Evaluation Brief

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Evaluation of the Implementation of the Title I Funded Elementary English for Speakers of Other Languages Program: Findings from May 2005 ESOL Teacher Survey

Nyambura Susan Maina, Ph.D.[i]

Background

This brief is part of the Department of Shared Accountability's (DSA) evaluation of the implementation of the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) enhanced staffing and services in Title I schools. At the beginning of the 2002–2003 school year, supplemental ESOL teachers were assigned to schools based on the number of beginning ESOL students in each school. This additional staffing allowed beginning ESOL students to receive additional support. Consistent with Goal 2 of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) strategic plan—to provide effective instructional programs—this staffing model continues to be studied to determine the extent to which it promotes improved student learning outcomes. This brief provides a summary and discussion of findings for each area addressed in a survey of ESOL teachers. Findings from the Web-based ESOL services log and data on student achievement will be reported in separate briefs in spring and fall 2007, respectively.

Methodology

A survey of ESOL teachers was distributed during the 2004–2005 school year. The purpose of the survey was to a) determine how services were implemented during the 2004–2005 school year, b) identify successful aspects of the ESOL instructional program and effective practices, c) identify challenges, and d) identify areas for improvement. The survey was developed in collaboration with staff from the Division of Academic Support, Federal and State Programs (DASFSP), and the Division of ESOL/Bilingual Programs.

The survey was distributed in May 2005 to ESOL teachers in Title I schools, either during an ESOL teacher meeting or by mail. A total of 110 teachers were surveyed, with a response rate of 71.8% (n=79). Descriptive statistics were computed for the structured survey items. The data from the open-ended survey items were summarized and most frequent responses reported in tables.

Summary of Major Findings

The elementary ESOL instructional program in Title I schools was undergoing significant changes during the 2004–2005 school year. Most of the changes corresponded to alignment of ESOL instruction with MCPS curriculum, with a focus on language skills, development and implementation of MCPS Grades 1 and 2 ESOL curriculum, and a new emphasis on consistency and standards.

The frequency with which the respondents performed various specified roles and responsibilities in 2004–2005 varied by school and with the nature of the activity. Nearly all respondents (97.4%) were involved in providing direct instruction.

Three fifths of respondents indicated that time was set aside for grade-level team meetings once a week or more. Grade-level teams worked collaboratively to determine what to teach next and how to teach it. Opportunities to work with other ESOL teachers on ESOL lesson planning, consult with classroom teachers about ESOL students, and/or coordinate Gifted and Talented (GT) services for ESOL students were less frequent. Individual comments from the respondents indicated that their influence on the instructional services in their school was limited.

The most commonly reported changes which impacted instruction were: increased implementation of the plug-in model, implementation of MCPS Grades 1 and 2 ESOL curriculum, implementation of the Reading First curriculum in selected Title I schools, alignment of the ESOL and reading language arts curriculum, and the hiring of more ESOL teachers. Additional positions increased targeted and consistent ESOL services. Reading Recovery—an early intervention reading

program for first grade students—was said to complement and promote language development. The Reading First program reportedly allowed limited time for ESOL instruction.

The majority of respondents reported that they differentiated instruction, used strategies aligned with scientifically based research, used assessment data, provided direct instruction to struggling ESOL students, and had adequate resources. On the other hand, most respondents reported insufficient time to plan and/or provide an appropriate amount of ESOL instruction.

Nearly three fourths (78.5%) reported various logistic and instructional challenges. Specifically, scheduling constraints presented difficulties in implementing the ESOL instructional models—pullout, plug-in, co-teach, and consultative—and/or coordinating with mainstream class activities.

Balancing the reading/language arts curriculum with ESOL instruction and time were the major instructional challenges encountered in 2004–2005. This included aligning ESOL instruction with the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum in reading. When discussing challenges, the respondents expressed the need to be clear about the differences or inherent overlaps between ESOL instruction and literacy.

The pullout model was reported as effective with beginning ESOL students; whereas, a combination of the pullout/plug-in model, combined use of ESOL curriculum and the reading/language arts curriculum, writing instruction/support and small group instruction were recommended for intermediate and advanced students. In addition, vocabulary development was reported to be one of the most effective teaching strategies for advanced ESOL students. Oral language development, small group instruction, and writing support were emphasized for all ESOL students.

Discussion of Findings

Description of respondents. The average years of teaching for respondents was 12.7, with an average of 9 years teaching ESOL and 5 years in the current school. Nearly all of the respondents (98.6%) were certified to teach ESOL (Appendix Tables A1 and A2).

Implementation Status of ESOL Services

ESOL teacher roles and responsibilities. Nearly all of the respondents (97.4%) provided English language instruction once a week or more. Other responsibilities included participating in designing strategies for struggling students (75.6%), selecting texts (67.9%), providing reading intervention instruction (60.3%), and scheduling students for English language instruction once a week or more (58.4%). A majority updated the ESOL Enrollment Survey once a month (72.4%). Consulting with regular classroom teachers occurred several times a year. Two thirds (64.1%) reported they were involved as liaisons between ESOL students, parents, and the school at least one to four times a year. Less than half of the respondents (43.6%) were involved in translating (Appendix Table A3).

Planning and coordination of ESOL services. More than half of respondents (61.5%) reported they had time to participate in grade-level team meetings once a week or more. Nearly half (48.2%) reported that time was set aside for them to work with other ESOL teachers either once a week or more (33.0%) or once a month (15.2%). Opportunities to participate in professional development offered to classroom teachers varied as follows: one to four times a year (39.2%), five to eight times a year (20.3%), or once a month (25.3%) (Appendix Table A4).

Slightly more than half of the respondents (63.3%) had time set aside for them to observe demonstrations of new ESOL instructional materials or observe instruction in other classrooms (57.0%). While most of the respondents (70.5%) reported that time was set aside for them to coordinate interventions with the special education staff or work with the ESOL parent outreach staff member (69.2%), less than half (40.5%) reported that time was set aside for them to coordinate services with GT staff (Appendix Table A4).

Changes schools made which impacted ESOL instruction. Sixty-two respondents (63.3%) listed changes their schools made that impacted ESOL instruction. The most frequently cited changes were implementation of more plug-in services as a model of instruction (19 of 62), implementation of the Grade 1 and 2 ESOL curriculum (12 of 62), and mandated Reading First curriculum (10 of 62) (Appendix Table A5).

Successful Aspects of the Instructional Program

Teachers' description of ESOL services. When asked to describe the ESOL services in their schools, the majority either agreed or strongly agreed—response

categories agreed and strongly agreed are combined here—that their schools differentiated instruction to meet students needs (98.7%), used strategies that were aligned with scientifically-based ESOL research (91.3%), used assessment data to guide or modify ESOL instruction (89.6%), and provided additional opportunities for struggling students in small groups (89.9%). Likewise, respondents indicated that the ESOL curriculum built upon topics covered in regular classrooms (83.1%), provided additional opportunities for struggling students (81.0%), provided additional direct instruction to struggling ESOL students individually during ESOL time (79.5%), and provided schools with adequate resources and use of formative assessments to monitor progress (79.5%). On the other hand, only half (53.2%) agreed that sufficient time was allotted for ESOL instruction and less than half (39.2%) agreed that sufficient time was allotted for planning (Appendix Table A6).

Of the respondents (n=57) who listed successful aspects, one third (19 of 57) cited the implementation of the Grade 1 and 2 ESOL curriculum guides as one of most successful aspects of the ESOL instructional program (Appendix Table A7).

More than half of the open-ended responses (14 of 25) cited changes in test scores as evidence of the success. Student growth and progress measures included classroom teacher satisfaction, students' growth in reading or writing, and students being more successful participants in class. In Reading First schools, the responses indicated the program contributed to reading and writing but not to oral language skills (Appendix Table A8).

Challenges Encountered in 2004–2005

Challenges were reported by 62 respondents and fell into two major categories, logistics and/or instructional. Logistic challenges were scheduling, inadequate instructional time, testing, and/or space. Some respondents (9 of 62) expressed frustration with lack of time for planning. Likewise, some reported (6 of 62) that their ESOL instructional groups were too large and had an inappropriate grouping of mixed ESOL instruction levels, especially when newcomers were integrated into class due to insufficient ESOL staffing (Appendix Table A9).

The major instructional challenge reported by respondents was balancing the reading/language arts curriculum with ESOL instruction (11 of 62). Furthermore, open-ended responses (10 of 62)

explained that the instructional time for ESOL was insufficient for a variety of reasons: a) ESOL sessions were cancelled often because of meetings, b) ESOL teachers were pulled from instruction to proctor or facilitate a variety of mandated testing, c) ESOL competed for time with other special services such as GT and Reading Recovery, and d) some teachers met with several ESOL groups daily (sometimes more than five groups). As such, these teachers could not allot adequate instructional time for all their groups.

Additionally, some respondents (5 of 62) indicated that the Reading First program was restrictive and accorded teachers with limited time to implement the curriculum (Appendix Table A9).

Effective Instructional Practices and Strategies

The five respondents who had experience with the Multidisciplinary Education, Training, and Support (METS) program agreed that the self-contained classroom was the most appropriate model for METS students. Teaching strategies and practices reported to be effective for beginning ESOL students included: emphasis on oral language development (37 of 67), pullout model (20 of 67), and small group instruction (12 of 67).

A variety of instructional strategies, practices, and resources were reported to be effective for intermediate ESOL students. Those most frequently cited by the respondents were oral language development (17 of 59), ESOL curriculum combined with regular curriculum (9 of 59), pullout/plug-in model combination (8 of 59), writing instruction/support (7 of 59), and small group instruction (7 of 59). Specifically, combining ESOL instruction with the regular curriculum was reported to be highly effective for intermediate ESOL students. Examples of this included instruction aligned with the reading/language arts curriculum, modified alternative assignments or modified regular materials, and/or a combination of ESOL and reading strategies.

Among those who provided responses to open-ended items, oral language development (13 of 64), writing support (10 of 64), both plug-in and pullout models (8 of 64), and vocabulary development (6 of 64) were considered some of the effective instructional strategies for advanced ESOL students.

Strategies reported to be effective included providing opportunities for independent completion of grade-level tasks; implementing Reading Recovery strategies; coordinating access to a more complete curriculum; increasing classroom teachers'

understanding of the differences between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP); and providing thematic instruction across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Specifically, participation of ESOL students in Reading Recovery was reported by respondents to be successful in improving the reading and oral skills of students (Appendix Table A10).

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings from the survey:

- Review the ESOL staffing guidelines as they relate to the teacher-student ratio. A reduced ratio will help ensure time for planning and provide direct ESOL instruction, as well as staff development.

- Identify strategies to reassign tasks that interrupt ESOL instruction to reduce the incidences of missed ESOL sessions.

- Strengthen collaboration, communication, and relationships among ESOL teachers, classroom teachers, and school management in providing ongoing support to students. In particular—

  a. ensure that the goals of ESOL as articulated in the strategic plan are understood by all staff;

  b. provide clarification and opportunities to discuss the differences, as well as inherent overlaps, between ESOL instruction and reading and language arts instruction among teachers, curriculum developers, and administrators;

  c. encourage joint participation in monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating the progress of ESOL students;

  d. increase involvement of the ESOL staff in schoolwide planning teams with a focus on improving student skills in literacy and mathematics;

  e. decrease conflicts related to scheduling of ESOL classes; and

  f. continue to explore pathways and/or effective instructional practices to accelerate

the learning of ESOL students in the English language, mathematics, and reading.

- Develop a process and allocate time for ESOL teachers to share effective instructional practices within and among schools.

- Develop a process to coordinate participation of ESOL students in other initiatives such as programming for GT ESOL students.

- Consider allocating resources for an ESOL resource teacher/ESOL coach who will provide more targeted support to the ESOL teachers. This will ensure consistent implementation of the ESOL curriculum and clarify expectations for teachers and students.

Reference

MCPS, (n.d.). *Differentiating instruction for all ESOL proficiency levels.* Retrieved September 22, 2006, from http:/www.montgomeryschoolsmd. org/curriculum/esol/elem/Differentiating%20Inst. pdf

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**Evaluation of the Implementation of the Title I Funded
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Findings from May 2005 ESOL Teacher Survey**

Appendix

Table A1
Mean, Median, and Range of Respondents' Years of Teaching Experience

Teaching experience	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Number of years teaching	74	12.7	8.6	12	1	39
Number of years teaching ESOL	72	9.0	7.4	7	1	30
Number of years teaching at current school	68	4.9	4.7	4	1	24

Table A2
Number and Percentage of Respondents Reporting Grades Taught
By Teacher Certification Status

Certification (Multiple responses)	Certification Status											
	Elementary Education		Early Childhood Education		Special Education		ESOL/ESL Education		Other Comments		Total Responses	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pre-K	9	3.0	5	1.7	1	0.3	23	7.6	1	0.3	39	12.9
Kindergarten	9	3.0	6	2.0	3	1.0	34	11.2	1	0.3	53	17.5
Grade 1	11	3.6	5	1.7	1	0.3	27	8.9	2	0.7	46	15.2
Grade 2	16	5.3	3	1.0	0	0.0	31	10.2	1	0.3	51	16.8
Grade 3	10	3.3	3	1.0	1	0.3	21	6.9	1	0.3	36	11.9
Grade 4	9	3.0	2	0.7	2	0.7	26	8.6	2	0.7	41	13.5
Grade 5	10	3.3	1	0.3	1	0.3	24	7.9	1	0.3	37	12.2
Total	74	24.4	25	8.3	9	3.0	186	61.4	9	3.0	303	100.0

Table A3
Number and Percentage of Respondents Indicating How Often
They Performed Specified Responsibilities

How often did you	Not at all		1–4 times a year		5–8 times a year		Once a month		Once a week or more	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Provide direct English language instruction to ESOL students?	1	1.3	1	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	76	97.4
Participate in designing strategies for addressing the needs of struggling ESOL students?	0	0.0	3	3.8	3	3.8	13	16.7	59	75.6
Select texts and instructional materials for use in an ESOL classroom?	8	10.3	7	9.0	1	1.3	8	10.3	53	67.9
Participate in voluntary ESOL teacher professional development?	22	28.2	2	2.6	2	2.6	4	5.1	48	61.5
Provide reading intervention instruction?	3	3.8	9	11.5	5	6.4	14	17.9	47	60.3
Schedule ESOL students for English language instruction?	5	6.5	18	23.4	3	3.9	6	7.8	45	58.4
Participate in school-level team meetings (e.g. Educational Management Teams or Collaborative Action Process)?	1	1.3	11	14.3	10	13.0	21	27.3	34	44.2
Order/manage ESOL instructional materials?	12	15.4	33	42.3	7	9.0	7	9.0	19	24.4
Consult with regular teachers about ESOL students who exit the ESOL program?	13	16.7	16	20.5	13	16.7	17	21.8	19	24.4
Consult with non-ESOL teachers about ESOL students currently participating in the ESOL program?	8	10.4	25	32.5	15	19.5	15	19.5	14	18.2
Update the ESOL enrollment survey?	4	5.3	3	3.9	1	1.3	55	72.4	13	17.1
Translate materials/act as a translator?	44	56.4	14	17.9	6	7.7	4	5.1	10	12.8
Participate in the administration of school district and state exams to individuals or groups of students or serve as a test proctor?	1	1.3	47	60.3	22	28.2	4	5.1	4	5.1
Participate in mandatory summer ESOL teacher professional development?	3	3.8	68	87.2	4	5.1	0	0.0	3	3.8
Participate in quarterly ESOL teacher meetings?	0	0.0	64	82.1	10	12.8	1	1.3	3	3.8
Act as a liaison between ESOL students, parents, and the school?	28	35.9	38	48.7	6	7.7	3	3.8	3	3.8

Table A4
Number and Percentage of Respondents Indicating How Often
Time was set aside for ESOL Teachers to Participate in Specified Activities

How often was time set aside to	Not at All		1–4 Times a Year		5–8 Times a Year		Once a Month		Once a Week or More	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Participate in grade level team meetings?	6	7.7	5	6.4	8	10.3	11	14.1	48	61.5
Use formative assessment data to plan instruction?	9	11.8	9	11.8	7	9.2	17	22.4	34	44.7
Discuss needs of ELLs with administration, counselors, or teachers?	5	6.4	11	14.1	8	10.3	20	25.6	34	43.6
Work together with other teachers on ESOL lesson planning?	15	19.0	17	21.5	9	11.4	12	15.2	26	32.9
Work with the ESOL counselor?	18	22.8	24	30.4	13	16.5	10	12.7	14	17.7
Coordinate interventions for ESOL students not making progress in language acquisition?	12	15.6	24	31.2	10	13.0	18	23.4	13	16.9
Participate in professional development offered to regular classroom teachers?	4	5.1	31	39.2	16	20.3	20	25.3	8	10.1
Work with the ESOL parent outreach staff member?	24	30.8	30	38.5	4	5.1	13	16.7	7	9.0
Observe ESOL instruction in other classrooms?	34	43.0	30	38.0	5	6.3	4	5.1	6	7.6
Coordinate interventions with special education staff?	23	29.5	27	34.6	14	17.9	9	11.5	5	6.4
Observe a demonstration of new ESOL instructional materials?	29	36.7	39	49.4	5	6.3	3	3.8	3	3.8
Coordinate instruction with gifted and talented staff?	47	59.5	23	29.1	3	3.8	3	3.8	3	3.8
Work with the bilingual assessment team staff member?	35	44.9	32	41.0	7	9.0	2	2.6	2	2.6

Table A5
Number and Percentage Reporting Changes
That Impacted ESOL Instruction in 2004–2005

Significant changes (multiple responses)	Number of Respondents N	Percentage of Responses %
Implemented plug-in model more often	19	27.5
Implemented Grade 1 and 2 ESOL curriculum	12	17.4
Reading First curriculum mandated	10	14.5
ESOL instruction better aligned with reading language arts curriculum	6	8.7
Hired more/increased ESOL staff	6	8.7
None/not sure	5	7.3
ESOL teachers teaching interventions/Horizons limited ESOL planning and instruction time	4	5.8
ESOL teachers assigned to specific grade	3	4.4
Increased number and availability of instructional services (e.g., more differentiation, ESOL representation in leadership team, collecting data on ELLs)	13	18.8

Table A6
Number and Percentage of Respondents Indicating
Agreement with Survey Items on Description of ESOL Services

Statement	Strongly Agree or Agree	
	N	%
I extend and differentiate to best meet the instructional needs of my students.	78	98.7
I use ESOL instructional strategies that are aligned with scientifically-based ESOL research.	73	91.3
I provide additional direct instruction to struggling ESOL students in small groups during ESOL time.	71	89.9
I use assessment data to guide and/or modify ESOL instruction.	69	89.6
ESOL curriculum builds upon topics covered in regular classrooms.	64	83.1
I provide additional opportunities for struggling ESOL students (e.g. audio tapes, computer programs, ESOL counselors).	64	81.0
I use appropriate formative assessments to monitor progress of ELLs.	62	79.5
I provide additional direct instruction to struggling ESOL students individually during ESOL time.	62	79.5
Paraprofessionals work with my ESOL students under the direction of the non-ESOL teacher during the school day.	61	77.3
I have sufficient quantities of ESOL instructional materials for my ESOL students.	57	72.2
Sufficient time for ESOL instruction is allotted during the school day based on the ESOL levels of the students.	42	53.2
Sufficient time during the school day is allotted for planning ESOL instruction.	31	39.2

Table A7
Number and Percentage Reporting
Successful Aspects of ESOL Instruction in 2004–2005

Successful Aspects	Number of Respondents *N*	Percentage of Responses %
Grade 1and 2 ESOL curriculum	19	35.8
Specific strategies/program components	8	15.1
Consistent delivery/support every day	6	11.3
Flexibility in ESOL service	6	11.3
Pullout model/teach literacy block	5	9.4
Supportive/collaborative ESOL team	3	5.7
Co-teaching	3	5.7
Don't know /Unsure	3	5.7
All other most successful aspects of ESOL program (e.g., professional leadership at the county level, abundant materials, family support)	5	9.4

Table A8
Number and Percentage Reporting Evidence
for Successful Aspects of ESOL Instruction in 2004–2005

Evidence (multiple responses)	Number of Respondents N	Percentage of Responses %
IDEA Proficiency Test and other data	14	60.9
Observed student growth/progress	9	39.1
All other supporting evidence (e.g., school named Maryland Blue Ribbon, students who received Houghton Mifflin displayed significant progress in reading but little progress in speaking).	3	13.0

Table A9
Number and Percentage Reporting
Challenges Encountered in 2004–2005

Challenges (multiple responses)	Number of Respondents N	Percentage of Responses %
Scheduling concerns	11	18.3
Balancing reading/language arts curriculum with ESOL instruction	11	18.3
Inadequate instructional time	10	16.7
Too much testing conflicting with instruction	10	16.7
Inadequate teaching space	9	15.0
Lack of time for planning	8	13.3
Not enough ESOL teachers Groups too large	6	10.0
Reading First restrictions	5	8.3
ESOL log too time consuming	4	6.7
Parental/family support concerns	4	6.7
Mixed instructional levels (appropriate grouping)	3	5.0
All other ESOL instructional challenges (e.g., integrating newcomers into class, principal feels we need to exit students from ESOL as fast as possible, lack of seriousness on the part of the students)	6	10.0

Table A10
Number and Percentage
Reporting Effective ESOL Strategies

	Number of Respondents N	Percentage of Responses %
Strategies for ESOL Level 1 (multiple responses)		
Oral Language development (language focus)	37	56.1
Pullout model	20	30.3
Small group instruction	12	18.2
Repetition/clarity	5	7.6
Plug-in and pullout (combination)	4	6.1
ESOL curriculum	4	6.1
Modeling	3	4.5
Shared reading	3	4.5
Strategies for ESOL Level 2 (multiple responses)		
Oral language development (language focus)	17	29.3
ESOL curriculum combined with regular curriculum	9	15.5
Plug-in and pullout (combination)	8	13.8
Small group instruction	7	12.1
Writing instruction	7	12.1
Modeling	6	10.3
Plug-in model	6	10.3
Vocabulary development	5	8.6
Pullout model	4	6.9
Reading language arts curriculum (reading instruction)	4	6.9
Other ESOL instructional strategies (e.g., working with teachers so they understand the difference in BICS/CALP, interviewing activities, interactive activities, use wait time)	4	6.9
Strategies for ESOL Level 3 (multiple responses)		
Oral language development (language focus)	13	21.0
Writing instruction	10	16.1
Plug-in model	8	12.9
Plug-in and pullout (combination)	7	11.3
ESOL curriculum combined with regular curriculum	7	11.3
Reading language arts curriculum/reading instruction/reading	7	11.3
Vocabulary development	6	9.7
Small group instruction	4	6.5
Modeling	4	6.5
Grammar instruction	4	6.5
N/A	4	6.5
Pullout model	3	4.8
Pairs/cooperative learning	3	4.8
All "other" reading/writing strategies (e.g., need to be successful with content, sentence starters and read "alouds," above grade-level materials at upper grades, and student centered)	6	9.7

Note: ESOL instruction is divided into three levels: beginning (Level 1), intermediate (Level 2), and advanced (Level 3).