ExcELLence In...

Positive Link Between Preservice Teacher Preparation and Teachers’ Effectiveness with 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.

The findings also indicate that teachers report a need for enhanced preparation in ELL-specific classroom practices.

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.
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 strong relationship between teacher preparation and the achievement of ELLs in inclusive classrooms—teacher educators would do well to develop 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 teacher educators include:

- Require all preservice teacher education programs to provide a comprehensive preparation in ELL-specific coursework and field experiences designed to enhance effectiveness in teaching ELLs.
- Demonstrate evidence that the preparation program makes ELLs and their linguistic and cultural strengths and needs visible through coursework, readings, assignments, and assessments.
- Provide candidates with multiple ELL-specific field experiences, particularly in inclusive elementary settings.
- Provide candidates with multiple opportunities to: (1) address the role of language in teaching and learning for ELLs; (2) identify and engage in specific content and language/literacy instructional practices with ELLs in mainstream classroom settings; and (3) develop the ability to leverage school- and community-based resources.
- Support the development of a bi/multilingual and culturally competent teaching force by: (1) increasing native language and literacy programs in higher education; (2) supporting extended study abroad programs; and (3) working with secondary schools to encourage bilingual students to enter the teaching profession.
- 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.

The Role of Language

The role of language in teaching and learning for ELLs matters. Teachers need:

- Knowledge of how English works and the ability to teach it.
- Ability to integrate both English language development and content learning into instruction.
- Ability to use ELLs’ native languages as instructional resources (e.g., in grouping students for peer interaction, communicating with parents, etc.).

For More Information

Read more about the research—as well as read articles and view PowerPoint presentations—on the Project DELTA website (http://education.ufl.edu/project-delta/).