**Preservice Teacher Preparation Linked to Improved Academic Achievement for ELLs**

Florida’s ESOL-infused teacher education programs typically concentrate ESOL competencies in two or three courses and reinforce these competencies throughout other courses. What is it about ESOL-infused preservice programs that results in teacher effectiveness and perceptions of efficacy and preparedness to work with ELLs?

Project DELTA researchers engaged in a comprehensive study to understand what is most important in preparing teachers to work effectively with ELLs. They used a number of data sources—observations, surveys, and interviews with teacher education graduates—to add multiple perspectives to quantitative analyses of teacher characteristics and ELL academic performance.

**Research Findings**

ELLs whose teachers completed a preservice teacher preparation program with an infused ESOL endorsement showed higher learning outcomes on academic achievement measures than those ELLs whose teachers did not complete the infused ESOL endorsement program. Research findings indicate that graduates of a 5-year elementary education preparation program with an infused ESOL endorsement:

- Make a positive contribution to ELL achievement in reading and mathematics as measured on state standardized tests.
- Make a positive contribution to ELL achievement in Title I schools with low-income, low-performing student populations.
- Feel well prepared and effective in their ability to create inclusive learning environments and provide comprehensible instruction for ELLs by using effective strategies to teach reading and academic content.

**About Project Delta**

Project DELTA (Developing English Language through Teacher Achievement) at the University of Florida is a federally funded research project designed to study the link between elementary teacher preparation and ELL achievement in inclusive classrooms.

**ExcELLence In...**

English Language Learners (ELLs) whose teachers completed a preservice preparation program infused with an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement achieved higher scores in reading and mathematics on the Florida statewide assessment as compared with ELLs whose teachers did not complete the 5-year infused ESOL endorsement program.

Read on to learn more about the Project DELTA research findings and the steps policymakers can take to build on these results.
Policy Recommendations

Given the growing number of ELLs and the current emphasis on student achievement—as well as the findings of this research showing a positive relationship between teacher preparation and the achievement of ELLs in inclusive classrooms—state and federal policymakers would do well to invest in comprehensive preservice and inservice programs that prepare all teachers to work effectively with ELLs.

Based on Project DELTA findings and supported by other educational research on teacher preparation for ELLs, recommendations for policymakers include:

- Develop statewide policies that require comprehensive ELL preparation of all teachers and other educators (e.g., school leaders) through preservice and inservice professional development.
- Ensure that state education agencies establish a comprehensive program approval process. This process should require infused teacher preparation programs to document how course content focuses on ELLs. It also should demonstrate how teacher candidates are provided with sufficient structured opportunities to work with ELLs in meaningful ways in multiple settings.
- Invest in the development of a bi/multilingual and culturally competent teaching force by supporting: (1) high-quality PK–12 bilingual education programs; (2) native language and literacy programs in K–12 and higher education; (3) study abroad programs; (4) high school programs that encourage bilingual students to enter the teaching profession; and (5) programs that help retain bilingual teachers in the teaching profession.
- Encourage teacher evaluation systems that include effective practices for ELLs and recognize that ELL achievement is mediated by multiple variables (e.g., English proficiency, migrant status, instructional programs, other school reforms, etc.).
- Do not preclude the preparation and role of ESOL specialists who collaboratively provide expertise in instruction and specialized resources to support intensive English language and literacy development for ELLs.

Assessing Teacher Effectiveness

Caution: Using large data sets—such as statewide databases—for drawing causal associations between individual teachers and ELL achievement can be problematic for the following reasons:

- ELLs typically work with more than one teacher during any given school day.
- The development of a second language is complex and non-linear (i.e., English language proficiency does not increase in uniform increments).
- ELLs’ academic achievement is affected by their levels of English proficiency (oral and written), which are influenced by other important variables such as student age and prior educational experience.
- Teachers’ preservice and inservice preparation to work with ELLs can vary significantly, but it is typically not documented in district and state education databases.