Three Steps to Create a Designated ELD Curriculum Aligned to Academic Content

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Introduction

One of the top five factors influencing student achievement is the development of a curriculum that ensures that all students have an equal opportunity to learn (Marzano, 2003). This combination of curricular planning lays the groundwork for teachers to provide educational equity to all students including English Learners (ELs). As Marzano indicated, planned instruction has two key points:

- A *guaranteed curriculum* which is planned so that every student is provided the opportunity to learn the content that allows them a higher probability of success.

- A *viable curriculum* where schools arrange the necessary time to cover the guaranteed curriculum content and skill development so that students will not experience gaps in their knowledge or skill.

For ELs, this means providing an educational environment that addresses both their academic learning and their English development needs. This is codified in Lau v. Nichols (1974) and Castañeda v. Pickard (1981). The authors of this article and State of California (2014), in their 2014 English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework, believe this optimal learning environment can be best achieved through a two-pronged approach: Content Integrated English Language Development (ELD) and Designated ELD Curriculum (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Interplay Between Content Integrated ELD and Designated ELD Curriculum
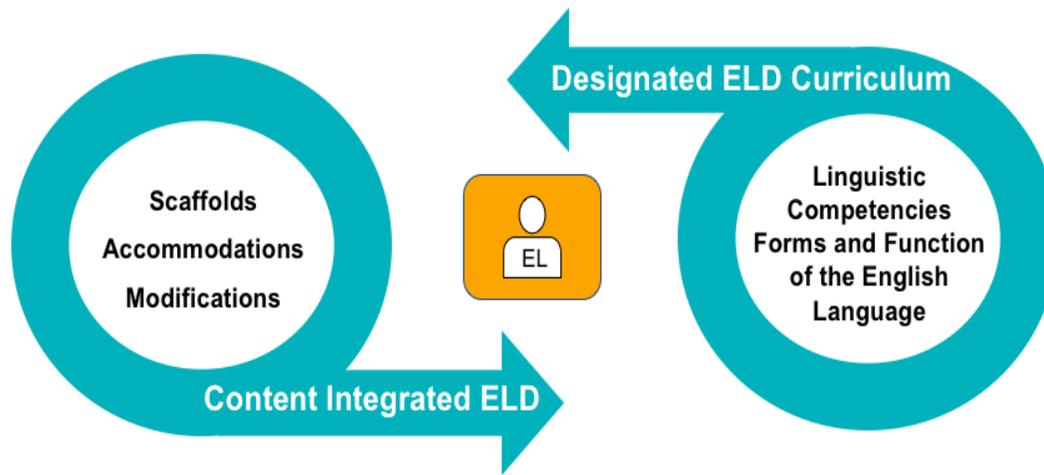
Many educators struggle to organize their ELD program curriculum because they only see EL education as content integrated support OR as designated ELD instruction, However, ELs benefit greatly from classroom support AND a designated ELD program. How do these two prongs differ?

- Content Integrated ELD: Content teachers teach *content* through *language*. In the content classroom, teachers use scaffolds and accommodations. Teachers are aware of background knowledge needs. They identify key vocabulary and English language forms and functions used in their discipline to make content accessible and comprehensible. They support the various levels of ELs in their classroom through lesson-level EL support.

- Designated ELD Curriculum: English Second Language (ESL) teachers teach *language* through *content*. They focus on the forms and functions of the English language taught

through the content being presented in the classroom. Specifically, they center on teaching the skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing through academic vocabulary and key elements of content at the word, sentence, and discourse levels. This requires the proactive planning of an ELD curriculum to ensure ELs will become English language proficient.

Why is a Designated ELD Curriculum Distinction Important?

Teachers adjust their language assistance in content classes according to their ELs' needs through differentiation. For all ELs, these modifications and scaffolds are not enough to provide the needed English language development required to acquire English language proficiency. Content teachers typically support the necessary academic language and English forms and functions just for their course. However, ELs require broader and deeper acquisition of academic English for cross-curricular success. One can look at it through the adage of "give a man a fish and he eats for a day, but teach a man to fish and he eats for a lifetime." Therefore, designated ELD instruction is critical to overall academic achievement for ELs.

In contrast, the other prong of EL education, the designated ELD instructional curriculum, aims to develop linguistic competencies of academic English across all subject areas. In co-teaching or sheltered ELD classes, the content is academic English language development using content-related words, sentences, and paragraphs linked to learning in the classroom. The goal of these designated ELD instructional programs is for ELs to reach peer or near-peer language levels at minimum.

What further distinguishes the ELD curriculum from a content curriculum is the sequenced scope and subsequent measures of learning. These are based on student proficiency levels and **not** on grade level or cognitive levels of learning. While the academic content

language should be the point of reference for the linguistic focus, ELD scope and sequence and measures of learning are in part determined by the ELs' English proficiency. These curricula work together so English Learners can *comprehend* content and *succeed* in the classroom.

Building A Curriculum Map

To build a curriculum map, teachers should start with an understanding of what constitutes a curriculum. A well-written curriculum is not simply a scope and sequence document (Marzano, 2003). Richards (2013) stated that there must be three components of language learning curricula:

1. **Academic Content Objectives to be Learned**, also called desired outcomes,

2. **Scope and sequence** in which these objectives are taught, and

3. **Assessment**, which measures how much students have learned.

Curricula are programmatic plans designed to explain what students will be able to do as a result of the planned instruction of the program. Richards (2013) proposed two levels of curricula: institutional and teacher. Institutional curricula is based on an overarching needs analysis of the student group over the school year (Richards, 2013). Whereas a teacher curriculum, Richards contended, "can be thought of as an action plan based on… the school curriculum" (p. 12). Without this more comprehensive goal-setting curriculum for language development, ESL teachers may not adequately plan what must be learned for a particular English proficiency level in a timely manner. For this reason, a school-level curriculum benefits both teachers who plan their lessons and students who receive a comprehensive array of language knowledge and experience.

How Do You Build an ELD Designated Curriculum Map?

To create a curriculum map for any program, educators should have the three interconnected components (Richards, 2013). We used a backward design approach (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Backward design (Figure 2) starts with the *output* which measures ELs' learning through projects as well as formative and/or summative and performance-based assessments. Then *input* is provided, which is the linguistic forms and functions of academic language to be learned. Finally, the *process* is determined which encompasses a variety of pedagogical approaches, instructional programs, and teaching strategies used to achieve the desired learning outcomes.

The basis for building an ELD curriculum is precisely the same as any content curriculum. The distinguishing feature of an ELD curriculum is the *linguistic focus* aligned to the academic content learning objectives.

Figure 2

Backward Design Approach to Curriculum Development
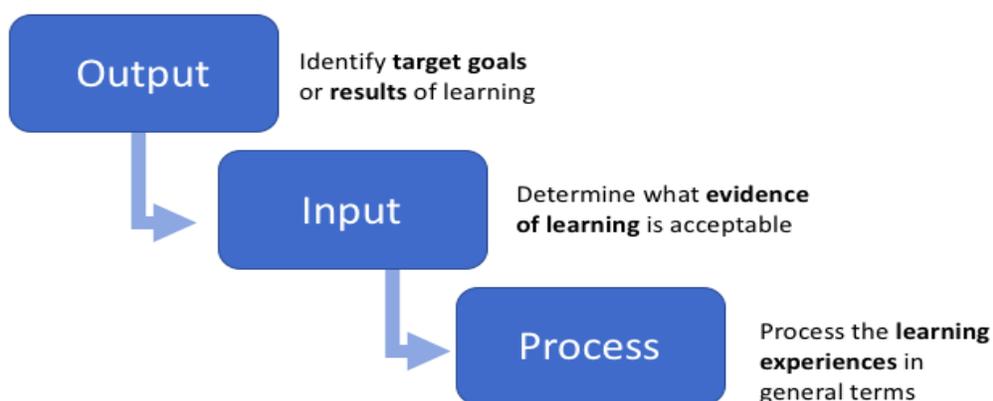
What Does it Mean to Have Linguistic Focus?

We, the authors, firmly believe language learning is recursive; however, instruction is linear. Based on various language acquisition standards published by WIDA (2020), ELPA21 (2014), TESOL (2006), and literacy work by Fountas and Pinnell (2016), we organized the linguistic features of academic language by word, sentence, and discourse level to help plan what constitutes English forms and functions. Multilingual learners need all educators to assist them to learn and express their learning. To achieve this, multilingual support must occur through both content integrated ELD and designated ELD instruction.

The Systems of Language Forms and Functions Chart, Figure 3, illustrates an overview of the forms and functions of academic language needed for ELs' success in the classroom. This is a partial snapshot of this document. These are the linguistic *foci* of an ELD curriculum. As ESL teachers and consultants, we developed this resource to map out what linguistic features are typically acquired by ELs in the progression of their language acquisition. This document also assists the content teacher working with Multilingual learners in the classroom by highlighting what ELs can do.

Figure 3

Systems of Language Forms and Functions Chart

Systems of Language Forms and Functions

Features of Academic Language	Beginning	Intermediate (and review all of Beginning)	Advanced (and review all of Intermediate)
Lexical **Word/Phrase** **Vocabulary Usage**	Letter identification and sound Alphabetical order Decode and spell simple vowel words Form and read contractions Read and spell sight words Read and label common social instructional vocabulary …	Decode and spell words with vowel variants, suffixes Segment longer words into syllables and identify the syllable type Identify meanings of commonly used suffixes and prefixes Identify homonyms …	Decode and spell multisyllabic words Identify meanings of more advanced suffixes and prefixes Identify Latin and Greek roots of words for meaning …
Linguistic **Sentence** **Language Forms and Conventions**	Identify and use nouns, verbs, articles, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions as appropriate for grade level and ELP level Conjugate and use verbs (present, past, future) Write simple sentences and identify sentence components and types …	Identify and use pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions Conjugate and use verbs (progressive, perfect, passive) Write using complex sentence patterns (independent and dependent clauses)	Identify and use gerunds and infinitives Conjugate and use verbs (conditional tense) Write using compound-complex sentence patterns …
Discourse **Linguistic Complexity**	Identify and use ending punctuation Apply capitalization rules appropriate for grade level and ELP level Identify varying types of genre Draw, label, and/or write simple narrative, informational and opinion/argumentative pieces Draw and label a Venn diagram …	Punctuate using quotations and commas Understand when reading text structure features Use transition words in writing Write multi-paragraph narrative, informational, and opinion/argumentative pieces Edit writing for focus and content …	Use literary devices in writing Organize text for cohesion and understanding Edit writing for grammar, syntax, and comprehension …

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Creating a Designated ELD Curriculum

Our overall approach starts by looking at the process to create a guaranteed and viable ELD curriculum. Figure 4 provides a graphical representation of the hierarchy of documents used in our process.
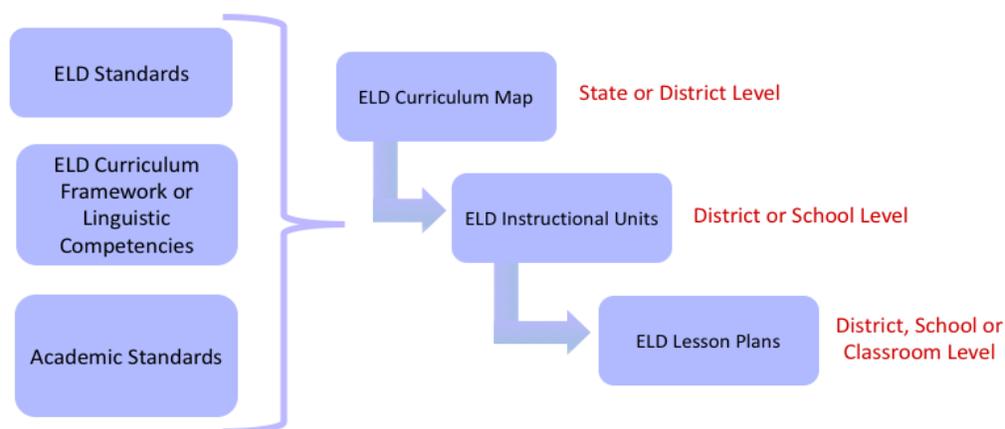
To start the process, you must gather and be familiar with these documents:

- **ELD standards** - these standards have been created by outside organizations like TESOL, WIDA, ELPA21, or other federal or state agencies

- **ELD instructional curriculum framework or linguistic competencies** (an example is shown in Figure 3) - these are the forms and functions of the English language which can be objectively assessed for mastery

- **Academic Content Standards** - these are the standards with which your ELD curriculum will be aligned; for example, the Florida BEST Standards.

Figure 4

Hierarchy of Curricular Documents

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Step 1: Create the ELD Curriculum Map (Figure 5)

- *Identify ELD to content standards connections*. Create a table as shown in Figure 5 which will record the ELD to content standards connection. Decide which content standards your school will use as the basis for your ELD program curriculum. Many schools choose English Language Arts (ELA), but others do a combination of the four core subjects. Fill the top rows of *each grade or grade band* table with what you Identify as the big ideas, or essential competencies, of the content standards you are going to use in the ELD

program. Do not choose more than three big ideas because you have to allow ELs enough time to learn, practice, and produce the academic language.

- *Identify the language forms and functions*. Link the English forms and functions to the content area's big ideas. Use a matrix like the one shown in Figure 3, The Systems of Language Forms and Functions, to construct your sequence.

- *Define the standards by the 4 domains.* For each language skill or domain (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing) determine how they are utilized in that standard. For example, a nonfiction narrative standard can include the sequence of events in your ELA scope and sequence; therefore, chronological transition words in writing or speaking would be the related linguistic function.

- *Define the summative assessments.* Now that you have filled in timing, content area, and language learning outcomes, add general summative assessments to your curriculum map. Keep these broad - write an informative text, pass a unit grammar test with 80%, and recount a narrative accurately. This is the global view of your ELD program's curriculum for a given grade and proficiency level.

Figure 5

ELD Curriculum Map Template

ELD Instructional Curriculum Map for: ___ Grade
ELP Level: WIDA Level ___

Unit Title & Time Frame	Content Area Essential Questions and Key Points	ELD Systems of Language Forms & Vocabulary				Projects & Assessments (Summative)
		Speaking	Listening	Reading	Writing	
Title # Weeks						
Title # Weeks						

This map is an overview of each course within your program to know what is being taught, when, and how learning will be determined and can be easily shared with many stakeholders. The interconnectedness of the ELD curriculum to the academic content is codified. Content teachers and ESL teachers can now collaborate their efforts within the two-pronged approach to equitably educate ELs. Use this map to plan the progression of language learning outcomes to avoid the "swiss cheese" effect of ELs having gaps in their acquisition of academic language.

Step 2: Create the ELD Instructional Units

The next level in our hierarchy is to create the instruction units (Figure 6). After pulling components from the ELD Curriculum Map, add more details such as materials and resources, formative assessments, language skill development, and content- and language-specific

vocabulary. Choice of materials, activities, and support will still be based on the teacher's own practices and student needs. What and how students will be assessed for mastery will be standardized through the identification of assessments with rubrics in this level document.

Figure 6

ELD Instructional Unit Chart

ELD Instructional Units for: ___ Grade
ELP Level: WIDA ELP Level ____
Unit Number/Name: Unit ____
Number of Weeks: ___ Weeks

Content Area Key Points & Content Big Ideas	Projects & Assessments (Summative)	Materials and Resources	State Academic Standards and State ELD Standards
			Academic Standards: ELD Standards:

ELD Systems of Language Forms & Vocabulary		
Domain	**Objectives/Tasks**	**Formative Assessment**
Listening		
Reading		
Speaking		
Writing		
Vocabulary		

ASSESSMENT

Materials	Summative Assessment	Rubric(s) for Assessment

Step 3 Create ELD Lesson Plans

The last step in the hierarchy takes the details from the Instructional Units Chart and creates the actual lesson plans. Various lesson plan formats can be used, yet all should include:

- lesson language objectives,

- measures of language learning objectives,

- planned instructional materials by proficiency levels, and

- planned engagement activities/strategies for learning.

These are not plans for the content teacher's integrated language supports or accommodations. However, these ELD lesson plans are to be used in stand-alone or co-teaching scenarios in which the ESL teacher connects the language of math, science, social students, language arts, or specials like art and music to the language objectives.

Conclusion

This curriculum creation process focuses on the acquisition of language for ELs to reach peer-level English proficiency. The authors have used this method with multiple school districts as consultants creating curriculum for districts or through training ESL teachers to create their own designated ELD curriculum.

The advantage of having an ELD designated curriculum is to have a comprehensive, thoroughly planned acquisition of English forms and functions to support ELs in the content classrooms. The byproduct of this process is to be able to inform all stakeholders. Schools can be held accountable by measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of their programs, find gaps, and make necessary changes. Without a designated written ELD curriculum, ELs are prevented from reaching their fullest academic potential.

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