**SECTION 2**

Creating a Local EL Educational Vision and Policy to Align with Best-Practice Principles

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This chapter focuses on core tenets of a visioning process. In many cases, the vision and goals of EL services either are not clearly delineated or are in constant flux due to changes in school and/or district leadership. This process most often is implemented by district leaders or districtwide committees that may include a board member and school principals. Following a thorough process that involves educators, parents, community and district/ school leaders, it provides a worthwhile opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue and to reshape local policy. This process calls for the formation of a committee or taskforce charged with recommending a vision for EL programs. During the vision-crafting process, the task force or committee needs access to school/district data and policies, program descriptions, surveys, school improvement plans and other relevant documents.

In 2015 Chicago Public Schools created a taskforce charged with developing a new districtwide school policy and vision for serving ELs. This handbook's co-author led this process for the district and the lessons learned have informed much of this chapter. Teachers, support staff, principals and district leaders had to apply to work on this initiative, which was conducted outside the school day. Teachers were compensated for their time. The scope of the committee work was outlined in the posting and teachers were selected based on their expertise, experience and commitment to work on the initiative. The group examined the existing Chicago Board of Education policies and policies from around the country. Based on this review, the group determined that changes were needed in order to revise programs based on current research and to highlight expected outcomes for EL programs. The Chicago Public School's vision serves as an exemplar later in this chapter.
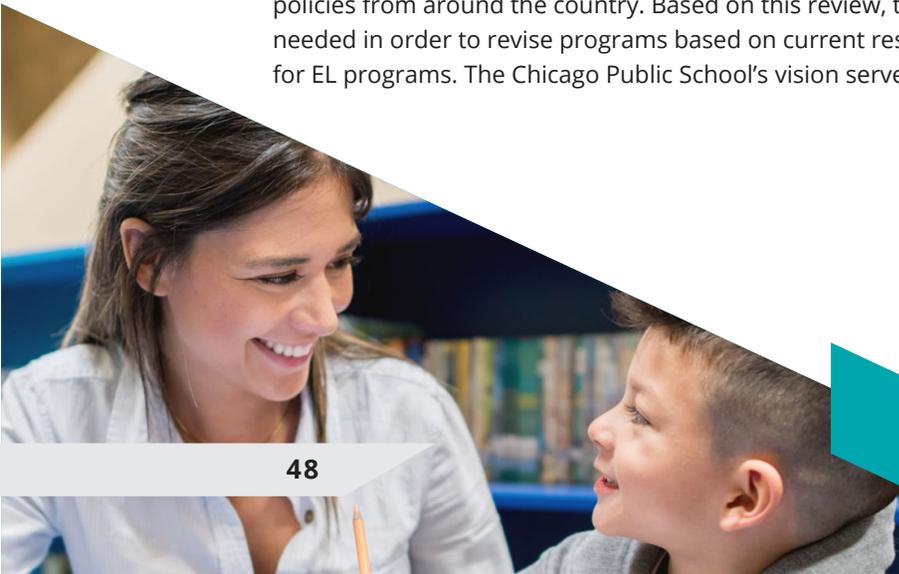
Core tenets of a visioning process include determining indicators of success, selecting a philosophy, aligning programs to that philosophy and drafting a purpose statement.
As a starting point, school district leaders should consider a number of guiding questions.

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE EL TASKFORCE

Who should be involved?

What are the current practices for ELs? What needs to be improved?

When will the vision for EL Programming need to be adopted?

Will a change in School Board policy be needed?

When does the School Board typically revise policies?

What implications will the vision have on staffing?

Will additional funding/resources be needed to sustain the vision?

When does the School Board approve hiring for the subsequent year?

Will extensive professional development for teachers be needed?

When is the calendar for professional development usually approved?

Determining Indicators of Success

At the onset, one of the most worthwhile activities a school district and/or school can engage in is to have conversations about success and metrics by which to gauge progress. Past practice has been to rely heavily on student achievement data. The ESSA regulations disseminated in 2016 called for states to develop accountability plans. Progress and achievement on statewide assessments are mandated to be part of the metrics used to judge school effectiveness. In Illinois, the majority of assessments administered to ELs are written in English, even when ELs are in bilingual education programs receiving native-language instruction. State assessments of language arts tend to only focus on English Language Arts. Math assessments are trans-adapted from English to a language other than English (LOTE). In some cases, science assessments are only available in certain grades and only in English. Another metric within state accountability is the progress ELs make toward reaching English proficiency as measured by the Annual ACCESS 2.0 assessment.

ELs are unable to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in relation to state standards on these assessments because they are not yet proficient in English. Because of this, when school report cards are published, ELs

perform below expectations, showing an achievement gap compared to their English-speaking peers. In the past, this triggered a rigorous Title III Improvement Plan. Given that, few educators in decision-making positions have had the necessary background to lead true reforms that are based on research of EL education.

When determining success, it is imperative to focus on how students perform over the long term, even after they are no longer classified as ELs.

ELs should perform on par with content assessments with their English-speaking peers once they have been reclassified as English-proficient based on the ACCESS score. Note that, even after ELs have been reclassified as English proficient, ESSA requires that all former ELs be monitored and provided with support service for four years.

Research conducted by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research recommends using metrics other than content assessments for determining student success. Metrics such as passing grades in core subjects and attendance have been better predictors of college and career success. Graduation rates from high school can also be considered. For example, the number of former ELs on track as freshman and the percentage of former ELs graduating from high school within four years are good standards to consider. Ensure that the local community weighs in on the definition of success at the beginning of the vision process.

INDICATORS TO CONSIDER

- 90 percent of EL students achieving English proficiency by eighth grade
- EL school attendance above 95 percent
- EL students with grades above "C" in core subject areas
- Percentage of ELs who attain English language proficiency by 8th grade
- 85-90 percent of former ELs designated as freshmen on track
- 90 percent of both current and former ELs participating in an extracurricular activity
- An equitable percentage of former ELs participating in Advanced Placement and Dual Credit Courses
- 90 percent of former ELs graduating high school within four years
- ELs having sufficient course completion in English, Math and Science to ensure college success
- More than half of former ELs achieving the State Seal of Biliteracy

Stakeholders should aim high in setting the definition of success. The indicators should be communicated to teachers, support staff, district administrators, parents and other community members.

Philosophy and Aligned Programming

Starting the Process

Convene a task force to examine existing policy and data. The task force should consist of teachers, support staff, parents, school and district administrators and School Board members. The task force should first analyze **demographic trends, student achievement, funding allocation and personnel qualifications, as well as perceptions** about how ELs learn. This analysis and subsequent dialogue help to clarify existing conditions and outcomes as well as levels of supports and challenges. Doing this work together helps the taskforce in establishing a common starting point and background knowledge. Later, as the task force presents findings to the local community, the changing demographics, survey information and achievement data may confirm that the district is on track or may show need for change to better address the needs of ELs.

Once goals are established, the taskforce is in a better position to determine the best program and philosophy to meet the stated objectives. Earlier chapters presented additive and subtractive philosophies; your district will need to determine which approach to adopt and the aligned programming.

The Vision Statement

The vision statement often will be more comprehensive than the actual policies; however, it is essential that the policies be in alignment with the overall vision for ELs. Large urban districts often draft their own School Board policies and have the legal resources to revise the language and provide advice on the implications of implementing the policies. Suburban districts often subscribe to a service through the Illinois Association of School Boards, known as Press Plus. In either case, the vision statement must be linked to the final policy regarding the education of ELs.

If the district aims to introduce an additive bilingual education philosophy, it should include language that clearly articulates the goal of achieving highest levels of bilingualism and biliteracy. Effective School Board policies delineate the Board members' commitment to ELs and their families as well as expectations for school and district regarding program implementation. Often the vision statement can be incorporated into a purpose statement within the local School Board policies. Below is a vision statement for ELs from the U.S. Department of Education:

VISION FOR ELs
Office of English Language Acquisition

Building on the linguistic and cultural resources our students bring to schools fosters the future success of our students, state and nation. The best opportunities for students' growth involve their participation in school experiences constructed from the respect and understanding of different linguistic, social and cultural perspectives. The rich tapestry of students' cultures and languages offers a basis to develop the academic and interpersonal skills needed to thrive in today's world.

In today's interconnected world, multilingual and cross-cultural competencies, critical thinking, collaboration and decision-making are important goals for all students. To foster the development of these skills among students, schools must intentionally incorporate them into linguistically and culturally responsive curricula.

Multiliteracies and multilingualism offer both individual and societal advantages. Students' home language(s) should play an essential role in curriculum, instruction and assessment. Students should be encouraged to use their existing skills across languages in the acquisition of new knowledge. Furthermore, development of pathways to multiliteracies will ultimately contribute to students' college and career readiness.

Now consider the following example from Chicago Public School Board Policy 603.1 (2016), which has a clear purpose statement around ensuring equity and a philosophy endorsing additive bilingualism. The goals and purpose of the EL services are clear to both the schools and the public. How does this align with the federal vision?

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 whose home language is not English have equity in education and language acquisition opportunities through the District's Bilingual Education Services.

The Board acknowledges that cultural identity is inseparable from language and recognizes bilingualism as a desirable goal and reflection of cultural heritage. This Policy strengthens the Board's commitment to recognize students' home languages and cultures as assets to build upon and to support academic success while they acquire English in preparation for success in college, career and life.

The Board is committed to bilingual education as an effective vehicle for providing English Learners (ELs) with a full measure of access to an equitable educational opportunity as required by federal and state law.

This policy specifies Dual Language Education as a program model option for delivering bilingual education services, and the Board recognizes Dual Language Education as an effective model for building bilingualism and biliteracy in students.

This policy reflects the Board's emphasis on:
• Services for English Learners which are aligned to federal and state legal standards
• Clarity and guidance on effective instructional design for English Learners
• Research-based instructional practices for English Learners
• Meaningful parental participation in Bilingual Education Services

Taskforce Research and Review of Best Practice Principles

This process might involve analyzing the practices most needed in each school, which might be done through a study group, focus groups, conferences, EL educational consultants and site visits to school districts implementing a variety of program models.

The information gathered will be valuable when the taskforce presents its final recommendations. Site visits in particular provide meaningful experiences where questions and concerns can be addressed. Fellow administrators who have implemented programmatic changes effectively are among the best points of reference and resources.

Setting a timeline for the entire process from the onset is necessary to keep it moving and in line with decisions, such as administration of the programs, program design, curricular and assessment alignment, staffing and budget. Because each district follows a calendar that organizes major district functions, it is likely that this process would begin by setting a timeline that includes at least one year of planning prior to program implementation.

Goals for the EL Taskforce or Committee:

1. Analyze local data.
2. Review best practice and research.
3. Review district policies and procedures.
4. Draft an overall **vision** for students.
5. Decide how the vision statement will be included in the policy proposal.
6. Present the vision and recommendations to the local School Board of Education for adoption:
   - Develop specific **goals and budget.**
   - Present to school leaders for adoption.
   - **Monitor progress** and adjust as necessary.

Final Steps for EL Taskforce or Committee:

Once data has been analyzed, the vision statement has been drafted and recommendations for local policy changes are ready, the taskforce or committee is ready to present its findings. The final presentation with recommendations can take place as part of a regular School Board meeting or in a special meeting. If the committee is recommending significant changes, a town hall or open meeting would be beneficial. Districts can invite former ELs as well as teachers and other support staff and parents of former ELs to speak about their experiences and expectations. Administrators from other districts that were part of site visits may be invited to share student data as part of the motivation for change.

Taskforce or committee members should include the following areas during the presentation to the local School Board:

1. Members of the committee or taskforce
2. Scope of the study and work that includes the data on student achievement, surveys and demographics
3. A brief review of the research used, and the site visits conducted
4. Invited expert speakers, such as administrators from other districts and consultants
5. Testimonies from families or former students
6. Recommendations for changes to School Board policies and implementation of the State Seal of Biliteracy
7. Recommendations for implementation and considerations; for changes in any school staffing and budgets
8. Suggestions regarding additional staffing or resources needed
9. Possible timeline for implementation
10. Budget recommendations along with potential funding sources
11. A communication plan for the families of ELs and the community
12. A process for monitoring progress and follow-up once the policies and programs are in place.

District Highlight
Woodstock SD 200: Universal Dual Language Programming at Elementary and High School Level

Keely Krueger, Assistant Superintendent

Universal Dual Language Programming

When did the district first decide to implement dual language education?
We began our dual language program in first grade in 2004. Prior to this we had a transitional bilingual program but made the shift as more information came out about dual language education and how English Learners were more successful in this type of program. We now offer dual language in grades Pre-K through high school with more than 2,500 students participating. Approximately 39 percent of the District's students are part of the dual language program. At the elementary level we have more dual classes than monolingual classes.

What process was used to gather community support?
The community support has built over the years as we have had more students wanting to be part of the dual-language program. As a school district we have a dual language parent night, which draws typically 200 to 300 people every year. Our public library has bilingual events such as Spanish storytelling and Day of the Dead events. Woodstock has a sister city in Mexico and we have done exchanges with them. The city of Woodstock has a Cultural Diversity Committee. There is also an active Hispanic Connections group in the city that promotes cultural diversity.

Does the school board policy support the programs?
We don't have a written policy to support dual language, but we have tremendous support from our board of education. I present to them on a yearly basis providing an update on the program.

How has the implementation of districtwide dual language changed the community?
We have dual language at 10 of our 12 schools. One school doesn't have dual language because it is a Therapeutic Day Treatment Center and the other school's students are bused into town to participate in dual language. The participation of so many people in dual language has helped with cultural acceptance.

Supporting ELs at the High School Level

How does the district serve ELs at the secondary level?
At the secondary level we enroll students in courses based upon the needs of individual learners. A group of us, including high school ESL/Bilingual and dual language teachers, middle school teachers, dual language coaches and the Assistant Superintendent meet to discuss individual students and determine placement in courses at the high school level. ELs are placed in ESL classes at three different levels or mainstream English classes based upon their needs. We also offer sheltered English classes across the content areas in math, health, social studies and science. Finally, ELs can take courses in Spanish as part of our dual language program. Most of them are enrolled in Spanish language arts classes alongside our dual language learners and also take advantage of dual language biology or dual language world history.

Describe scheduling and how EL/content teachers are assigned.
As the Director of EL programs, I meet annually with the high school principals and superintendent to determine staffing allocation for the upcoming school year. We look at course requests and number of students to determine staffing levels. I advocate for additional staff, if needed. Hiring new EL and dual language staff for the upcoming school year is facilitated through my department at the District level.

I screen new candidates for licensure and Spanish proficiency. We interview as a team with staff from the Department of Language and Culture and building-level staff. Scheduling is done at the building level with input from District level and Department of Language and Culture.

How does the district support ELs in the elective courses?
The district offers several elective courses in Spanish including Global Issues, International Business, Advanced Spanish Conversation and Phonetics (dual credit with Aurora University). In the next two years we will be adding an additional dual credit class called Latin American Civilization and Culture and also *Culturas del mundo y geografía.* We also have EL classroom assistants who support students in various classes where there is not an endorsed ESL/Bilingual teacher.

What is the current graduation rate for ELs in the district?
The current four-year graduation rate for our Latino students is 96 percent. The current four-year graduation rate for our ELs is 90 percent.

LOCAL CONVERSATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

It ends with reflection...
- ▰ Was the visioning process inclusive? How were teachers empowered as leaders?
- ▰ What resources or supportive groups emerged out of this process?
- ▰ What challenges were noted as part of the study?
- ▰ How will the changes to the EL policy or programming benefit the community at large?
- ▰ How do the changes enhance the district's commitment to equity?