



# OLN Research Alliance



## Impact

Eliminating the predictability and disparities among student groups and increasing outcomes and success for every Oregon student

Leadership for equity

Practice informs research, research informs practice

## Activities

**Equity in High School Graduation**  
Develop early warning systems

**Discipline Disparity**  
Identify strategies for eliminating disparities across subgroups

**Alternative Education**  
Design framework for alternative education accountability

**Measuring Equitable Outcomes**  
Identify outcome indicators for equitable practice

## Benefits

Participate with colleagues to address common problems of practice

Use analytic tools and evidence to eliminate disparities among student groups

Establish common indicators for equity and improvement

## Definition

A research alliance is a group of interested parties who work together to learn more about specific educational concerns so that they can make sound decisions to improve outcomes. Research alliances define research questions, share data, conduct research, and use the results.

To join the OLN Research Alliance, contact:  
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*Membership in the OLN Research Alliance is free to OLN member organizations and is supported with federal funding from the Institute of Education Sciences. REL Northwest, the regional educational laboratory at Education Northwest, provides support for conducting policy research and assists alliance members with data use, evidence-based policy development, and data-driven decision making.*



A presentation to  
the Oregon House  
Committee on  
Education

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## 5 “Big Ideas” About the Educational Needs and Challenges of English Learners and Their Implications for Classroom Instruction

### 1 English learners move through different stages as they acquire English and, at all stages, need *comprehensible input*.

Teachers should:

- Scaffold their instruction, providing more support at first and less over time
- Represent concepts in multiple ways, such as with photos, objects, diagrams, and gestures
- Promote structured and supported student interaction

*Comprehensible input* refers to information that is conveyed to students in a way that ensures they can understand, even if they do not know every word.

### 2 There is a difference between conversational and academic language; fluency in everyday conversation is not sufficient to ensure access to academic texts and tasks.

Teachers should:

- Provide multifaceted and intensive vocabulary instruction
- Focus on academically useful words, such as “approach” or “locate,” that are meaningful in multiple contexts
- Explicitly teach the ways language is used in different subjects, such as science, English, and social studies

### 3 English learners need instruction and supports that will allow them to meet state content standards.

Teachers should:

- Provide bilingual instruction when feasible
- In English instructional settings, permit and promote primary language supports
- In English instructional settings, use *sheltered instruction* strategies to build language and content at the same time

*Sheltered instruction* makes grade-level content accessible to students even if they are not fully fluent in English. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and Project GLAD are two examples of programs that prepare teachers to deliver sheltered instruction.

## 4 English learners have background knowledge and home cultures that sometimes differ from the U.S. mainstream.

Teachers should:

- Use culturally compatible instruction to build a bridge between home and school
- Make the norms and expectations of the classroom clear and explicit
- Activate prior background knowledge to increase comprehension
- Briefly build new background knowledge when prior knowledge does not exist

## 5 Many literacy skills transfer across languages, even languages that do not use the same alphabet.

Teachers should:

- Find out what literacy skills English learners have in their primary language
- Use primary language literacy as a starting place for English literacy instruction
- Promote bilingualism and biliteracy, if possible

**All of these research-based strategies *make a difference in student learning*. With effective professional development, they are also things that *all teachers can learn to do*. What constitutes effective professional development? Research tells us that it:**

- Focuses on the implementation of research-based instructional practices
- Is embedded in and relevant to the day-to-day classroom work of teachers
- Involves teams of teachers in active learning
- Brings in outside experts to present information to staff and help facilitate implementation
- Provides at least 30 contact hours of well-organized work on content or pedagogy or both
- Includes sustained follow-up support for implementation, such as coaching

### A final thought

While good instruction is essential for English learners, no individual teacher, no matter how skilled, can meet all of a student's needs on his or her own. Consistently good instruction is only possible within a larger context of schools that:

- Have adequate curricular materials, staffing, and facilities
- Provide teachers with time and resources to plan, collaborate, and learn
- Create a welcome, caring school environment



*This information is a subset of findings from a comprehensive review of research on effective instruction for English learners that we conducted at the request of the Washington state legislature.*

*Download a free copy of the full report at <http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/669>*