Preface

THE NEED FOR THIS BOOK

Standards of teaching and learning have taken center stage across the nation, with the expectation that *all* students will achieve at high levels. Against this backdrop, the fastest-growing population under 18 in the United States (Mather, 2009) is often left behind: English learners. In spite of the seminal Supreme Court decision, *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), which requires explicit attention to the linguistic needs of ELs in mainstream classrooms and was passed down over 40 years ago, the specific linguistic needs of English learners go largely unmet in many districts/schools.

Given the current vast shortage of ESL teachers and the ongoing failure to prepare mainstream classroom teachers to teach the ELs in their classrooms, it is overwhelmingly evident that a clear, step-by-step guide is needed to address the needs of English learners. These ELs increasingly represent a significant percentage of student enrollment in many districts/schools.

This book was born of the desire to assist and support districts/schools in systemically undertaking the change needed to focus on the academic achievement of ELs. The model described within addresses the current inequitable state of affairs by advocating for the comprehensive inclusion of ELs in classroom practice by providing them access to the standards-based curriculum, rooted in an orientation of informed empathy and understanding of the range of EL background characteristics that drive instructional needs.

The authors have developed a team-based approach to schoolwide student achievement with a focus on ELs. This book details the steps needed to effect positive change in K–12 schools to provide ELs access to a standards-based curriculum. It addresses such topics as

- Mobilizing district/school teams to cultivate a collective will and vision to serve ELs
- Establishing buy-in from all educators and stakeholders that will motivate sustained effort

- Inspecting data through an "EL Lens" to ascertain and ensure its utility and meaning for ELs
- Defining roles of each district/school administrator, teacher, and stakeholder in supporting EL success
- Implementing linguistically differentiated standards-based instruction and assessment in K–12 classrooms, based on student data
- Adopting and implementing standards-based differentiated grading for ELs

Given projections for continuing growth of the EL population in US schools, and given the fact that many school districts already report majority EL enrollment, it is time to acknowledge the importance of ELs as young future leaders who have an urgent need to receive a rigorous education that will result in college and career readiness. The dividends of providing this preparation are obvious in terms of benefits to individuals, families, communities, and economies. Not providing such rigorous education represents an unacceptable and embarrassing waste of human potential. While the appropriate education of ELs in the United States is a challenging task due to the need to simultaneously develop both English language proficiency and content knowledge, skills, and abilities, the potential rewards to students, families, and communities are great and nonnegotiable.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

In **Chapter 1**, the overview of the **ENGAGE** model outlines the components for engaging ELs by providing access to standards-based achievement using a district/school team-based approach:

- Establish a shared vision grounded in deep understanding of ELs.
- Name and capitalize upon relevant expertise within collaborative teams.
- Gather and analyze EL-specific data.
- Align standards-based assessments and grading with ELs' current levels of linguistic and content development.
- Ground standards-based instruction in content *and* language development.
- Examine results to inform and drive next steps.

Detailing the need for change in meeting the needs of ELs, **Chapter 1** grounds districts/schools in shifting demographics and describes current issues in schools that fail to meet EL needs. Suffering from overrepresentation

in special education and a disproportionately high dropout rate, ELs clearly are in need of advocacy, instruction, and support. Chapter 1 motivates districts/schools to adopt the team-based approach described by the ENGAGE model to address these issues both systemically and systematically, based on a shared vision for engaging and serving ELs.

Chapter 2 supports district/school leaders and teams by offering guidance in how to **E**stablish *a shared vision for serving ELs* grounded in an understanding of the realities of these students. This essential foundational step describes the importance of cultivating a district/school collective will to support ELs and provides a compass to guide future actions in team-based work to support ELs at the district/school level.

Chapter 3 expands on the ENGAGE model by fleshing out what it means to **N**ame *and capitalize upon relevant expertise within collaborative teams.* This step in the process is essential for illuminating internal resources, allowing stakeholders in the EL teaching/learning process to call upon each other for meaningful support in their work to facilitate EL academic achievement. Useful templates are shared in this chapter and throughout the book for teams to refer to and utilize during implementation of the ENGAGE model. In addition, ideas for establishing mechanisms for communication and collaboration, sharing expertise, and celebrating successes are detailed.

Chapter 4 describes how to **G**ather *and analyze EL-specific data.* While many team members will be familiar with traditional data that are often applied to ELs, this chapter describes the inappropriate and ill-advised nature of relying on data that are generated by assessments not designed for ELs and that do not take into account their background characteristics. The notion of interpreting EL data through an EL Lens is offered as a tool to enhance understanding of what ELs know and can do, both in English and in the content areas. Collection of additional relevant EL data is encouraged and described. This chapter lays out the process for convening collaborative teams and for increasing district/school capacity to use data to drive EL instruction and assessment. The specific roles and responsibilities of three levels of districtwide/schoolwide personnel (administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders) are described in detail in this chapter and the next two.

Chapter 5 focuses on an essential practice for teachers of ELs: how to **A**lign *standards-based assessments and grading with ELs' current levels of linguistic and content development.* The authors describe and detail this alignment process through clear analysis of both English language development/proficiency levels and content abilities. Teachers are guided in the process of creating assessments that are appropriate for ELs in terms of language and content demands. Finally, the authors advocate for a

differentiated standards-based grading process that acknowledges EL learning in keeping with their linguistic and content instructional levels.

Chapter 6 describes the next component: how to **G***round standards-based instruction in content* and *language development.* EL-appropriate curriculum design and instructional materials are discussed, along with research-based practices found to support ELs and linguistically differentiated teaching strategies for use in the classroom on a daily basis. The chapter offers a variety of practical suggestions and includes resources for district/school teams to use when implementing instruction that attends to both language and content development.

Examine results to inform and drive next steps is the final component of the ENGAGE model. **Chapter 7** underscores the cyclical and spiraling nature of examining and interpreting data, adjusting practice, and redoubling efforts to achieve improved results. In addition, a helpful resource designed to assist teams in evaluating their work is provided in template form.

We hope that, through adopting and implementing the ENGAGE model, districts/schools will be empowered to engage ELs in equitable learning opportunities by providing access to standards through

- Differentiating linguistic and curricular expectations based on accurately interpreted data
- Affording ELs parity of access to the curriculum through differentiated instruction
- Implementing grading policies that provide accurate and meaningful information for ELs and their families
- And most important, supporting ELs in demonstrating increased achievement grounded in standards