HUMANITY
A D V A N C E D

ENGLISH LEARNERS PROGRAMS

District Review

Dedham Public Schools
April 2019 – May 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION

On April and May 2019, Dr. Bertha-Elena Rojas conducted a district-wide English Learners (EL) Program Review for the Dedham Public Schools at the request of Superintendent Michael Welch. The intent of the review was to gather information and data to support a self-assessment of the current status and effectiveness of EL Programs in district, and to inform the development of a Strategic Action Plan to assist the district with its goal to improve supports and educational outcomes for the increasing population of English Learners that Dedham Public Schools (DPS) has experienced in recent years. The EL Program Review was conducted by gathering district information and data in alignment with recommended areas and indicators of EL Program effectiveness as delineated in the English Learner Tool Kit for State and Local Education Agencies issued by the U.S. Department of Education (November 2016), and the indicators used by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Comprehensive District Review Protocol for EL Programs. Both documents are available for reference through the links provided below:

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html

http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/cpr/?section=tfm

In addition, the EL Programs Review was organized to gather evidence of effective EL Program Implementation as it is described in the DESE *Guidance on Identification, Assessment, Placement and Reclassification of English Learners* (January 2019). In addition, a review of the district's EL progress monitoring was conducted based upon the *Guidelines for the Use of Benchmarks Toward Attaining English Proficiency* (October 2018). Both guidance documents are available for reference through the link below:

http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/guidance/default.html?section=guidance

The regulatory guidance documents referenced above have been significantly updated with evidenced based research in effective EL Program and with more rigorous accountability standards for EL Education, which have been enacted into education law. The regulatory guidance integrates the *Act Relative to Language Opportunity for Our Kids*, commonly referred to as the *LOOK Act*, which was signed by Governor Baker into law on November 22, 2017. This law amended the design and implementation of EL programs, while also specified the accountability standards for the timely and effective English language acquisition for EL students. The guidance also integrates specific federal education requirements for EL programs and supports as required in the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* of 1965 and its amendment in the *Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA)* of 2016. The above laws have prompted significant accountability expectations in EL educational outcomes, which have been integrated in the new MA Accountability System guidelines for MA schools (DESE 2018). For instance, progress by EL students is accounted for under the MCAS Achievement scores and Student Growth Percentile scores in both English Language Arts and Math for all students (2 of 6 indicators). In addition, the specific indicator of Progress Toward English Proficiency by EL students was added to the new accountability system released this academic year. For this purpose, DESE released English Proficiency Growth Targets this year, based upon expectations

of attainment of English proficiency within six years that EL students entered MA schools. Information about the new DESE Accountability System is available through the link below.

http://www.doe.mass.edu/accountability/lists-tools.html

The following information and data collection activities took place over four school days to inform this report and recommendations for drafting a strategic action plan:

- ❖ Dates of EL Program Review: April 1st, 3rd, 22nd, 29th, May 7th, 8th, and 15th, 2019. A telephone meeting with a principal was conducted on May 13th and the Oral Report to the Superintendent took place in May 15th, 2019.
- ❖ 21 meetings and focus groups representing district leadership (5), building-based leadership (8), and focus groups of classroom teachers, including Sheltered English Immersion-SEI teachers (6) and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers (2).
- ❖ 25 classroom walkthroughs during SEI instruction and ESL instruction including 4 at the Early Childhood Center, 13 at the elementary schools, 5 at the Middle School and 3 at the High School.
- ❖ Review of district information and documents pertinent to Standard Operating Procedures that support the implementation of EL Programs in district.

The above activities provided multiple stakeholder groups across the district with opportunities to voice their perceived effective practices for ELs, as well as the challenges in structure, practices and utilization of resources that may hinder better outcomes for EL students in district. It also provided a forum for the collection of ideas and recommendations as to what schools and the district could do to work collaboratively and effectively toward improved academic outcomes for ELs.

The objective for the classroom observations/walk-throughs was to gain a holistic perspective of the district's framework to support instruction for EL students while attending their English language development classes (ESL) as well as during content instruction and/or mainstream classes (SEI). It also provided perspective around the district's knowledge and understanding of Second Language Acquisition, the utilization of cultural and linguistically fair practices in standard operating procedures and the overall quality of ESL and SEI best practices for effective instruction. It is important to note that the purpose of classroom observations/walk-throughs was to gather patterns of program implementation and instructional practices and not to assess or evaluate teachers or to identify practices by individual teachers.

The report has been structured into three sections:

1. Key Findings gathered from meetings, focus groups, walk-throughs, and district information, based upon the indicators of EL program effectiveness.
2. Synthesis of classroom visits.
3. Recommendations for immediate, high-impact actions to create and revise/modify structures, procedures, practices and the utilization of resources, and to inform a strategic action plan to support improvement in the effectiveness of EL programs and of EL students' outcomes.

SECTION I: KEY FINDINGS

This section provides information about the district's current status in meeting regulations that support EL programs as delineated by indicators referenced by the U.S. Department of Education, DESE, evidenced based research in Second Language Acquisition and Instructional Best Practices for EL students. The outcomes for each indicator were assessed through a 3-tier system, based upon the presence of **initial, developing or robust evidence** of the presence of key components of each indicator. The ratings are provided on the top right heading for each indicator.

In addition, qualitative and/or contextual findings are provided after the evidence analysis for each indicator. These were derived from observations or reports that reflect relevant information that impacts district functioning in regard to the successful implementation of the target indicators.

1. IDENTIFICATION OF ENGLISH LEARNERS:	Rating: <u>Developing</u>

Indicators:

- ➢ Identification of ELs in a timely manner
- ➢ Utilization of the Home Language Survey as a tool to identify all potential ELs
- ➢ Presence of standard operating procedures in accordance to DESE guidelines to identify students who may be ELs, assess their level of English proficiency at the time of enrollment, and place identified EL students in appropriate EL programs for their proficiency level.

Evidence:

- District has recently developed general standard operating procedures to ensure that all potential EL students are identified in a timely manner.
- The district's standard operating procedures includes the utilization of the Home Language Survey (HLS), including translated versions in multiple languages.
- The district utilizes language screening methods and procedures in congruence with the DESE guidance.

Qualitative/Contextual Findings:

- Standard operating procedures remain under development
- Concerns were reported about the lack of translated documents available for Limited English Proficient (LEP) parents, to support the general process of enrollment, and to provide parents with information about the DPS.
- The lack of interpreters limits the availability of background information about incoming EL students that could be used to better informed teachers about the students, plan for their programming and mobilization of resources.
- A reference was made about a telephone-based interpreter service the district acquired. It was widely reported that such service is seldom used. Many participants did not know the service is available.

2. **PROVISION OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS (includes Curriculum and Instruction):**
Rating: Initial

Indicators:

- ➢ ELs are educated through Sheltered English Immersion or other approved instructional program that meets the requirements of federal and state law.
- ➢ Implemented EL programs are research-based and include both an English language acquisition component and subject matter content.
- ➢ The district's grouping of students ensures that ELs receive effective content instruction at appropriate academic levels and that ESL instruction is provided at the appropriate proficiency level. ESL instruction should be aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and must integrate components of the WIDA English Language Development (ELD) Standards.
- ➢ EL programs are staffed by ESL certified teachers and content instruction is provided by SEI endorsed teachers.

Evidence:

- The Implementation of Sheltered English Immersion as a program that includes both an explicit English Language Development (ELD) component, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) and Sheltered Content Instruction (SCI) appears absent throughout the district. There is no evidence of the district's having adopted a model of EL programming that is consistent and evidenced based. Most students are scheduled with ESL periods; however, there is no alignment between the ESL instruction and the mainstream educational program and curriculum as a cohesive program.
- There is little evidence that the district uses strategic scheduling to accommodate the language development needs of EL students. El students are scheduled last and the process is cumbersome. Such scheduling practices limit access of ESL instruction to students and the efficient utilization of ESL staff. Schedules are clearer in the middle school and the high school due to the period scheduling infrastructure.
- EL students with disabilities are generally not considered for ESL instruction.
- Implementation of SEI strategies by mainstream teachers is minimal. Details about SEI instruction are available in Section II.
- Teacher schedules include no collaboration time with ESL teachers.
- ESL teachers have limited resources to support ESL instruction, including curriculum, WIDA Tools, instructional materials and professional development.
- There is little evidence of the use of model curriculum units or the ESL MCU Guide to design ESL instruction.
- There was evidence of pockets of high-quality ESL and SEI across tiers. Further details are available in Section II.

Qualitative/Contextual Findings:

- The District's culture, as it is reported by many members of the faculty and some administrators, indicates that the domains of Second Language Acquisition, cultural and linguistic responsive teaching, and/or expanding on SEI/Retell strategies would not be domains of interest or need for PD. Staff appreciates the complexities brought by individual EL students, especially when they are newcomers, or through an unexpected surge in enrollment as it took place as a result of incoming students from Puerto Rico due to

hurricane Maria. However, the perception remains that the EL population remains very low incidence. Staff perceives that PD they received already in the EL related areas is sufficient.

- Staff in multiple roles including administration and teaching faculty, related a perspective where ESL is not considered part of the "core" instruction for ELs. Many references were made about the fact that EL students are "missing instruction" or are not in mainstream classrooms where they should be, even though concerns were also voiced about the fact that the students do not know English and more support is needed to help them in the classroom. There seemed to be little understanding that EL students, especially beginner level students, are missing the core instruction even when they are in the regular classroom, especially when evidence of use of SEI strategies was minimal.

- District leadership and building based leadership favor "embedded" forms of ESL or co-teaching for elementary schools. These preferences appeared based upon the challenges posed by scheduling students with ESL, and the limited time available for ESL scheduling compared to other district priorities. At the elementary level, this concern was more prevalent in reference to the expectations for the implementation of the newly acquired curricula and the limited time the staff has to implement it, even for the students who do not leave the classroom.

- Staff could not communicate a model, plans or resources to support an embedded model of ESL delivery, or any model of ESL.

- The teaching faculty at all levels perceives ESL teachers as staff that should be trained on what they do as mainstream teachers, so that mainstream teachers can receive more support to teach in their classrooms. For instance, at the elementary level, teachers would like ESL teachers to be trained in Lucy Calkins and Fundations. At the High School, teachers would like to have paraprofessionals trained in content areas to work with students in small groups, or after school.

- The secondary schools reported that additional staff is needed to teach the content curriculum separately to EL students in a way that would help them and not "take away from" or "slow down" the teaching for mainstream students.

- Mainstream teachers consistently reported a 'disconnect" between ESL and what they do. They expressed in multiple ways that they do not know what happens during ESL time, or what ESL looks like.

- Building principals reported not having a clear idea of what ESL looks like when well implemented. They also expressed not having clarity about how to assess ESL instruction, including components and indicators to look for that would be specific to ESL instruction.

- ESL teachers across all tiers consistently reported that EL programs and ESL instruction have little priority within the district's goals, strategic planning and goals for improvement. They also reported that resources to support effective ESL instruction are scarce.

- ESL teachers at the elementary level specifically, reported concerns about their role not being understood, about being treated as paraprofessionals instead of teacher equals, and about feeling pressured to teach mainstream curriculum, which is at times in conflict with what ESL should look like to support the language development needs of students.

- SEI teachers at the Early Childhood and Elementary sites expressed concerned that the recently acquired curricula by the district leaves very little time to support classroom discussions and the practice of listening and speaking skills for ELs. They also reported that the scope and sequence of the curricula leave little time for the students to be out of the classroom to receive other supports, such as ESL.

3. STAFFING AND SUPPORTING ENGLISH LEARNER PROGRAMS: **Rating: <u>Developing</u>**

Indicators:

- ➢ Schools must provide the personnel necessary to effectively implement EL programs
- ➢ Schools must have trained administrators to properly support EL programs, meaningfully evaluate student outcomes and conduct meaningful evaluations of teachers.
- ➢ Staffing requires ESL certified teachers to provide explicit instruction in English Language Development (ELD) and SEI endorsed teachers to ensure curriculum accessibility to EL students, based upon their English proficiency level.

Evidence:

- The district recently allocated an administrative position for EL programs (EL Department Head). The new EL Department Head is an experienced ESL teacher who is working on her knowledge about federal and state regulations and guidelines about EL education. The parameters of the scope of the position appear to be a work in progress.
- The ESL faculty is very pleased to have an EL Department Head in district, and also appreciates the opportunity to have meetings and PD relevant to their area of expertise as a result.
- School-based administrators are appreciative of the district's allocation for an EL Department Head position. The administration reflected upon the increase numbers of ELs coming in district, and specifically referred to the challenges posed by the influx of EL students in district as a result of hurricane Maria last year, which was considered as very challenging.
- The district appears to have an adequate amount of ESL certified teachers at the elementary level. Scheduling inefficiencies and the lack of a clear ESL program model pose limitations to support all students with ESL instruction as it is recommended by the DESE guidelines.
- The Middle School and the High School both have very experienced and committed ESL certified teachers who do their best accommodating as many students as possible. Given the range of grades and of needs of the students, the teachers are challenged with groupings of students that at times limit the effectiveness of their instruction.
- The district's majority of mainstream teachers have the SEI endorsement.
- Implementation of SEI strategies by mainstream teachers was predominantly absent. Details about SEI instruction are available in Section II.

Qualitative/Contextual Findings:

- The EL Department Head position is new, and the definition of responsibilities and duties remains a work in progress, including the time allocation for administrative and teaching activities.
- Many classes had a very small number of EL students.

4. SUPPORTING ENGLISH LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES:
Rating: <u>Initial</u>

Indicators:

➢ Schools must identify and evaluate ELs with disabilities in a timely manner
➢ Schools must utilize cultural and linguistically fair practices to assess EL students for the purpose of disability determination. When possible and appropriate, evaluations should be conducted in the child's native language
➢ Schools must not determine disabilities because of EL students' limited language proficiency
➢ EL students with disabilities must receive both English language development instruction and the disability-related services they are entitled to by law.

Evidence:
- There is evidence that the topic of EL students with disabilities causes confusion and concern in the teaching faculty.
- There is evidence that scheduling of EL students with disabilities with both their language development instruction (ESL) and their disability-related services is considered to be "in conflict." There seems to be no strategy or evidence of collaborative scheduling practices to support EL students with disabilities.
- In many instances, staff reported that they have been told that EL students with disabilities cannot be scheduled with both, special education services and ESL. They also conveyed that special education is treated as the domain of priority for scheduling.

Qualitative/Contextual Findings:
- The special education director appreciates the challenges posed by the complex presentation of EL students with disabilities.
- The administration has eliminated previous practices for assessment that were not cultural and/or linguistically responsive.
- The special education department is working toward strengthening the pre-referral process to best differentiate between language development needs and potential disability or handicap.
- The department is also more active on securing native language assessments when necessary.
- The administration recognized that more professional development is required in supporting cultural and linguistically fair assessment practices in district.
- The administration also recognized the need for cultural competency training for all stakeholders in district because conversations about race and diversity remain difficult within the district. Reportedly, this need was acknowledged at the Equity and Diversity Task Force created by the superintendent this year.

5. SUPPORTING ELs WHO OPT-OUT FROM EL PROGRAMS:
Rating: <u>Initial</u>

Indicators:

> ➢ Parents have the right to opt-out their children from EL programs, provided that they do so voluntarily and with full understanding of the benefits of ESL instruction.
> ➢ Opt-out students maintain their EL status and are required to take the ACCESS test for ELs
> ➢ Schools remain accountable for supporting the language development and learning needs of opt-out children
> ➢ Schools must monitor the progress of opt-out EL students, and inform parents when their children are not making appropriate progress

Evidence:

- General standard operating procedures are in place to inform parents of their rights to opt-out students.
- Opt-Out forms are utilized.
- Standard operating procedures do not specify the annual review process required for opt-out students.
- Opt-out students take the ACCESS Test for ELs and also have progress monitoring as required by guidelines.
- There is evidence that parents from the Greenlodge School opt-out their EL students at a higher rate than at the other elementary schools. It was also reported that EL students are referred more for special education evaluations.
- There is little evidence of supports through other school-based resources for opt-out EL students.
-

Qualitative/Contextual Findings:

- The principal from the Greenlodge School explained that the opt-out trends at the school appear to be most specific from Greek families. She explained that the rate of EL students in the school is very small, and that Greek families would prefer "push-in" support rather that pull-out ESL. As a result, they choose to opt-out their children.

6. RECLASIFICATION AND MONITORING OF ELS EXITING EL PROGRAMS:
Rating: <u>Initial</u>

Indicators:

> ➢ Schools must monitor EL students' progress toward achieving English proficiency, acquiring content knowledge and being able to perform ordinary academic work in English
> ➢ Reclassified students should be monitored for four years as per DESE guidelines
> ➢ Schools should ensure that former EL students have meaningful access to the grade level curriculum.

Evidence (Indicator #6):
- General standard operating procedures are in place to reclassify students into Former English Learners (FELs) and track their progress over the four years of monitoring.
- There is little evidence of utilization of SEI strategies by mainstream teachers to support accessibility of content curricula for FEL students.

Qualitative/Contextual Findings:
- There is limited alignment with the student information system, to track the monitoring of FEL students with accuracy, such as designating them as year 1, 2, 3 or 4 accurately.
- Schools have little knowledge about outcomes of students who are former ELs. This information does not seem relevant in analyses of student outcomes. At the high school level, the administration reported no concerns about EL or FEL students meeting their graduation requirements.

---

7. **DISTRICT CAPACITY FOR EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EL PROGRAMS:**   **Rating: <u>Initial</u>**

Indicators:

- ➤ Successful EL programs ensure that EL students attain both English proficiency and equity in their participation in standard instructional programs.
- ➤ EL students' progress in English language proficiency is evaluated with the ACCESS for ELs test. Results are utilized to evaluate outcomes of EL students and assess the effectiveness of EL programs.
- ➤ Districts and schools must gather consistent data to develop EL District profiles and ensure that the Student Information System (SIS) tracks data needed to understand the EL population and monitor ELs' progress.
- ➤ Districts and schools should collect longitudinal data to monitor the performance of current ELs, opt-out ELs and FELs. Longitudinal data also helps identify long-term ELs and ELs' trajectory toward language proficiency, such as proficiency growth, years of proficiency attainment, EL graduation and drop-out rates.

Evidence:
- There is evidence of general data gathering and data management systems that provide basic information about the district's EL students' profile. Such data is not aligned with the district's formal Student Information System (SIS).
- There is evidence that the main areas of compliance are tracked and monitored through SIMS for the purpose of compliance reporting of the existing SIMS indicators for the EL population.
- There is little evidence of integration of relevant EL data identifiers in the district's SIS.
- There is little evidence of district's capability to conduct longitudinal data analysis, due to the lack of data available through the SIS or other sources. As a result, the district has no capability to evaluate the effectiveness of EL programs. For instance, the district has

Evidence (Indicator #7) Continuation:

limited understanding of the time that students spend in EL programs, the time it takes students to reach proficiency levels, the performance of students from different proficiency levels in MCAs and ACCESS, determination of students that could potentially be Long-Term ELs, patterns of EL students with disabilities and SLIFE, and performance of Opt-Out and FEL students.

- There is evidence that ACCESS test results are used to identify students' proficiency level and classroom assignments along with WIDA levels. There is little evidence that growth measures, target growth indicators or attainment data are used to gauge impact of instructional practices and overall effectiveness of EL programs.
- There was no evidence of standard operating procedures for the required EL Benchmark of Progress in Language Proficiency in accordance to DESE Guidelines.

Qualitative/Contextual Findings:

- The EL Department Head is well informed about DESE guidelines pertaining to ELs and EL programming. However, the lack of alignments of the district's SIS and EL data points, and of detailed standard operating procedures limit the potential use of EL data to best inform district practices, evaluate EL outcomes and EL programs.
- The District's lack of clarity around the model and structure of EL programs for each tier, significantly limit the district's development of data structures and procedures for EL program evaluation.

8. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:
Rating: <u>Initial</u>

Indicators:

- ➢ Districts with ELs must develop professional development plans and provide training for teachers in second language acquisition techniques for the re-certification of teachers and administrators.
- ➢ Districts are expected to extend the RETELL training so that teachers are able to integrate SEI strategies in their instruction to support ELs and FELs in mainstream classrooms.

Evidence:

- There is little evidence of a professional development plan to explicitly address ESL and SEI instructional needs to support effective implementation of EL programs.
- There is little evidence of the utilization of WIDA based tools and resources to support lesson design and implementation for ELs, along with analysis of modalities of input and output from students based upon their language proficiency level.
- The need for cultural and linguistically responsive professional development and for relevant practices was voiced by a very small group of stakeholders.
- Mainstream teaching faculty does not consider at this time that EL related PD is necessary or worth their time, even though they expressed concerns about the challenges posed by EL students in district.

> **Evidence (Indicator #8), Continuation:**
> - ESL teachers are appreciative of having time to meet as a group to review EL related needs. however, they expressed concerns that their meetings have focused on data management and not on improving their practice of ESL.
> - Many staff voiced needs around improving communication with parents via interpretation and translation services.
> - The need for improving family engagement practices was voiced by a small group of staff.

Qualitative/Contextual Findings:
-N/A for this indicator

SECTION II: SYNTHESIS OF CLASSROOM VISITS

Dr. Rojas visited 26 classrooms at seven schools. Visits ranged between 20 minutes to 40 minutes. Visit schedules were arranged in advanced by school principals. Most classroom observations scheduled were accomplished with the exception of 2 classes at the high school. In one of the classes scheduled, the teacher was administering a test for the whole period. Therefore, data was not gathered from this period. In another scheduled class, the teacher showed a movie for the full period. Data was gathered from this class. In the middle school, a scheduled class had a substitute for the day. Another teacher volunteered her class to be part of the walk-through instead. Data gathered from 25 walk-throughs was utilized for the analysis.

The SEI Smart Card was used as the observational walk-through tool to gauge evidence of implementation of both ESL and SEI instructional best practices. This tool was introduced to Massachusetts districts through the Rethinking Equity in the Teaching of English Language Learners (RETELL) Initiative and has been endorsed by DESE as a capacity building tool for both school leaders and teaching faculty. School leaders are encouraged to use this tool to gauge the extent to which instruction is accessible to EL students in classrooms in cultural and linguistic responsive ways. Teaching faculty are encouraged to use the tool as a guide for lesson planning and instructional delivery. The tool is divided in two domains. The first, *Organization of the Classroom* (OC), includes indicators of classroom culture, lesson structure and the explicit inclusion of both content and language learning objectives in the lesson plans. The second domain, *Instructional Design and Delivery* (IDD), includes key research-based indicators that correlate with effective learning outcomes for EL students, such as activating prior knowledge and explicit vocabulary teaching, utilization of multiple modalities of input, output and representation of information to maximize access of curriculum and learning and student engagement, instructional rigor and presentation of content within students' English proficiency level. The SEI Smart Card Tool is attached (Appendix A) for reference.

Table A, at the end of this report, provides a summary of the evidence of the best practices observed across all classrooms visited. The following evidence was obtained:

Strengths:

- ➢ Middle School classrooms showed the most relative strengths in the implementation of cultural and linguistic responsive practices.
- ➢ In the Organization of the Classroom domain, Classroom Climate and Available Class Time (classroom structure) were the highest rated. Sixty four percent of the classrooms were characterized by positive relationships between teachers and students and among students. Early Childhood and middle school classrooms were predominant in this indicator.
- ➢ In the Instructional Design and Delivery Domain, the highest rating was obtained in the use of a wide range of instructional techniques (60%) and the use of lesson design and/or strategies to support student inquiry, exploration and problem solving (60%).
- ➢ Solid best practices in ESL instruction were observed in one elementary classroom and one high school classroom. The students were highly engaged, and the lesson design was explicit to help the students develop their vocabulary, overall expression and application of language skills into literacy components.
- ➢ Solid SEI strategies were observed in two middle school sessions. In these sessions, the learning was taking place through ongoing collaborative projects. The lessons were dynamic and rigorous. The teachers provided multiple opportunities for the students to interact and included multiple modalities of input and output. The teacher facilitated learning with ongoing feedback and support. Students appeared happy, motivated and engaged throughout the lessons.
- ➢ Explicit use of SEI strategies was observed in three elementary sessions and one middle school sessions. In the elementary sessions, the teacher and paraprofessional worked together to support the students in centers and had designed engaging learning activities for knowledge application. In the middle school session, the teacher used feedback and inquiry skillfully and strategically to validate the students' learning and efforts. The teacher explicitly facilitated interactions to help the students share opinions, think about arguments and stimulate their writing.

Areas of Improvement:

- ➢ High school classes showed the most weaknesses in the implementation of SEI strategies (evidence of indicators present at the most in 33% on the classrooms visited).
- ➢ In the Organization of the Classroom domain, only 36% of the sessions had explicit evidence of learning objectives. Language objectives were neglected, only observable in 16% of the sessions.
- ➢ In the SEI Instructional Design and Delivery only half of sessions observed included activation of prior knowledge (52%) and presentation of content adapted to students' language proficiency (56%).
- ➢ Instructional delivery with rigor and depth of content appeared to be a struggle, as it was evident in only 36% of the sessions.
- ➢ Most sessions struggled to promote meaningful student output as all indicators that measured design components specific to support student demonstration of learning were depleted including, opportunities for the students to articulate their thinking and reasoning (32%), opportunities for the students to apply knowledge and concepts (44%) and the use of questions to engage students (52%).

- ➢ ESL teachers did not seem to use WIDA tools to support the design and delivery of their lessons.
- ➢ Collaborative and planning time appear scarce for both mainstream teachers and ESL teachers. Teachers reported that collaborative time at the elementary level is available once a week. There is no opportunity for ESL to participate. At the middle school and high school, scheduling practices limit collaboration between ESL and SEI teachers.

Qualitive / Contextual Findings:

- Most classes appeared to have a manageable number of students, between 18 and 20.
- At the elementary level, all regular classrooms visited had a teacher and a paraprofessional. Paraprofessionals appeared to be meaningfully engaged in supporting classroom instruction in about 30% of the sessions visited. In many sessions, the role of the paraprofessional was unclear.
- In the high school content sessions, students of color sat as a group and to the side of the class.

SECTION III: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMMEDIATE, HIGH IMPACT ACTION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

III.1 Strengths to Leverage and Build Upon:

- ➢ The central administration leadership is strongly committed to addressing the needs of the increasing population of EL students, and of building system-wide capacity to maximize student outcomes.
- ➢ The district has an Equity Task Force that has begun to work toward improving the district's practices for inclusion and education equity.
- ➢ The new EL Department Head is committed to developing procedures for the district, and to supporting the ESL teachers.
- ➢ Building-based administrations acknowledge the need for improvement of EL programs and/or cultural competency.
- ➢ There is an adequate amount of ESL teachers in the district to support the instructional needs in English Language Development (ELD) for all enrolled EL students.
- ➢ There are pockets of high-quality instruction in all tiers observed, some in ESL others in SEI.
- ➢ The district has invested in a telephone language interpreter system.

III2. Immediate, high impact recommendations to improve the overall quality of EL Programs to begin the FY2019-2020 academic year:

1. ***Key Finding to address:*** EL Programs appear disconnected and detached from the district's structure of educational and academic programs. Principals and school staff have limited understanding of the purpose of ESL and perceive it as competing with the district's programs. As a result, ESL teachers work in isolation, or under contexts that are not effective.

Recommendations:
-Develop and/or expand a districtwide vision of instructional impact that is inclusive of ESL as a necessary component of core instruction for EL students in order to ensure positive academic outcomes for ELs.
-Research best practices for ESL implementation and effective models that would support it with the district's newly acquired literacy curriculum for early childhood and elementary schools.
-Develop expertise in both language and literacy acquisition for ELs to best inform instructional practices at the elementary level. Coaching or targeted PD in these areas would be beneficial in supporting the district with an inclusive vision and mission.

2. ***Key Finding to address****:* Some EL students may not be scheduled with ESL instruction, even though ESL staffing at every building is adequate to support full scheduling of EL students. ESL scheduling does not appear to be strategically included at building's scheduling structures.

   Recommendations:
   -Develop strategic scheduling frameworks to include ESL instruction from the beginning of the scheduling process. At the elementary level, this would ensure that all students receive ESL and also prevent students form missing the same content areas. At the secondary level, it will ensure all students receive ESL and maximize scheduling efficiencies.
   -Clarify the models for ESL instruction available in district, based upon formal parameters, such as WIDA levels.
   -Support ESL curriculum development work after school to draft a guiding ESL curriculum for the district.
   -Work collaborative with the Special Education Department so that EL students with disabilities also receive the necessary ESL instruction.
   -Consider allocation of at least one more position for secondary schools, that could be half time at both the middle school and the high school. This would support the targeted ESL instruction for EL students based upon their proficiency levels.

3. ***Key Finding to address****:* SEI instruction is a significant area of weakness. In addition, the majority of the faculty who participated in the focus groups does not appear motivated to build their capacity in strengthening their SEI strategies. However, strengthening SEI instruction is a necessary component to support EL Programs. Given the size of enrollment and the low incidence rate of ELs in the DPS, the district may be more successful in strengthening SEI instruction and in developing a strong EL program by focusing on building capacity in a cohort of teachers.

   Recommendations:
   -Survey teachers at the elementary level to gauge their interest in developing their SEI skills. Provide targeted professional development to this group of teachers and support collaborative planning time among them and with ESL teachers. Ideally, having at least one teacher per grade at each school with this commitment would support the emergence of a strong EL program.
   -Survey content teachers at the secondary level for the same purpose as described above to identify content teachers interested in strengthening their design and delivery for

sheltered content instruction. Ideally, having at least two content teachers per grade would support the emergence of an integrated EL program.
-Strategically assign EL students to classrooms where teachers are interested in supporting ELs and willing to participate in PD and collaboration with ESL teachers.
-Consider supporting interested SEI teachers and ESL teachers with coaching to strengthen their skills.
-Integrate paraprofessionals at the elementary level in training so that they are better able to support SEI teachers in the implementation of SEI strategies.
-Support additional collaborative learning time for groups of SEI and ESL teachers. At the secondary level, cross-curricular design would have a significant impact in the quality of instruction.

4. ***Key Finding to address:*** There appears to be limited training, skill and capacity building for EL related topics and instructional design. Principals and SEI staff do not consider EL related professional development (PD) an area of priority. ESL faculty considers it a priority, though limited resources and PD scheduling practices have prevented capacity building PD.

   Recommendations:
   -Prioritize ESL focus PD for ESL teachers, and acquire instructional support materials, such as WIDA materials and tools and WIDA training. Such resources would support an understandable framework of ESL instruction that would build collaboration between ESL and SEI teachers.
   -Consider PD for building administrators and SEI teachers in understanding second language acquisition and expanding on SEI strategies.

5. ***Key Finding to address:*** Cultural and linguistically fair communication and assessment practices appear not sufficient and/or adequate to support meaningful communication with parents. Practices also appear limited for evaluations of EL students.

   Recommendations:
   -Expand district's strategies for meaningful communication with parents and guardians, such as developing a bank of most frequently used documents in district templates with translated versions in as many languages represented in the student body as possible.
   -Evaluate the extent to which the available telephone interpretation system could be made accessible to buildings to support regular interactions with parents/guardians in their native language.
   -Support the special education assessment staff with professional development in cultural and linguistically fair assessments of EL students. Eventually, expand such training to teaching faculty.

Respectfully submitted,

Bertha-Elena Rojas, Psy.D.; M.Ed.
Founder and CEO
Humanity Advanced, LLC