learning loss at the start of the academic year? If so, how?**

**a. Was this done for all students or just EL students?**

**Listen for:**

- € Administered district language arts, literacy, math, or other content area assessment
- € Administered student questionnaire
- € Conducted family interview or questionnaire
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**b. Who engaged in this work?**

**7. [if school engaged in efforts to assess English proficiency or content understanding] How did teachers at your school use information from these efforts to assess learning loss due to pandemic related challenges (in English proficiency and/or content understanding)? What steps/actions were taken to follow-up on results?**

**Listen for:**

- € Informing EL placement or course-taking decisions
- € Requiring development of individual academic plans for ELs
- € Targeting capacity-building supports for teachers (e.g., professional development, instructional resources)
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**8. How did teachers at your school determine program placement/course taking for ELs at the start of the academic year? What additional factors were considered/changes were implemented this year compared to prior years?**

**Listen for:**

- € EL assessment, literacy or content assessment
- € Student questionnaire
- € Family questionnaire/interview
- € Student observation (via virtual platform)
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

9. What instructional approaches or models of instruction is your school using this year to support EL language and content development? Which of these supports are offered in-person and which are offered virtually?

**Listen for:**

- € Sheltered instruction
- € Dual language programs (e.g., two-way immersion, maintenance or late-exit bilingual education)
- € Pull out ELD instruction
- € Push in, integrated ELD instruction
- € Transitional bilingual education
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Probe for:**

- To what extent was this the same or different than what you used in prior years? How long has the school used this approach or model?
- [if there have been changes] What led to these changes?

10. How did your school identify and select technology tools and resources to use for ELs?

**Probe for:**

- To what extent did you rely on resources or tools that were used in previous years?
- What resources or tools were new to this year and what selection criteria did you use?
- Were any of the resources specific for ELs?

11. What roles and responsibilities do EL teachers/specialists have for serving EL students? In what ways has this changed in the current context?

**Listen for:**

- € EL teacher- whole class instruction
- € EL teacher- small group instruction, tutoring,
- € EL teacher- contact families
- € EL teacher- monitor EL student participation/engagement
- € Content teacher- whole class instruction
- € Content teacher- contact families
- € Content teacher- monitor EL student participation/engagement
- € Collaboration for planning
- € Collaboration for instruction
- € Collaboration for assessment
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

12. Did teachers at your school offer differentiated or additional targeted supports specifically for ELs to support their language development and address learning loss (in language and/or content) over the course of the 2020-2021 academic year? If so, what supports?

- a. During distance/remote learning?
- b. During in-person learning?
- c. To what extent was this the same or different than what you utilized in prior years?

**Listen for:**

- € Priority for in-person instruction
- € Extended learning time
- € One on one support or tutoring
- € Technology programs/apps, or additional resources for language learning
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**13. How has your approach to providing ELs meaningful access to content had to shift or change because of the pandemic? What supports or changes did you implement to address this?**

- a. During distance/remote learning?
- b. During in-person learning?

**Listen for:**

- € Preview content with EL specialist
- € Scaffolds provided by EL specialist
- € One on one support or tutoring from classroom teacher
- € One on one support or tutoring from EL specialist
- € Technology programs/apps, or additional resources for content development

**14. How have teachers at your school monitored EL student attendance during distance learning?**

- a. How have teachers at your school monitored EL participation and engagement in distance learning?
- b. What is the participation rate among ELs?
- c. How did EL attendance and participation compare with non-ELs?
- d. How has your school tried to improve attendance and participation of ELs?

**15. How has your school monitored EL student progress in language and content development this year? How was this process different from past years/focused specifically on needs stemming from the pandemic?**

**Listen for:**

- € District-created formative assessment
- € Informal/formative classroom assessments
- € Using standardized ELP language practice and training tests in formative ways
- € Informal observations during virtual learning
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**16. How did teachers use that information to inform instruction or provide targeted support for ELs? Which of these supports were new this year?**

**Listen for:**

- € Provide extended learning time
- € Provide targeted instructional support (ie small group, one on one)
- € Prioritize/determine which content is essential for grade level content development
- € Provide detailed feedback on assignments
- € Tiered systems of support

- € Provide additional resources, or technology supports
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**17. What training or support did your school offer to teachers to address EL specific learning needs due to the pandemic? What was the content of the training?**

**Listen for:**

- € Professional development/training on using technology for learning
- € Professional development/training on serving ELs in remote instruction
- € Professional development/training on addressing EL learning loss/gaps
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

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## **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS FOR ELS**

**18. Did your school conduct a needs assessment to evaluate the social and emotional health of all students? If so, how?**

- a. Was this something you were doing prior to COVID or newly enacted in response to COVID?
- b. Are there any modifications to these measures for ELs? Are there any measures only for ELs? If so, what are those measures?
- c. What, if any, strategies are teachers encouraged to use to monitor the social and emotional health of ELs in their classrooms?

**19. What strategies or practices has your school used to support EL students' and their families' social and emotional health? Which of these are being implemented or expanded in response to pandemic related needs/concerns?**

**Listen for (each strategy or practice could incorporate one or more of what is listed below):**

- € Strategies to build relationships between students and educators
- € Strategies to build relationships among students (use of student peer advisors for student mentoring and support)
- € Strategies to help students' regulate their emotions
- € Mentoring strategies
- € Bullying prevention programs
- € Use of trauma-informed instructional practices
- € Increased access to counselors or social workers
- € Assessing student social and emotional health needs
- € Increase the number of school counselors/psychologists/social workers
- € Materials or resources for families about social emotional/wellness supports
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Probe if not mentioned:**

- € Are any of these different than the strategies for all students? If so, how?
- € Were any of these offered in languages other than English?

**20. What are the roles and activities of school staff that focus on the social and emotional health of all students, and more specifically, the social and emotional health of ELs?**

**Listen for:**

- € Role of EL specialists (e.g., Title III coordinators)
- € Role of social emotional learning coordinator (or other similar types of coordinators)
- € Role of other district staff including psychologists, counselors, and social workers
- € Role of school administrators
- € Role of other types of staff
- € Role of family or community liaisons

**21. What training or supports have teachers in your school received to support ELs' social and emotional health?**

**a. Was any of this new or specific for the COVID context?**

**Listen for:**

- € Supports on identifying social-emotional needs or trauma
- € Supports on specific programs that are designed to promote social and emotional health (e.g., training on Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports)
- € Training on promoting positive school climate or school connectedness (for remote learning or in-person learning)
- € Training on trauma-informed practices
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**22. What have been the greatest challenges for supporting student social and emotional health during the past year/pandemic**

**Listen for:**

- € Educator/school leader capacity issues (e.g., resources, time, staffing)
- € Limited information on EL's social emotional needs and strategies
- € Providing supports that are accessible to ELs and culturally responsive
- € Magnitude of stressors that ELs are facing
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_



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## EL PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

I'd like to ask about your school's approach to engaging and communicating with parents and families of ELs.

**23. What, if any, steps has your school taken to better understand the needs of your ELs' parents and families during the pandemic?**

**Listen for:**

- € Surveys translated into home language
- € Information gathering by EL parent liaison(s)
- € Outreach by EL teachers
- € Virtual office hours (with home language speakers or translators)
- € Input from community-based organizations
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**24. What strategies has the school used to communicate with EL parents and families during the pandemic?**

**Probe if not mentioned:**

- In what format(s) has information been provided (e.g., texts, emails, phone calls, social media, home visits)?
- How has the information been made accessible to parents who speak languages other than English?
- Is this new or different during the pandemic with regard to content, frequency, modes?

**25. What types of information has your school's communication with EL parents and families focused on this past year?**

**Listen for:**

- € Information about COVID-19 risks and health practices
- € Information about educational services provided by district/school (e.g., reopening plans, options for instruction)
- € Information on promoting students' social-emotional health
- € Information on supporting students' English and/or home language development
- € Information on supporting students' academic learning
- € Information on their child's progress and needs
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**26. Have you tracked your outreach with families of EL students? If so, how does ability to communicate with EL families compare to non-EL families?**

**27. What, if any, guidance or supports has the district provided to help your teachers and administrators better communicate and engage with EL parents and families during the pandemic?**

**Listen for:**

- € Guidance materials or TA documents on EL parent engagement
- € Technical assistance or professional development sessions (e.g., webinars)
- € Resources to share with EL parents or families (e.g., technology manuals, online educational materials)
- € Software tools to support remote learning
- € Translation assistance
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Probe if not mentioned:**

- How useful did you find these supports? What, if any, other supports would be useful?

**28. What do you think went well with regard to how your school addressed communicating and supporting EL parents and families during the pandemic?**

**29. What, if any, challenges has your school faced in communicating with or supporting EL parents and families during the pandemic?**

**Listen for:**

- € Providing communication in diverse languages
- € Communicating with particular language groups
- € Communicating in culturally responsive ways
- € Difficulty reaching parents of ELs (e.g., changes in parent contact info)
- € Finding effective modes of communication
- € Limited staff capacity
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**30. Has your school taken any steps in the past year to build its capacity to engage with or support EL parents and families?**

**Listen for:**

- € Collaborating with existing community partners/CBOs
- € Forming new community partnerships
- € Hiring new district or school-level staff such as family/community liaisons
- € Adopting new software or technology (e.g., translation software)
- € Providing training or support to staff (content \_\_\_\_\_)
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

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## CONCLUSION

**31. What have been the greatest challenges your school has faced in supporting ELs during the pandemic?**

**Listen for:**

- € Structural barriers to remote learning (e.g., technology limitations such as access to internet or technology devices for students)
- € Teacher capacity to provide effective remote learning for ELs
- € Knowledge of effective ways to serve ELs in remote learning environment
- € Barriers to engaging with EL parents and families
- € Other \_\_\_\_\_

**32. What practices have you found to be most useful in supporting ELs during the pandemic? Can you explain why you consider these practices to be most useful?**

**33. Those were all of the questions I had for you today. Is there anything we haven't discussed about your school's approach to serving ELs during the pandemic that would be important for us to know?**

**Thank you very much for speaking with me!**