

SMALLER  
**LEARNING COMMUNITIES**  
PROGRAM

**Middle-to-High School Transition for English  
Language Learners: Promising School-Based  
Practices**

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# Introduction

This paper examines the nexus among three current areas of concern for secondary educators and policymakers: restructuring high schools into small learning communities (SLCs); supporting the transition of students into the ninth grade; and instructing English language learners (ELLs). Research in these three separate areas has become increasingly abundant and relevant as national educational policy focus has shifted toward high school improvement. ELLs are enrolled in large numbers in urban schools, which have lately been the recipients of high school reform initiatives. Yet, despite the abundant presence of ELLs in these schools, little information is available on how the distinctive linguistic, academic, and social needs of ELLs have been considered in high school reform policies and programmatic initiatives.

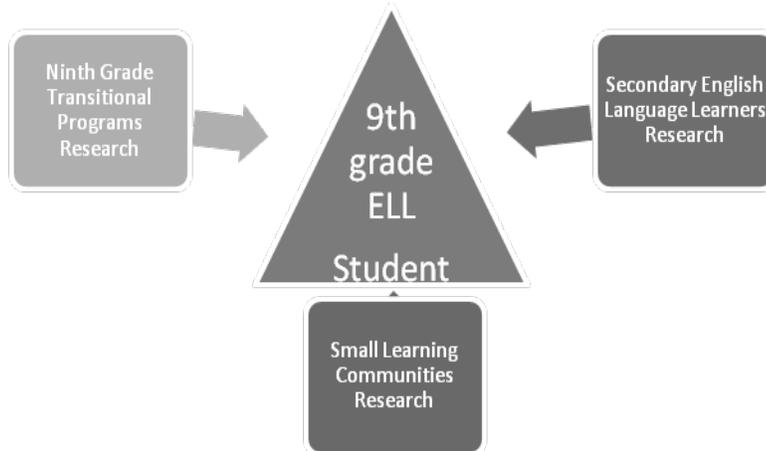
What happens to the ELL moving from eighth to ninth grade in a SLC? How are his or her unique educational needs considered? Is the instructional program designed to seamlessly integrate English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) instruction with the SLC or ninth-grade transitional programs? Is the student required to choose between accessing linguistically appropriate instruction and accessing the benefits of a career or technical academy? Does the student's de facto status as an ELL preclude him or her from taking part in programs and courses within the SLC schools? These and similar questions are thinly addressed in the existing literature.

The purpose of this report is to address some of these questions by highlighting high school practices that are effectively helping ELL students transition from the middle school to the high school level. It summarizes descriptive information gathered from seven high schools located in various urban districts across the country. In this research, we describe how a selected number of schools are putting the pieces together to serve ninth-grade ELLs across the spectrum. The research does not attempt to establish a direct correlation between practices in these schools and improved achievement outcomes for ELLs. Instead, it posits that a prerequisite for improved achievement is the establishment of a school climate in which students and teachers can focus on the core work of the schools, which is teaching and learning. This cannot take place without the appropriate conditions being in place at the schools. SLCs create such conditions in large comprehensive high schools.

The report is organized into four sections. The first section reviews the research on SLCs, ninth-grade transitions, and instructing ELLs, in order to elucidate the need for convergence of research on these three topics (see figure 1). In the policy realm, these topics exist in separate spheres. But the reality for educators working in schools is not nearly so distinct. A single student can easily be part of all three of these domains. School districts and policymakers who examine the intersection of these research areas will be able to provide more informed guidance to the educational practitioners serving

the growing number of ELLs who will enter their ninth-grade year as a student in an SLC high school.

**Figure 1: The Convergence of Research Addressing Ninth-Grade ELLs**



The second section provides selected demographic characteristics of the schools that participated in this research. The third section includes a discussion of survey research results. In this section, the current practices of a handful of schools are examined to highlight ways in which the schools actively seek to support middle-to-high school transitions for ELLs in SLCs. Finally, the fourth section discusses implications and recommendations for future research in this area.

## Review of the Literature: SLCs

### Overview

The SLCs movement has taken hold in response to evidence that large, comprehensive high schools do not effectively meet the needs of all students. In particular, urban districts with high minority and low-income student populations have turned to SLCs as a means of closing the achievement gap and preventing students from leaving school without a diploma. The dropout problem is particularly high among ELL learners. Nationally, ELL students have the second highest dropout rate. High dropout rates among ELLs (and other minority students) have profoundly negative economic and social consequences for the individual students and the Nation as a whole.

In the wake of increased campus violence in the late 1990s, small schools were also recognized for their potential to create safer, more secure school environments. An infusion of outside funding—in particular, the financial commitment of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2000 and the U.S. Department of Education’s (ED) Small

Learning Communities (SLC) Program—have fertilized a spurt in the growth of SLCs over the past 10 years.

SLCs have frequently been created by disassembling large high schools and reconfiguring them into academies organized around student interests. Structurally, SLCs differ from comprehensive high schools in that they serve a much smaller student population: They are intended to comprise between 200 and 400 students (Cotton, 2001). This simple structural reduction in school size facilitates one-to-one contact between adolescents and adults and forges relationships, which are often reinforced through an advisory program (Wasley and Lear, 2001). Students (and teachers) in smaller environments can come to know and care about one another in a way that is difficult to achieve in large schools (Cotton, 2001). This concept of personalization has been found in numerous research studies to be a key predictor of school retention and success for many students.

The organizational structure of SLCs may be less rigid than in traditional comprehensive high schools. Administrators and teachers may have shared roles in decisionmaking and have more autonomy over budget, curriculum, and program offerings in SLCs.

The most successful SLCs pair their structural changes with the adoption of a more focused, data-driven instructional plan. “Educators have tended to approach SLCs and small schools as merely structural changes. However, when a strong instructional vision drives reorganization, district and school staffs see restructuring itself as only one dimension of the reforms they need to pursue to institute high school best practice” (Oxley and Luers, 2010).

When instructional change is included, there can be an overlap with the creation of professional learning communities (PLCs), in which teachers collaboratively use data to create instructional goals unique to their student populations (Dufour, 2003). Teachers in SLCs using a PLC model have a common planning period and share the same small group of students, whom they closely monitor in order to offer an increasingly targeted responsiveness to individual student needs.

SLCs also tend to be organized around instructional themes that reflect community interests. For example, students may choose to be part of a technical academy, an environmental science academy, a business leadership program, or an international academy. Community organizations and businesses are often able to support these programs through internships or consultation.

## **Research Findings**

Recent research on the results of the implementation of smaller high schools is beginning to show quantitatively measurable success as students enrolled in SLCs graduate and begin to move into the workforce and postsecondary institutions. A June 2010 report by MDRC, a social policy research organization, offers an unprecedented

analysis of large-scale district-level implementation of SLCs. The report tracked students in New York City and compared results among eighth-grade students who enrolled in 105 “small schools of choice” (SSC) and their peers who enrolled in comprehensive high schools.

Study results showed that by the end of their first year of high school, 58.5 percent of students enrolled in SSCs were on track to graduate in 4 years, as compared with 48.5 percent of their non-SSC counterparts. This 10 percent improvement in student outcomes during the freshman year is theorized to portend a corresponding future uptick in graduation rates. The study found that New York City SSCs increased overall graduation rates by 6.8 percentage points, from 61.9 percent for students who attended schools other than SSCs to 68.7 percent for SSC enrollees (Bloom et al., 2010). Within the vast New York City school system, a 6.8 percent rise in graduation rates represents improvement in the lives of thousands upon thousands of students who otherwise may never have earned a high school diploma.

These results substantiate the notion that SLCs improve outcomes for students. A 2006 report, also by MDRC, evaluated three widely used high school reform initiatives: Career Academies, First Things First, and Talent Development. The evaluations found that “the participating schools that enacted structural changes and reformed their instructional practices were able to increase students’ feeling of connectedness and were able to resolve many of the learning gaps and credit deficiencies for ninth-grade students with low academic skills.”

Although the 2010 MDRC report offers arguably the largest and most comprehensive quantitative analysis of SLCs conducted to date, the study does not provide much detail on ELLs. The only data presented on ELLs showed that the New York SSCs enrolled 5 percent fewer ELLs than their comprehensive high school counterparts. The New York SSCs have an overall ELL enrollment of 7.9 percent, compared with 12.9 percent enrollment in comprehensive schools (Bloom et al., 2010). This disparity in enrollment data raises an important question: Do barriers exist that lead thousands fewer ELLs to enroll in New York’s small high schools than in comprehensive high schools?

Community leaders in New York posed this same question in 2006. A report by The New York Immigration Coalition and Advocates for Children of New York speaks to the enrollment gap between ELLs and their English-proficient peers (New York Immigration Coalition and Advocates for Children of New York, 2006). The report, which conducted surveys and analyzed district enrollment data, found that ELLs were not given full and equitable access to small schools in New York. According to this report, during early implementation of the small schools initiative, more than half of the small schools had less than 5 percent of their total student population who were ELLs. Small schools in New York were permitted to exclude ELLs during their first 2 years of operation, and many of the new small schools reported that they did not offer ESOL or bilingual instruction. The report also indicated small schools were disproportionately located in

non-immigrant communities, thus creating a geographic barrier to enrollment. Although the report acknowledged the positive work of New York’s nine International Schools, which predominately serve ELLs, it expressed concern that access to the hundreds of other small school programs was not equitable.

A qualitative study conducted in 2001 by the Education Alliance at Brown University also spotlighted implementation problems with serving ELLs in SLCs. This study examined five Boston-area high schools that restructured into SLCs. Interviews with educators at these schools illustrated the challenges of working with ELLs in SLCs, particularly in the context of bilingual education. At the five schools studied, approximately one-third of the student population consisted of ELLs or students who lived in a home in which English was not the first language. A key finding in this study stated, “As schools have formed more SLCs, bilingual programs within those schools have struggled to maintain basic services to bilingual students and to make sure that there is equitable access to upper-grade pathways” (Allen et al., 2001).

## **Ninth-Grade Transitions**

Students who have difficulty adapting to the high school environment during the ninth-grade year are at a much higher risk of dropping out than students who effectively navigate this transition. As young people matriculate into high schools that are much larger and less supportive than middle schools, they can easily get lost in the crowd. In comprehensive schools with large class sizes and seven-period days, a high school teacher may see hundreds of students daily. High school teachers generally expect more independence and self-direction from students than do middle school teachers. High school curricula and assessment-driven pacing guides that encourage teachers to push forward with rigorous instruction can clash with the actual needs of ninth-grade students who enter high school with poor literacy, math, and study skills. Teachers and administrators in high schools often have differing expectations of behavior and discipline than do middle school faculty. It can be challenging for even the most caring adults working in large comprehensive high schools to form the types of positive relationships necessary to keep at-risk ninth-graders engaged in school life (Quint, 2006).

Almost all students experience drops in grades and attendance in the ninth grade (Baldwin et al., 2009). High schools reflect this difficulty with the middle-to-high school transition in their enrollment figures. It is not uncommon for high schools to have disproportionately larger numbers of ninth-grade students, due to significant numbers of ninth-grade repeaters. More students fail ninth grade than any other grade, creating what is known as the “ninth-grade bulge” (Williams and Richman, 2007). By the time a young person has failed ninth grade twice, they are usually 16 years old—old enough to legally stop attending school.

Ninth-grade retention has become a fairly reliable predictor of dropout risk, particularly in high-poverty schools. Meanwhile, students who make a successful transition into high school are more likely to earn a diploma than their peers who fail ninth grade. The Consortium on Chicago School Research found that high school students who have earned at least 10 credits and are failing no more than one core subject at the end of grade 9 are 3.5 times more likely to graduate in 4 years than are other students (Bloom et al., 2010).

Programs that support incoming freshman as they transition to high school are an important pillar in a school's dropout reduction strategy. These programs can take many forms. Some ninth-grade transitional programs are based at the middle school level and focus on preparation for high school. Other programs are based at the high school and involve outreach and orientations to rising ninth-graders and follow-up support structures throughout the ninth grade. Many schools that have moved to a SLC model include freshman academies or ninth-grade houses, which prepare students to enter a program of their choice in the 10th grade. Summer bridge programs are designed to enhance a student's ability to succeed during freshman year by recruiting students into a summer program that offers academic remediation, social support, and orientation activities (The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2009).

The National Middle School Association (Smith, 2006) explains that the concept of a transition period should start in the middle of eighth grade and span the entire ninth-grade year. Ideally, the middle and high schools should collaborate to communicate a shared vision and expectations for transitioning students. Teachers and administrators need to work to keep parents involved in their child's education and school activities during the middle school years so that they are comfortable "coming to school" and confident that their involvement makes a difference in their child's academic success (Mizelle and Irvin, 2000).

The existing body of research on the ninth-grade transition makes almost no reference to ELLs. Yet all of the issues that can make ninth grade difficult for non-ELLs would have a compounding effect on ELLs because they have limited access to the language of instruction and lack familiarity with the culture of U.S. high schools. For ELLs who arrive in the United States in the later elementary or middle school years, the transition to high school would naturally be a daunting one. Almost as soon as they get used to one school, they would be pushed into the next.

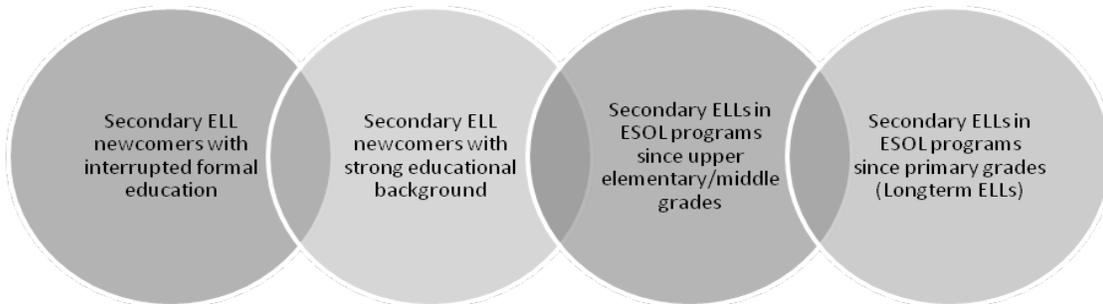
## Secondary ELLs

### Student Characteristics

The population of ELL students has swelled in the United States in recent years. Between 1979 and 2008, the number of school-age children who spoke a language other than English at home increased from 3.8 million to 10.9 million, or from 9 to 21

percent of the population in this age range (NCES , 2010). The changing demographics, coupled with the 2001 No Child Left Behind requirement that student Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data be disaggregated into an ELL subgroup has brought a tide of new awareness among educational professionals about the diverse instructional needs of ELLs. Figure 2 shows four common categories representing the diversity in ELL students' educational backgrounds.

**Figure 2: Diversity in ELL Students' Educational Backgrounds**



ELLs in secondary schools represent an extremely wide spectrum of instructional need. The needs of secondary ELLs often vary in relation to their schooling in the United States as well as wide-ranging levels of literacy skills in both languages, and previous schooling in their native country (The National High School Center, 2009). At one end of the secondary ESOL spectrum are adolescent newcomer students with interrupted formal education (SIFE). These young people require a cadre of support services to help them navigate a new cultural landscape and develop linguistic and academic competence.

Newcomers with interrupted education who lack basic skills in their home language require intensive, specialized literacy instruction—the type of instruction rarely available in a traditional high school setting (Short and Fitzsimmons, 2007). A bit farther along the spectrum are adolescent newcomers who are well-educated in their home language. Although they may sit side by side in beginner English language development (ELD) classes with SIFE students, newcomer adolescents with formal education are adept at applying their reading skills and background knowledge from their home language. Their approach to learning English is often different from that of their SIFE peers. Their ability to transfer literacy skills across languages can mean they will tend to rely more on written instruction and seek out grammar rules to help them make sense of the new language. Once these students acquire an intermediate proficiency level in oral English, they often make rapid and impressive gains in English reading and writing proficiency. These students are able to apply background knowledge to their English schoolwork and generally do well when they transition into mainstream content classes.

Moving down the spectrum, there are adolescents who moved to the United States during their upper elementary or middle school years. These students often are

semiliterate in two languages. They may have partially mastered reading in their first language before being brought to the United States, where they had to start over again learning to read in a second language. Achieving proficiency in reading and in academic language comprehension can challenge these students, for whom oral English is often deceptively easy to master. Teachers who meet these students for the first time in high school often wonder why the students are in ESOL programs, until they drill down instructionally and discover the gaps in their academic vocabulary and reading ability.

Finally, at the farthest end of the spectrum are those born in the United States, who have been enrolled in U.S. schools since the primary grades, yet are unable to demonstrate the English proficiency levels needed to exit ESOL programs. These students are often labeled as “L-TELLS”—that is, long-term ELLs. In many circles, these students are also sadly called “ESOL lifers.” Most of these students have never had instruction in their first language, are orally fluent in both English and their first language, and yet are unable to make the jump in reading and writing proficiency needed to be reclassified as English proficient.

Depending on the school’s ESOL program (or bilingual) structure, teachers may find students from all ends of this spectrum in the same classroom. Skilled ESOL teachers know how to differentiate instruction to meet the widely varying needs of all secondary ELLs in the spectrum. But this work is not easy. The goal is not to move ELLs on the spectrum, but rather to know how each student’s unique background affects his or her instructional needs, and to meet that student with tailored secondary-level instruction.

## **Instructional Models and Programs for ELLs**

Flexible programming options at the secondary level are crucial to creating learning environments that are responsive to and foster achievement for ELLs at all points on the ESOL spectrum. Table 1 gives an overview of the most widely used instructional models for ELLs.

SLCs are a structural element designed to create a more personalized learning environment. The three instructional approaches identified above do not have different implications for SLCs; however, there are different implications for the ELL students with respect to accessing subject matter instruction. This is particularly the case with an ESOL approach that does not integrate subject matter content with language development.

- In an SLC specifically designed for ELLs, in which content-based ESOL is the delivery mode, students could lag behind in acquisition of rigorous content because they do not get access to challenging content until they have reached a more advanced level of English language proficiency. This would be the case even with primary language support.

- Conversely, in SLCs in which the delivery of English language instruction is done through a sheltered or bilingual approach, the student is not likely to lag behind in acquisition of content.

Assuming that the sheltered approach is taught as recommended by the experts (Scarcella, 2003), the content and language are taught together in the same classroom, by the same teacher or through a coteaching model in which the ESOL and content

**Table 1: Commonly Used Instructional Models for ELLs**

|                                | <b>Sheltered Content Instruction</b>  | <b>English Language Development</b>  | <b>Bilingual Education</b>  |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>Program Variations</b>      | Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)<br><br>Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)   | English for Speakers of Other Languages<br><br>Content-Based ESOL  | Dual Language Immersion<br><br>Transitional Bilingual   |
| <b>Program Characteristics</b> | Content courses are taught using grade-level content standards with integrated language support.<br><br>Students are grouped into courses as homogeneous groups of ELLs or as mixed groups of ELLs and non-ELLs.<br><br>Vocabulary and language instruction are specific to content.<br><br>Courses are usually taught by a content certified teacher with training in sheltered instruction. | English language courses are taught using English language development standards.<br><br>Only ELLs are enrolled in these courses.<br><br>General English language and vocabulary skills are taught, with some integration of content material.<br><br>Courses are taught by an ESOL teacher. | Courses are taught in two languages.<br><br>Transitional bilingual programs aim to move students toward English proficiency, while offering some instruction in the home language.<br><br>Dual language programs aim to give ELLs and non-ELLs full proficiency in English and another language.<br><br>Instruction in both languages continues throughout the duration of the program (K–12).<br><br>Courses are generally taught by bilingual certified teachers. |

teacher collaboratively plan. Consequently, there is no separation in terms of access to grade-level content instruction. In a bilingual SLC, the student is learning grade-level content in the home language coupled with English language instruction.

A major consideration for schools in planning instructional services to ELLs in the context of an SLC is the cost of the staffing and instructional materials involved in the

various instructional approaches. From a staffing perspective, the sheltered approach and the bilingual approach are generally more expensive because the staff members have specialized training beyond their basic teaching credentials. Schools that provide primary language support in the sheltered content and content-based ESOL models would also incur additional staffing costs. For learning communities with staff advisors, additional bilingual personnel should enhance the sense of “connectedness” of the students because they presumably have access to adults with whom they can communicate, and those adults may have an understanding of the students’ cultural background. In addition, these advisors can function as an advocate for the ELL students. However, advisors can be incorporated into the SLC approach for ELLs independent of the instructional delivery model.

Most of the resources available on how to create instructional programs that support secondary ELLs focus on students who are on the two opposite ends of the ESOL spectrum: newcomers and L-TELLs.

A good deal of work has been done toward identifying best practices for newcomer programs. These programs have been developed primarily for the recently arrived immigrant student. The Center for Applied Linguistics (among others) has generated guidance to school districts looking to create newcomer centers. “Newcomer programs have been established to bridge the gap between newcomers’ needs and regular language support programs. The objective of these programs is to develop students’ English language skills, help them acculturate to U.S. schools, and make them aware of educational expectations and opportunities. Newcomer programs are a fairly recent phenomenon and are growing across the United States” (Short and Boyson, 2003). Newcomer centers dovetail nicely with SLCs and have been established in many high schools that have restructured using an SLC model. Newcomer centers are specifically designed to meet the needs of ELLs at the left side of the spectrum: recent immigrants with varying levels of prior educational experience. Newcomer programs help to smooth transitions for recently arrived immigrant students and are quite helpful in assisting students with navigating their first year in the American high school setting.

However, newcomer programs do not provide all the services that ELL students need. The most rapidly growing group of adolescent ELLs are not immigrants; rather, they are second- and third-generation U.S.-born students whose home language is not English. “Fifty-seven percent of LEP [limited English proficient] adolescents nationwide are U.S. born. Up to 27 percent of all LEP adolescents are members of the second generation, and 30 percent are third generation” (Batalova et al., 2007). These students may sometimes reach plateaus in their language learning in the early grades, reaching a point of communicative competence at which they understand and can be understood by native speakers. However, without proper, targeted instruction in academic language, these students run a high risk of becoming “fossilized” in their language development and never achieving the level of English proficiency necessary for academic success at the secondary level. After 10 years in the California school system,

the likelihood that an ELL will be reclassified as “fluent English proficient” is estimated to be less than 40 percent (The National High School Center, 2009). Instructional models that push orally fluent ELLs to strengthen and refine their language skills to become communicatively competent in the academic realm are extremely important for moving L-TELLs into full English proficiency.

The work of researchers Scarcella and Kinsella has been instrumental in identification of the key elements needed to meet the ELD needs of ELLs. Their research has focused on the need for explicit instruction in academic language and academic vocabulary. Both have called for instructional programs that deliberately address systematic academic language and vocabulary development in the classroom. “All too often, the teacher is the only individual in the classroom who uses actual academic language, while students are allowed to passively listen or use casual, daily vernacular . . . we must structure daily classroom contexts so that all students are accountable for using newly introduced terminology in their speaking and writing” (Feldman and Kinsella, 2005).

Scarcella, who works with ELLs in the postsecondary context, advocates intensive study of academic English at the secondary level. “Motivating English learners to study academic English is challenging, particularly when the students have experienced past failure or feel that learning it reduces their reputation among their peers. Teachers can motivate their English learners by helping them achieve success in ELD and by teaching them the importance of academic English in gaining high-paying jobs, getting admitted to college, learning valuable life skills, and gaining access to knowledge” (Scarcella, 2003). Secondary ELLs who are able to independently differentiate between social and academic language registers, who are able to apply vocabulary learning strategies, and who understand and appropriately use grammatical rules are empowered to succeed academically at levels on par with native English speaking students. Schools that want to avoid having their ELLs “fossilize” into L-TELLs must put academic language and vocabulary instruction at the center of their secondary language development programs.

Moreover, teachers need to be taught to use this approach. It cannot be assumed that teachers are skilled in working with ELL students at the secondary level. Fortunately, several professional development models are now in place that strengthen teachers’ competence to work with ELLs in the realm of language and subject matter instruction. The following models have embedded the core notion of academic ELD along with content English.

### **Expediting Comprehension for English Language Learners Model**

Expediting Comprehension for English Language Learners (ExC-ELL) is a promising new professional development model for secondary content teachers. ExC-ELL gives secondary content teachers a framework for integrating the delivering of literacy and language instruction to ELLs in courses such as science, math, and social studies.

Evaluations of the ExC-ELL model show promising results for increased teacher knowledge, improved instruction, and higher student achievement. A Johns Hopkins study of ExC-ELL compared student outcomes in schools using the ExC-ELL model with those in schools with similar populations not using ExC-ELL. Results suggest that the ExC-ELL model prepares content teachers to accelerate language and literacy for those ELLs who read below grade level and who need extensive vocabulary development. One school using the ExC-ELL professional development model was recognized 2 years in a row for achieving the greatest gains for ELLs among all 100-plus middle schools in New York City (Calderon, 2010).

Extensive explicit vocabulary instruction became the basis of ELL academic success in the participating schools. Teachers reported that teaching rich vocabulary and reading integrated into math, science, and social studies helped all pupils perform better.

One piece of the ExC-ELL professional development model is a curriculum for SIFE and newcomer ELLs called Reading Instructional Goals for Older Readers (RIGOR). RIGOR has also been used to support special education ELLs. The RIGOR curriculum tested in New York schools has proven to be exceptionally promising for middle school ELLs with low literacy skills (Calderon, 2010).

### **Quality Teaching for English Learners Model**

Another model in use in several large school districts is the Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) model developed by Aida Walqui and her team at the nonprofit WestEd. The program focuses on building the capacity of teachers to work more effectively with ELLs at the middle and high school levels by deepening their understanding of academic language and their skill in using effective instructional methodologies. The effort is directed at both content and ELL teachers. In addition, the model focuses on the “whole school” based on the premise that all teachers in a school need to ensure that ELLs have access to rigorous academic content (Zehr, 2010).

A report on the implementation of this model at Lanier High School in Austin, Texas, noted that over a 2-year period of implementation, the pass rate of both ELLs and non-ELLs on the Texas statewide assessment increased across subject areas. The approach has also been used in New York City, where teacher evaluation results show positive outcomes regarding changes in teacher attitude about student learning and their satisfaction with QTEL’s presentations and professional development tools (WestEd, 2010).

### **Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Model**

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is an instructional model that is effective for ELLs across the spectrum but is particularly suited for L-TELLs. The SIOP model is a research-based and validated instructional model that consists of eight interrelated components. SIOP uses instructional strategies connected to these eight components to show classroom teachers how to design and deliver lessons that attend

to the academic and linguistic needs of English learners (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2009).

The SIOP model gives teachers pragmatic techniques that provide opportunities for students to practice English language skills as they interact about content. The SIOP model helps mainstream classroom teachers become partners with ESOL teachers by showing teachers ways to create classroom environments that meet the academic language needs of ELLs across the spectrum without reducing the rigor of content instruction.

## Putting the Pieces Together

The research on ninth-grade transitions shows promising practices for helping students adapt to high school. The research on secondary ELLs provides instructional methods and programs that will unlock language and help ELLs to thrive. SLCs have been shown to significantly reduce dropout rates. There are solutions to the “high school problem” that are being enacted in schools across the country.

Still, these solutions do not appear to be systematically inclusive of one of our nation’s most at-risk youth populations: secondary ELLs. Consider that the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed that only 4 percent of eighth-grade ELLs scored at or above the proficient level in reading. In math, only 11 percent of eighth-grade ELLs received a proficient score (Francis et al., 2006). It seems unlikely that many of the 96 percent of eighth-graders who were not proficient in reading in 2005 now hold a high school diploma in 2010.

Perhaps no group stands more to benefit from high-quality high school programs than ninth-grade ELLs. Whether it is through SLCs, ninth-grade transitional programs, or both, the key to improving the education of secondary ELLs lies in identifying and funding high-quality programs that bridge the gap from middle to high school for the growing number of L-TELLs.

## The Schools

The unit of analysis of this study is the school. Thirteen high schools and two middle schools received a request to respond to an online survey. This was a sample of schools recommended by ED as possible innovators in serving ELL students. A total of eight schools responded, representing three states and six school districts. One of the eight schools was a middle school.<sup>1</sup> The survey contains 26 questions that elicited responses regarding the structure of the schools’ SLC program, ELL-specific practices, ninth-grade interventions, community or parent engagement, and professional development. In

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<sup>1</sup> There was only one middle school responding, and consequently there was no point of comparison. Therefore, the middle school responses were not included in this analysis.

addition, staff were asked to define the meaning of “program success” in the context of their program. Depending on the school, respondents were one of the following: the principal, assistant principal, SLC coordinator, or program coordinator. Six of the eight school surveys were completed by an assistant principal.

All of the schools in the sample are fairly large (more than 1,000 students) in terms of student enrollment. The percentage of students who come from low-income households is more than 50 percent for all of the schools, with an ELL student enrollment ranging from 5 percent to 23 percent. In all cases (except the middle school), the graduation rate for ELLs was significantly lower than that of “all students.” Specifically, the gap between ELLs and “all students” ranged from 21 percent to 60 percent for five of seven schools. One high school had a 5 percent gap between ELL and all students, while another did not provide the graduation rate for ELL students.<sup>2</sup>

Six of the seven high schools did not make adequate yearly progress for school year 2008–2009. The two schools that did meet the adequate yearly progress standard had very different ELL enrollment profiles. One is located in a suburb of a major urban school district in the northeast region of the country; its ELL enrollment was 5 percent. The other high school is located in a major north central urban school system, and its ELL student enrollment was 15 percent.

A limitation of this study is the inadequate responses provided by the schools responding to the survey. Specifically, respondents skipped questions, provided incomplete answers, or did not provide a detailed description of their policies and practices. In addition, caution needs to be exercised regarding generalizations about practices within these schools given the total number of schools in the sample. Nonetheless, authors were able to make some general observations across the schools and point to examples of promising school-level efforts.

## Research Findings

### Restructuring Organizational Features

All of the schools are operating within an SLC context. They have restructured to create SLCs by establishing houses (two schools), academies (four schools), or magnet programs (two schools). What does this mean in terms of educating a secondary school ELL?

The four schools that have reorganized into academies have created one or more academies specifically for ELL students. They organized instruction around a career or instructional theme *and* the English language proficiency level of the students. Schools provide content instruction in English using various instructional approaches that

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<sup>2</sup> The middle school would not have reported graduation rates.

mediate the student's access to the content. This is coupled with support in the native language of the student.

Although ELD and career themes are core factors in organizing the SLCs, only two of the six schools using some form of SLC described how they integrate the SLC concept with services to ELLs. The others did not address the question or noted that ELLs have access to the SLCs *after* reaching an advanced level of ELD. The following are descriptions of approaches used in two high schools with well-developed delivery systems. Both of these schools are located in New York State.

*The Public Service SLC accommodates ELL bilingual Spanish students; the Biz Tek SLCs accommodate all ELLs that are not enrolled in a bilingual program; the Pre-Med SLC accommodates recently proficient and advanced ELLs. The Newcomers SLC accommodates ELLs that have recently arrived in the USA for a year English immersion program.*

*Our High School created an ELL Academy to accommodate the academic needs of the beginning and intermediate ELL students. There is an ELL Leadership team comprised of the AP ESL, the ELL lead teacher, the ELL compliance coordinator, 3 guidance counselors, ESL teachers and content area teachers. They work as a team to plan, facilitate, and evaluate all services provided to the ELL student population. Incoming advanced ESL students enter the Ninth Grade Academy, and advanced ESL students enter the upper career academies: arts, social sciences, business, and sports management. All academies have leadership teams as outlined for the ELL Academy. In all academies, there is common planning time for teachers. They meet twice a week for 45 minutes and they tutor their students twice a week for 45 minutes.*

In the first school, there is a distinction between those students receiving bilingual services and those that do not. The school does align services to subgroups of ELLs; nonetheless, several questions surfaced during the review. Do newcomer students receive any content instruction while in the Newcomer Academy? And do Spanish-speaking students in the Public Service SLC have access to a Pre-Med SLC as they move up in grade?

The second school does not offer bilingual instruction; however, the delivery of ESOL and content instruction seems to be sequenced in a manner that ensures a smooth transition from one level to the next. In addition, in this delivery model, newly arrived students are placed in SLCs specifically designed for recent arrivals, whereas the rest are placed in academies based on their level of ELP. It is unclear how long students remain in the "newly arrived" academy. Moreover, the more advanced ELLs appear to have greater options in the selection of career-themed SLCs.

## **Instructional Support**

Previous discussion in this paper has focused on structural changes that schools have undertaken to serve ELLs in the context of SLC. In this section, we explore additional questions: How is the instruction organized, and how do schools build the capacity of teachers to deliver such instruction?

The challenge for the high schools is to deliver a core academic program to ELLs that entails ELD and concurrently provides supports to mitigate the potential loss of students during the 10th grade. With the exception of one school in the state of Illinois, all high schools surveyed presented a plan for delivery of ESOL and content instruction to ELLs. Consistent with research in English language acquisition, all schools are delivering content-based English language instruction. Specifically, the ELD instruction is not taught devoid of content. Moreover, the English language instruction is intense, particularly at the beginning levels. Beginning ELLs are placed in ESOL classes for longer periods of time during the day. In addition, this instruction is supplemented with additional English language support after school hours and during the weekends. Since ELLs in secondary schools have greater time pressures than non-ELLs, it is entirely appropriate for schools to accelerate ELD. But they also need to ensure that students progress in the content areas. The most extensive description of instructional programming to ELLs was provided by one high school in the state of New York (see table 2).

**Table 2: Example of High School ELL Programming**

| <b>ELL Ninth-Grade Instructional Program</b>  | <b>Language of Instruction</b>  | <b>Instructional Strategies</b>   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Our ESL program is organized to serve a variety of students from varied languages and cultures. Based on the results of the NYSESLAT, LAB-R or the Spanish version of LAB, and teachers' recommendations, ninth graders are placed in the appropriate levels of instruction. Services for ELL students are provided by the ESL/Foreign Languages Department across the SLCs where LEPs are assigned.</p> <p>In accordance with New York State Education Department regulations, our "Advanced" students receive instruction in the English department. Our bilingual program entails math, social studies, and science, with instruction given primarily in Spanish. English is introduced gradually according to the language allocation policy designated for our program.</p> | <p>English is the language of instruction in the ESL classes. Teachers use ESL methodology and instructional strategies in assisting students to achieve the state-designated level of English proficiency for their level. In our Transitional Bilingual Program, Spanish is the language of instruction, with English introduced progressively according to the language allocation guidelines as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning level: 60 percent Spanish/40 percent English</li> <li>• Intermediate level: 50 percent Spanish/50 percent English</li> <li>• Advanced level: 25 percent Spanish/75 percent English</li> </ul> | <p>A variety of strategies is used by our staff, including developmental lessons, reader response, cooperative learning groups, read aloud, shared reading, interactive reading, phonemic awareness, small group instruction, total physical response, prior knowledge and making predictions activities, use of graphic organizers, sequencing and summarizing, compare and contrast, scaffolding, schema building/metacognition, as well as multicultural activities.</p> <p>Other activities include oral book reports, writing biographies, conducting interviews and writing reports, and practice for the English Regents. Teachers always incorporate in each lesson the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.</p> |

This particular school seems to have a well-planned language development program. Most schools deliver subject matter instruction through sheltered content approaches such as SIOP or Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) or in the native language (not typical). Schools that do not offer content instruction in the native language provide supports in the native language by means of bilingual aides; however, this was not an option available to students in all of the high schools. Other instructional supports identified by the schools consisted of tutoring in the native language (or in English), after-school classes, Saturday school, acting classes, and group excursions to cultural venues of the city. Creating opportunities for ELL adolescents to interact with their peers in nonacademic setting is important, because peers serve as language models. Experts (Scarcella, 2006) assert that people acquire the language of those with whom they associate. Thus, these school-initiated opportunities are important attempts by the schools to enhance ELLs' English language acquisition.

Not all of the sampled schools have developed appropriate and flexible program options for ELL students. For example, one school with a low ELL enrollment (5 percent)<sup>3</sup> reported that it accommodates ELLs by providing services such as after-school test preparation classes, translators during administration of assessments (when appropriate), mentoring for college readiness, and service learning opportunities. Another school in a large Midwestern city noted that they provide tutoring in native language and study skills support. This school did address the question of ELD development or content instruction for ELLs. Although these services fulfill areas of needed ELL programming, they do not attend to issues of language development and access to core content. This is particularly the case for the school located in the Midwest.<sup>4</sup>

### **Professional Development**

Teachers in the schools surveyed participate in professional development efforts focusing on language development or sheltered content, consistent with the most often used instructional delivery approach. These methodologies are directed to both ESOL and content area teachers.

In addition to state-mandated certification (Cross Cultural Language and Academic Development), teachers in the two California high schools are trained in SDAIE and SIOP sheltering techniques. Similarly, the schools located in New York provide training in the use of these approaches. The QTEL professional development model was mentioned by more than one of the New York State schools. Finally, teachers across schools participate in professional development designed to improve their general teaching practices such as differentiated instruction and strengthening literacy development.

## **Transitions**

### **Middle to High School and During the Ninth Grade**

Although the delivery of instructional services is the essential task of schools, it is important to identify other supports that increase the likelihood of ELL student success in secondary schools.

Creating programmatic linkages that facilitate the transition between the eighth grade (middle school) and the ninth grade (high school) is important because it can ease the shift for the adolescent learner at a phase of development when they are emotionally and psychologically vulnerable (Curran-Nield, 2009). The following discussion addresses the issue of supports at the middle school and during the ninth grade in high school.

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<sup>3</sup> Total enrollment in this school was 1,579 for school year 2008–2009.

<sup>4</sup> Total enrollment in this school was 1,976 for school year 2007–2008.

Five of seven high schools have a relationship with the feeder middle schools that range from the exchange of administrative records to more meaningful (programmatic) coordination. In addition to the exchange of records, middle and high schools staffs collaborate in the planning and convening of events such as presentations to the parents of the incoming high school freshmen, meetings with eighth-grade students during the school year, and summer orientation programs that introduce students to the school policies and course of studies. All of these activities are consistent with best practices. However, with the exception of three of the high schools, not much customization seems to have taken place. Moreover, the contact with the middle schools is inconsistent for most of the schools. The schools that appear to be more attuned to the needs of ELLs employ the following practices: convene summer transitional programs for eighth-grade ELLs; hold Saturday and summer programs for students with interrupted schooling; and conduct classroom observations to ensure alignment between the eighth- and ninth-grade curriculum.

## **Ninth Grade**

Setting behavior expectations for ninth-grade students is important because they do not know the behavioral boundaries of the high school setting (Quint, 2006). In addition, many ELL and at-risk students lack an understanding of the study habits and behaviors that lead to academic success.

In the sampled schools, conversation with entering ELL ninth graders starts at the middle school level and is continued into the ninth-grade level in various ways. Behavior expectations are communicated during freshman orientation, in monthly publications sent to the students' home, by classroom teachers, in student handbooks, and during school assemblies. In a few of the schools, the correspondence is translated into the students' home language.

## **Supporting Struggling Students**

But setting expectations is not sufficient. To support struggling students, avoid retention of ELL students in the ninth grade, and stem the potential loss of students in 10th grade, schools use several strategies. The intensity of support varies across schools, but there are similarities in the particular actions undertaken at the school level. These include monitoring student attendance and performance on a monthly basis; meeting with parents and students once there are signs of potential problems; and providing tutoring, after-school classes, native language clubs, computer labs, and Saturday programs. In addition, students are closely monitored by their advisory teachers. A few of the practices used in the sampled schools merit particular attention. A school in California uses a "Zeros Aren't Permitted" (ZAP) program, which enables teachers to "ZAP" students that are falling behind or in need of extra help. Students are "placed in the ZAP-ing teachers' classes to get extra assistance." Another school conducts extensive analysis of student assessment results, and on the basis of the results recommends ELL students to supplemental instructional programs. In this school, materials from the

students' native language are used to support content instruction. There is also use of software programs to enhance the students' ELD.

To improve student performance on the state assessments, one school provides "an accelerated English program, a three-term algebra class, and a two-term life science class prior to administration of the regents Living Environment class." Giving ELLs a longer period of time in which to complete required courses makes it easier for students to meet the high school credit requirements. It is difficult for ELLs at the high school level to meet course requirements within the same time frame allowed for non-ELLs. This flexibility enhances the likelihood of student success.

For students that are far behind in accumulation of high school credits, some schools offer catch-up options. There are evening high school programs, a senior academy to support seniors that need credits to graduate, and a twilight program that offers high school credit recovery classes. Finally, to help ELL students adjust to the new culture and school, one school has an on-site social worker who works with the students and their families.

### **Mentoring and Independent Study Skills**

Several strategies have been identified in the research literature as being effective in helping to keep ELL students "connected" and in encouraging the development of self-discipline.

In the high schools in this study, students are offered mentoring support by peer mentors or adult mentors. Three of the six schools assign entering ELL ninth graders to junior or senior peer mentors who may speak the same language as the entering freshman. Student mentors can answer questions posed by the entering ninth grader, give helpful hints, and become a "buddy" to the students during the difficult transition to high school.

Developing independent study skills is one of many habits that are needed at the high school level, where students are expected to assume greater self-discipline and responsibility. Schools assist students in this area using several approaches: through individual work with students to demonstrate effective ways of studying and accessing knowledge; in readiness seminars that focus on study skills, time management, and note-taking; and through college readiness seminars. In a large northeast school, computer-based software programs (Destination Math-English and Spanish Version 2, and Achieve 3000 Reading Program) supplement the teaching of independent skills.

### **Addressing Subgroup Diversity**

As previously noted, the ELL student subgroup is highly diverse in terms of prior schooling and degree of proficiency in English. Because several subgroups of ELLs vary in terms of these two factors, educators need to consider the variation as they plan an

instructional program for ELLs. Students with interrupted schooling, older students, and L-TELLs are usually in need of special supports. By contrast, ELL adolescents with high levels of literacy in their native language and a strong educational background may not need the intensity of supports that should be offered to the three other subgroups.

None of the schools had an approach for systematically and appropriately addressing the needs of all subgroups. In addition, the instructional response does not seem to differ significantly across these subgroups. Nonetheless, schools with the highest ELL enrollment seem to be further along in addressing the needs of one or two of the subgroups identified in appendix 2. Students with interrupted schooling (i.e., SIFE) receive ELD instruction delivered via an SLC (NY State School # 2) or outside of the regular school schedule. Older students also receive intensive help in ELD and are offered evening classes. One school awards credits for classes taken in their home country, which can help students in meeting high school credit requirements. There is flexibility in scheduling of these supports for both SIFE students and the older ELL students at the lower level of the English-learning continuum. For example, a school in California has an “early-out” option for older students needing to work.

The high schools are least prepared to serve L-TELLs. Four of the high schools did not answer the question, and one provided a response that can be characterized as irresponsible. Nonetheless, the same school provides instruction in the native language and has in place various supports to assist struggling students (e.g., tutoring, adult classes, advisories, flexible scheduling).

## **Engaging Parents and Community Members**

Parents of ELLs are often unfamiliar with the American credit system and lack information on pathways to college. Lack of information can prevent parents from monitoring progress and supporting their children during the high school years. Consequently, engaging parents in matters bearing on the students’ academic success is of great consequence. Most schools’ efforts to engage parents in the life of the school were somewhat conventional. For example, parents were involved in orientation events during back-to-school nights, meetings with school academic counselors or teachers, and in reviews of schoolwide plans.

Nonetheless, there are examples of schools reaching out to parents often during the year and in more meaningful ways. Examples of such activities include meetings to discuss the school planning process, reviews of schoolwide data, development of school plans, and discussion of supports to be offered to ELL students. Moreover, parents are involved in activities designed to build their ability to work with their children at home. Such is the case in a high-risk school in California where parenting skills are taught in both English and Spanish. Two schools convene Saturday English literacy classes for parents of ELL students. The classes include topics such as supporting student achievement, learning about college entry, and learning about the range of services for

special needs students (i.e., special education). Finally, the broader community works with the high schools in facilitating service learning and internship experiences for ELL students.

## Challenges and Opportunities

In an attempt to inform the school reform community and ED, schools were asked to identify the challenges SLCs face as they attempt to serve ELL students. The number of schools participating in this research effort was small, but the challenges faced by the schools probably reflect those of other high schools that serve ELL students. The transition challenges for the high schools center on interfacing with the middle schools to reduce problems associated with placement of ELLs into the ninth grade, and managing the influx of ELLs late in the school year planning process. In addition, serving L-TELLs and engaging parents meaningfully is a challenge for some of the schools.

Conversely, the staffs were asked to identify factors that accounted for the success of their services to ELL students. These included the SLC (academy) structure; collaboration with peers; EL computer lab, support by the district in the area of reading and language development; and leadership vision. In addition, availability of additional resources for professional development has enabled one high school in New York State to deepen its professional development offering, which has strengthen the delivery of services to ELL students. Hopefully, these positive actions will pave the way for improvement in academic performance and in increasing the graduation rates for these students at these schools.

## Summary and Conclusion

This research has shown that in a number of high schools across the country, school staffs are attempting to serve ELL students and that some of the attempts are consistent with the research on best practices for secondary ELL students. Specifically, these include:

- the emphasis on intense ELD instruction to ensure that student catch up with their peers;
- the use of specialized instructional methodologies that build the capacity of content teachers to work with ELL students; and
- the flexible delivery and scheduling of academic and non-academic supports.

However, based on the responses, it is unclear how the ELL service delivery approach used in the schools is integrated with the academy or the SLCs. The exceptions were two schools in the State of New York that merit closer examination. Moreover, it does not appear that any one school is implementing a coherent service delivery plan. Instead, there are examples of isolated implementation of best practices in a given area, but not

across the school or for all ELL students. The schools with larger ELL student populations seem to be further ahead in planning programs that address both academic needs and social–emotional needs that adolescents bring to the school systems. However, there was one school that, despite significant enrollment of ELLs, is not yet putting forth deliberate efforts to appropriately serve these students.

## **Implications and Recommendations**

### **Recommendations for Districts**

- Strengthen and support the administrative units within the central office operations to ensure that they are reviewing services to ELLs.
- Identify necessary support to schools so that they can more appropriately deliver services to students.
- Strengthen collaboration between feeder middle schools and high schools to promote greater alignment in instructional services and, ultimately, improved services for ELL students.
- If feasible, direct resources to schools willing to innovate in the delivery of appropriate services to secondary ELLs in the context of SLCs.
- Support implementation of interventions that target L-TELLs in a few selected high schools; based on outcome data, support the intervention’s replication to multiple school sites.

### **Recommendations for Schools**

- Develop well-structured transitional programs that reinforce the importance of a high school diploma and support ELLs during the crucial first year of high school. This is particularly important for secondary SLCs with significant enrollment of ELLs speaking a single language.
- Continue efforts to engage parents meaningfully in the life of the schools. Successful strategies exist in various places that might be emulated with adaptations at the high school level.
- Focus on the challenge, across schools, of meeting the needs of L-TELLs. Schools might consider developing intensive academic instruction with a focus on vocabulary development. There is some research evidence that this approach is effective when working with L-TELL students.

### **Recommendations for Researchers**

- Conduct case study analysis of schools using various forms of sheltered instruction to assess how well these approaches facilitate acquisition of rigorous content.

These evaluations should be conducted by independent researchers, not those affiliated with the particular content shelter approach.

- Continue to capture lessons learned during attempts by schools to create SLCs for ELL students. In particular, researchers may want to focus on the two schools in the state of New York that seem to come closer to the delivery of a coherent instructional program aligned to the SLC approach.
- Probe more deeply into the nature of the barriers that prevent schools implementing SLCs from integrating the needs of ELLs. The outcome of this process should form the basis of a conversation among practitioners and researchers about actions to overcome the barriers.

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# Appendix 1: School Demographic Characteristics

**Table A-1: Participating Schools' Selected Demographic Characteristics  
AYP Ranking for School Year 2008–2009**

| School                          | Grade<br>s | Enrollments  |           | Graduation rates |      | % Economically Disadvantaged |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|------|------------------------------|
|                                 |            | All students | ELLs      | All students     | ELLs |                              |
| CA High School no #1<br>AYP--No | 9-12       | 2023         | 243 (12%) | 87%              | 34%  | 60%                          |
| NY State School #1<br>AYP--No   | 9-12       | 2342         | 382 (15%) | 48%              | 28%  | 50%                          |
| Illinois School #1<br>AYP --Yes | 9-12       | 1996         | 299 (15%) | 55%              | 35%  | 52%                          |
| NY State School #2<br>AYP --No  | 9-12       | 3287         | 427 (13%) | 62%              | 41%  | 62% <sup>5</sup>             |
| CA School #2<br>AYP --No        | 9-12       | 4104         | 944 (23%) | 80%              | 17%  | 75%                          |
| NY State #3<br>AYP--No          | 9-12       | 1128         | 226 (20%) | 47%              | 41%  | 79%                          |
| NY State # 4<br>School AYP Yes  | 9-12       | 1452         | 69 (5%)   | 61%              | N/A  | 87%                          |

<sup>5</sup> According to NYC Department of Education data this figures represents eligible for free and reduced price lunch.

## Appendix 2: Services to ELL Learners

Table A-2: High School Services to a Variety of ELL Learners

| School/% ELL                    | ELLs/Interrupted Schooling   | Beginner ELP and Older student/ Lacks Credits  | Long Term ELL  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>CA High School #1 (12%)</b>  | No Response  | No Clear response  | No Response  |
| <b>NY State School #1 (15%)</b> | Accelerated English, after school, tutoring, Saturday                      | Credits awarded for content classes in native country. Extend duration of some content classes | Accelerated English, after school, tutoring, Saturday                                |
| <b>IL School #1 (15%)</b>       | No Response  | No response  | No Response  |
| <b>NY State School #2 (13%)</b> | Supplemental evening support in the content areas and English SIFE Academy | No clear response  | No clear response  |
| <b>CA School #2 (23%)</b>       | Reading and math remediation as electives, tutoring,                       | Evening HS, credit recovery program, summer school, adult education , early-out                | Professional development on generation 1.5 <sup>6</sup> students and literacy skills |
| <b>NY State #3 (20%)</b>        | ESL or adult classes once student reaches 17                               | Once 17 student is referred to other programs in the city                                      | Continually testing until able to exit program                                       |
| <b>NY State # 4 (5%)</b>        | Saturday and summer instruction  | Student are closely monitored ---not clear nature of services                                  | No specific services identified....indicate that supports are provided               |

<sup>6</sup> Generation 1.5 refers to people that immigrate before or during their early teen years.

# Appendix 3: Online Survey for ELL Middle and High School Students

## Promising Practices for ELL Middle and High School Students

The purpose of this survey is to collect baseline information on school practices designed to support the successful transition of ELLs from middle to high school and through the end of the ninth-grade year. The survey should be completed by a school-level person who is most knowledgeable about services to ELL students, or a district-level official who coordinates services to ELLs at the middle and high school level and knows about school-level practices. **This is not an evaluation.** It is an attempt to capture practices that support improved outcomes for ELL students. Your participation is voluntary. There are no consequences for not participating. By responding to the survey and participating in a follow-up call, should it be necessary, you are giving your consent to participate in this study.

We appreciate your willingness to assist with this effort. Should you have any questions about this survey, please contact Dr. Julia Lara at [JuliaLar@gmail.com](mailto:JuliaLar@gmail.com), or Shelley Hartford at [Shartford@aacps.org](mailto:Shartford@aacps.org). Please note you do not have to complete the survey in one session—you can exit and return to it as time permits. Please complete the survey by July 12, 2010. Finally, please send (electronically) any documents that might help explain the answers provided below. Thank you.

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1. Name of the School: \_\_\_\_\_

District \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

High School, or  Middle School

2. Name and title of the person completing the survey:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

3. Is the school using a small schools strategy? If so, which one?

- Small Schools and School within a Schools
- Academies
- Magnet Schools
- Houses
- Other? Please explain:

4. Have there been any changes to your small schools strategies to accommodate ELLs? If so, explain below:

5. Explain how the middle school and high school work jointly to provide services which prepare eighth-grade ELLs for high school?

6. What structures are in place to support communication between middle and high schools during the articulation process in order to ensure continuity of services to the students/families as they transition to a new school environment?

7. What forms of summer programming and/or orientations specific to ELLs are used to prepare rising eighth graders for the high school setting?

8. Please provide an overview of services provided to ninth-grade ELL students.

9. What strategies does the school use to communicate expectations to incoming ninth-grade students regarding behavior?

10. What strategies are used to avoid retention of ELL students during the ninth-grade year? Please explain:

11. What forms of mentoring are available to support ELLs as they transition from the middle to high school setting? Please describe:

12. In what capacity does this school help students to build independent study skills?

13. Describe the model used for providing content-based language instruction to incoming students with beginner English proficiency.

14. How does the school address the specific academic language needs of long-term English language learners?

15. How does the school address education gap of middle or high school ELL students that have interrupted schooling?

16. How does the school tailor services to align state/district high school credit requirements with the actual instructional needs of adolescent ELLs, particularly ELLs entering high school with beginner proficiency levels?

17. How does the program accommodate adolescent ELLs who enter the workforce at an early age?

18. What interventions are provided to struggling ELLs? How do these interventions for ELLs differ from interventions available for non-ELLs?

19. How does the school engage community members in order to foster positive attitudes toward the high school among middle school ELLs entering high school?

20. How does the program work with parents to build their capacity for supporting their child in high school?

21. How are teachers prepared to implement SLC structures and support ELL students?  
Please describe:

22. Does the school have a guidance counselor dedicated to ELL students?

yes     no

23. What are the key challenges encountered by your school in attempting to serve ELLs during the eighth-to-ninth-grade transition?

24. What makes your program or services successful?

25. What else would you like us to know about your work with ELL students?

26. If yes, please enter a phone where we can reach you: \_\_\_\_\_

27. May we contact you via phone to clarify any questions? If so, list a phone number below.

Thanks so much for your time and feedback.