

English Language Learning Study

Project Summary

During the development of iTeam at the high school, the collected data began to tell a story about Rockford High School English Learners' overall success. At the same time, the high school EL Teacher was noticing the difficulties in providing effective EL services to high school and middle school students. Because of these developments, a broader look at effective practices and growth opportunities for ELL students became a focus project.

Rockford High School Data Summary

Percent of Students With a Pattern* of "High Risk" (red) Achievement

*Gr 9-10 A pattern is defined as three out of four of the indicators. (attendance, connections, reading assessments, F's)

*Gr 11-12 A pattern is defined as two out of three of the indicators. (attendance, connections, reading assessments, F's)

9th Grade	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	ELL
	14%	0%	50%	8%	100% (2)

10th Grade	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	ELL
	0%	X	30%	21%	100% (4)

11th Grade	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	ELL
	67%	67%	40%	31%	X

12th Grade	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	ELL
	33%	X	50%	15%	67% (3)

Rockford Middle School Data Summary

Percent of Students With a Pattern* of “High Risk” (red) Achievement

*A pattern is defined as four out of six of the last reading assessments.

5th Grade	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	ELL
	57%	17%	22%	16%	100% (4)

6th Grade	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	ELL
	0%	10%	57%	11%	100% (2)

7th Grade	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	ELL
	43%	67%	13%	16%	100% (2)

8th Grade	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	ELL
	43%	75%	80%	12%	75% (8)

Rockford Middle School Current Program

At Rockford Middle School, newcomers can have a one-period reading class with the EL teacher. Other students may be seen during their BOOST time if they are not scheduled for another content-area BOOST class, and if the EL teacher’s schedule permits. During the first semester of the 2015-2016 school year, 7th grade students received service once a week during their choir time, and 6th grade students had some EL support in their writing class. Beginning in February, a change in the high school schedule will permit the 7th graders to have an EL BOOST on Tuesdays and Thursdays only, and the 5th graders will come 4 days a week once they complete their current unit of study in Traci Moore’s reading BOOST.

Rockford High School Current Program

At Rockford High School, there is one ELD class period scheduled for beginning to low-intermediate ELs, and one period open for students who need help with homework or who need tests read to them. Students over level 3 receive no direct EL instruction.

Recommendations from Research on Best Practices & School Models

Secondary EL program recommendations grades 5-12:

Newcomers through Level 2 should have at least 2 class periods of EL service per day.

Level 3 ELs should have at least one class period of ELD every day with other students at the same proficiency level.

Level 4.0 to 5.0 ELs should have ½ hour of service per day with other students at a similar proficiency level.

Rockford Area Schools English Language Learning Philosophy Recommendation

1. Because of the prevalence of low achievement among ELL students in our district, all EL learners at the middle school and high school should be automatically evaluated for iTeam status every year. We should be providing these students with the most comprehensive interventions possible in order to boost their success.
2. EL services should take priority over other interventions as language issues are known to complicate other learning.
3. EL services should be limited to EL instruction. Providing tutoring on class work and reading tests is helpful to students in getting through their outside coursework and should be considered as an added intervention, but it has not been shown to measurably improve language abilities. Therefore, the EL teacher should not be the provider of these services.
4. Scheduling of the EL teacher's time is the number one roadblock to the successful implementation of these interventions. Because we have one EL teacher for two buildings with variable schedules, it is important to create a great deal of flexibility for our EL students to be able to attend services with the EL teacher. That will need to include the flexibility to provide services outside of the WIN or BOOST periods.

Rockford High School Recommendations

1. At the high school, newcomer-level 2 students should have one hour of ELD as an elective credit, and one hour of ELA in the EL classroom. (EL teacher 2 hours per day) This aggressive instruction should provide accelerated understanding of the English language and a ramping up of the successful navigation of more rigorous classes.
2. It would be beneficial to have a bilingual paraprofessional to help students learn content material in mainstream classrooms (math, science, and social studies) while they learn English. If a paraprofessional is not available, other staff members could be considered or we could begin a program to use trained student helpers. EL students need support in order to earn credits toward graduation while they are learning English. This is a situation that we need to be cognizant of with our lower level EL students.

Rockford Middle School Recommendations

1. Students who qualify for EL services should attend an EL intervention period every day in addition to their ELA class.
2. Newcomers through level 2 ELs should attend an ELA class and receive additional support with a daily hour-long EL reading class.

Conclusion

Based on student data, it is clear that we need to improve our instruction and intervention with our English Language Learners. We believe that program improvements can be made without an increased financial resources.