

English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) effective school practices

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

Background

This research provides insights into effective practices in schools that demonstrate evidence of strong EAL/D student growth. It makes explicit what works for EAL/D learners in schools. It strengthens the evidence base for effective practices in schools by describing the particular nature of schools and teaching that drive successful EAL/D education. The EAL/D quality teaching lesson observation tool, developed as part of the research project and informed by previous research by Jennifer Hammond and the NSW Quality Teaching Model, has the potential to further enhance understandings of EAL/D teaching practice in future research projects.

Main findings

Effective school leaders understand and engage their culturally and linguistically diverse communities and respond to their complex needs

School leadership that understands, respects and connects with their culturally and linguistically diverse communities was evident in all research schools. It built a positive school and classroom culture where all students and staff felt a sense of belonging which facilitated positive achievement in cognitive, social and emotional dimensions of their learning.

EAL/D specialist teachers were key in building community connections and deep awareness of the strengths and complex needs of families. Schools recognised the critical role of the EAL/D specialist teachers' expertise which informed whole school programs and teaching practice. Sustained professional learning about English language and EAL/D learner development, curriculum literacy demands, and the cultural and linguistic resources learners bring to school was evident in all schools.

Effective teaching and learning for EAL/D students amplifies rather than simplifies the curriculum through explicit English language and literacy teaching

Teachers in the research schools were able to integrate a language focus into each learning sequence and provide clear instruction of language features required to demonstrate subject knowledge.

Teachers articulated clear goals for language and subject learning, including learning intentions and success criteria for each lesson, and scaffolded each EAL/D student to accomplish tasks independently. They planned for oral interaction during lessons, allowing students to explore and clarify their understanding of concepts through classroom talk, often in their home language, while pushing them to produce extended stretches of English language which were comprehensible to others.

They used EAL/D student assessment evidence, analysed with reference to EAL/D learning progressions, to inform learning and teaching across the school.

Respectful relationships create a school and classroom culture of cooperation, high care and high achievement

The leadership teams, mainstream staff and EAL/D specialist teachers all demonstrated a shared enthusiasm for their EAL/D students and school communities. Respectful relationships were evident in highly productive co-teaching relationships, where EAL/D expertise was valued and shared knowledge of EAL/D pedagogy informed planning and teaching.

High levels of trust were evident in the classroom where EAL/D students had the confidence to take risks with new learning and develop new identities as successful learners.

High expectations of EAL/D students and strong relationships between teachers and EAL/D students (and between teachers) created positive school and classroom cultures of high care where students felt a sense of belonging and confidence in their capacity to achieve.

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