



CHANGE SUPPORT FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The 52,000 members of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) support the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) along with the principles of educational equity that it represents, and NCTE makes the following research-based recommendations for changes in the schooling and assessment of English language learners (ELLs).

Use ethical testing principles and a variety of assessments when testing ELLs.

- Measure student achievement across the disciplines in the language in which students are best able to demonstrate learning.
- Avoid any single assessment and insist on multiple assessments.
- Account for the amount and duration of exposure to English.
- Recognize that tests in English include linguistic complexity and cultural and historical knowledge that may be unfamiliar to ELLs.
- Allow for accommodations that are language based or consistent with students' language needs rather than those designed for students with disabilities.¹

Support research-based professional development for teachers of English language learners.

- Currently, less than 13 percent of teachers have received professional development on teaching ELLs, and only three states have policies that require all teachers to have some expertise in teaching ELLs effectively.
- Nationwide, at least 43 percent of teachers have ELLs in their classrooms.
- Well-meaning teachers with inadequate training can sabotage their own efforts to create positive learning environments through hypercriticism of errors, not seeing native language usage as an appropriate scaffold, or ignoring language errors.
- Professional development should help teachers develop effective practices that build on home languages.²

Support bilingual and dual immersion programs.

- Research shows that five factors—potential, implementation, breadth, instruction time, and instructional environment—provide the most long-term and enriched bilingual/ELL programs and successfully close the achievement gap.
- Effective writing instruction for bilingual students combines process writing with direct instruction.
- More research and resources can help enhance these promising programs by ensuring better preparation for teachers.³

Endnotes

- ¹ Abedi, J., & Gándara, P. (2006). Performance of English language learners as a subgroup in large-scale assessment: Interaction of research and policy. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice* 25(4), 36–46.
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