



COLORADO
Department of Education

Denver Public Schools –
STRIVE Prep RISE High
School
2019-2020 ELPA Excellence
Award Report



English Language Proficiency Act (ELPA) Excellence Award Report Overview

ELPA statute requires each awardee to provide data analysis and a summary of their evidence-based English language proficiency program, or English language development (ELD) program. The intent of the reporting requirement is to disseminate best practices that have contributed to the successes of the ELPA Excellence Award recipients.

This report includes a description of each category below and how the respective categories have contributed to the success of English learners in the district or charter school. While the report may include activities provided in the 2019-2020 school year and/or activities provided with the ELPA Excellence award funds, the intent of the report is to detail the supports and services that are offered to English learners and have contributed to their high linguistic and academic growth and achievement.

English Language Development Program(s) Description

STRIVE Prep RISE uses a co-taught English Language Development (ELD) model referred to as Paired Literacy. In this model, English and ELD teachers co-teach a standards-aligned lesson that includes an explicit focus on language through content language objectives, direct language instruction and abundant opportunities for oral rehearsal and written application of the target language. Paired Literacy differs significantly from other co-taught ELD models in that it is not sheltered instruction, but Dedicated ELD delivered in a balanced language approach (Long's Focus on Forms) through the meaningful content of an English Language Arts class. In Paired Literacy classrooms, equal importance is placed on content and language.

STRIVE Prep RISE initially adopted this approach to ELD to reduce the stigmatization of pullout ELD classes and provide greater flexibility in schedules to increase scholars' abilities to meet graduation requirements. Since that time, we have found additional benefits in that it allows scholars greater interaction with proficient peers and strengthens access to the English Language Arts curriculum. This has been particularly positive for students who had previously plateaued at intermediate proficiency levels.

To support this model, English classes are doubled blocked (in grades 9/10), meaning there is twice as much time for English than other content areas. This allows for time each day for Paired Literacy to occur in English classes 9th- 12th grade. Co-teachers meet regularly to analyze the linguistic demands of the ELA CCSS standards of the lessons/assessment and plan appropriate language instruction based on student data. Teachers then work together to identify key moments in the lesson plan for incorporating academic language instruction, practice and feedback. Since implementing this model, we have found co-planning and teacher parity is essential for effectively executing Paired Literacy.

Our team is aware of the advantages of grouping ELD instruction by proficiency levels, so we provide two other layers of support beyond co-taught, mixed-level classes. First, all Emerging Bilinguals (EBs) receive targeted, small-group homogenous instruction a minimum of once a week to address any language gaps or push complexity. During this time, non-ELL students receive small group instruction to address their own academic needs. This system ensures that no students feel singled out. Next, scholars who have an overall WIDA score of 1.0-2.9 are eligible for additional stand-alone ELD class in addition to Paired Literacy where foundational skills in the four language domains can be addressed according to their proficiency levels and WIDA's Can Do Descriptors. E.L. Achieve's Matrix of Grammatical forms is a key document when planning both of these services.

The ELD instructional sequence follows a gradual release structure that generally consists of: explicit language instruction using modeling, deconstruction and co-construction strategies followed by collaborative practice through structured language protocols and meaningful application of the target language. Students produce both written and oral language independently and collaboratively, in a mix of one-day assignments and longer-term projects. Students wrote and recorded podcasts, wrote children's books, gave persuasive oral presentations about proposed field trips, and shared information about meaningful meals, items, and traditions. Students also engaged in the Collaborative Strategic Reading protocol, allowing for opportunities to focus on speaking and listening together. Students would spend time listening to podcasts, videos, speakers, or each other. They would then respond to what they heard in writing or orally. The foci of lessons were decided upon based on upcoming language requirements in content classes and/or observed areas of growth.

Instructional Practices

In addition to Dedicated ELD, we provide Integrated Content Language Development in all classes. In this approach, we focus on providing meaningful access to grade-level content through sheltered instruction strategies, such as: providing directions orally and in writing, visuals (and realia if able) for vocabulary, use of tech, appropriate teacher speech, and closed captions on all videos for every lesson. At the same time, we promote accelerated language acquisition by providing explicit instruction on the vocabulary, discourse patterns and language forms of each specific content area. All teachers monitor for and provide feedback on language as well as content.

Across contents we run “Verbals,” (an idea observed from another charter network and modified to fit the needs of the STRIVE Prep RISE campus) where scholars give oral presentations once a quarter in a core content area. Scholars are provided questions to which they answer in class and as homework, they practice responding orally to the questions, and then on our Verbals day, scholars present their question to an adult and/or peer judge (depending on the grade level) and are scored on a rubric. This activity lends itself to natural repetitions of academic language and concepts in each core content area as scholars speak and listen to one another during practice in and outside of the classroom. While not required, we encourage scholars to write and rewrite their verbals responses to practice, though many different methods are utilized to practice for an oral response. Notecards are also provided to scholars to use during their oral responses and they are encouraged to write their entire response on the cards or talking points to support them during that very nerve-wracking experience. Confidence is built with repeating this habit of public speaking (to one other person) 4 times a year.

Another key instructional practice is ensuring that the ACCESS test is given equal weight and importance when compared to other assessments. Our ELD team works to ensure that the following happens for each EB taking the test:

- ELD teachers help to create individualized goals based on previous year’s data. This is done one on one with scholars who review their previous year’s scores and set their own goal.
- One on one prep for taking the test. Describing and reviewing the format and providing a space to practice what they will expect with intentional time and space to practice. During the practice sessions more positive self-talk is encouraged by the ELD teachers, a google slides presentation is given to scholars outlining the “why” behind the test, and encouraging scholars that this is the last time they can take the test itself.

Professional Learning Opportunities

All staff are required to complete an English Language Acquisition qualification program within two years of joining our team to prepare them to work with our EB population. In their first year, teachers learn the foundations of second language acquisition theory, sheltered instruction and academic language. In their second year, they expand on this knowledge by incorporating literacy strategies for culturally linguistically diverse students and culturally responsive teaching practices. Teachers show proficiency in these areas through a combination of strategic planning, observations and reflection. Our ELA coach provides feedback to each teacher on the track, as well as the teacher’s individual coach throughout the year.

During summer training professional development specific to sheltering is given to all teachers, and on occasion are held at various touch points throughout the school year. Those touch points vary based on trends and can occur in weekly coaching meetings, department level meetings, grade level meetings or at full or partial staff professional development. Teachers have a great deal of disaggregated data from PSAT/SAT as well as internal performance assessments they use to make groupings in the classroom and to monitor progress over the course of the school year.

STRIVE Prep RISE has also conducted a number of empathy interviews over the course of the past 2 years in order to get a better understanding of the scholar experience and be responsive in our teaching to that shared experience. Information from these interviews has been used to shape instructional strategies at our school and supports our inclusive ELD model.

Program Evaluation and Data Analysis

We begin each academic year by creating an English Language Acquisition Service Plan with goals for Dedicated ELD and Integrated Content Language Development on the previous year's data and progress. This data includes: ACCESS MGP, disaggregated PSAT/SAT scores, and trends from instructional observations. Over the course of the year, benchmark assessments and additional instructional observations are used to evaluate our process towards reaching the outlined goals.

There is a three-person instructional advisory team that meets frequently throughout the year to ensure that we are meeting the needs of individual in-program and redesignated EBs through formal monitoring protocols. They use a body evidence composed of grades, ACCESS data, standardized tests and work samples to inform their evaluations and support students. This team regularly communicates with school leadership and the MTSS team to identify and address important trends.

The efficacy of our Paired Literacy model is evaluated quantitatively through student scores and qualitatively through instructional rounds that look at both teacher input and student output. In the first year of implementation, we found no significant increase in student performance but saw a noted improvement in student engagement during language instruction based on observation rubrics. This data encouraged us to continue with the co-taught model with a few adjustments designed to increase student performance. We revised our professional development for ELD teachers to incorporate the following guiding principles:

- Paired Literacy is a unique hybrid class in which Dedicated ELD and English Language Arts happened simultaneously, it is not a sheltered ELA class
- Language instruction should be incorporated at key points throughout the lesson and tied directly to the content of the ELA curriculum, not an isolated mini-lesson
- Students need both access to challenging grade-level academic language and target instruction catered to their individual proficiency

These principles resulted in stronger practices around co-planning and small group instruction, described in the sections above. As a result, we saw an increase in ACCESS MGP the following year. We will continue to refine our instruction based on our ELA Service Plans in years to come.

Community Supports and Family Partnerships

STRIVE Prep RISE holds a Family Council meeting monthly. The topics of these meetings vary, translation services are always provided. Example past topics have included 1) best practices for supporting learning at home (prior to remote learning), and 2) ways to pay for college. In general, translation efforts are present in all communication sent home and have included (but are not limited to):

- Calls/text from teachers and administrators
- written materials (docs, slides, etc....)
- in person meetings*

*Living up to our mission, we have empowered our exited EB scholars to translate in real time at large and small events as an opportunity to show the power of their bilingualism and take pride in what they know. This also builds a culture of being fully seen.

When scholar translators are not an option or available and/or for sensitive meetings, translation by the district both with headsets and with 1:1 translators are provided. As mentioned before, there are numerous parent/guardian touchpoints throughout the year and have included: calls, emails, texts and Back to School Night, as well as parent teacher conferences.

RISE also has a scholar lead LatinX club which is a way for scholars to celebrate, educate, and put on programming at the campus.

Fiscal Resources

At STRIVE RISE ELPA funds were used to purchase physical books, audio books, and curricular licenses to support reading comprehension, writing strategies, and the communication skills needed for success in school, college, and beyond

Post-Secondary Practices (for secondary schools and districts only)

This is still in development as we just graduated our first class in May (but was actually rescheduled to the first weekend in August due to COVID). The college access team worked diligently to ensure every scholar, including EBs, had a post-secondary plan, including completing their ICAP materials. Naviance is the platform used to house this information. Families are a part of supporting scholars to determine what their next step will include. What has made the program successful thus far has been junior seminar (was semester long and has shifted to yearlong) and senior seminar (yearlong). Both junior and senior seminar is a dedicated elective to provide scholars with information about career, college, scholarships, and self-identity work to support scholars in navigating their next step. In both courses scholars also review their credits needed to graduate and create plans for getting back on track if they are off. There is a junior class college trip to the University of New Mexico (among other stops along the way down), providing the opportunity to be on various types of campuses within driving distance (as opposed to flying) for families to expand their understanding of options for their scholars. There are also (by invite only) substantially subsidized East and West coast college trips run out of our college access programming.

Family nights by college access also occur throughout the high school experience. Junior and senior year there are specific FAFSA nights as well as specific information about graduation requirements.

Other Practices or Any Other Effective Program Elements

It should be stated that our lunchroom and hallways are cell phone free zones. This encourages scholars to speak to one another constantly throughout the day without distraction in both native and non-native languages. This has been true since the founding of RISE in 2016 and we believe has supported our instructional practices by fostering communication spaces that require speaking and listening while on our campus without the option of opting out of the conversation. We also only allow headphones when teachers have explicitly named they are needed for something in class. This also allows for language to be heard throughout the day in various contexts.

Contact Information

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