



Willamette
EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT

Oregon Department of Education
Education Service District
English Language Development Support
Year 3 Evaluation Results



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ODE ESD English Language Development Support Year 3 Evaluation Results

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the third year of the implementation of the Oregon Department of Education's special funding to provide English language development support to districts in five Educational Service Districts (ESD) and those nearby with 20 or fewer identified emergent bilinguals. The purpose of this funding is to address disparities in outcomes of emergent bilinguals in rural districts by providing technical assistance (TA) on culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy and practice.

This year was an unusual year in that students were in face-to-face classes until Spring Break in March. At that point, all schools moved to a distance learning format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This had a dramatic impact on everyone's work.

Seven English Learner¹ (EL) Specialists were hired to serve from five ESDs. They provided technical assistance from 13 different categories, based on the needs identified by the programs they served. Participants in 87 districts and ESDs received services.

ESD EL Specialists made 1409 log entries of 703 technical assistance sessions. ESD EL Specialists logged 648 hours of travel time and 703 hours of TA. This was greatly reduced from the previous year's travel of 1219 hours, and 1977 hours of TA and was due in large part to the move to distance learning due to the pandemic. Fully 81% of TA areas fell into 7 of the 13 categories.

In addition to the logs, a satisfaction and impact survey was sent to TA recipients. A response rate of 47% was achieved. Out of 650 TAs indicated by them, only 10 (1.5%) were rated less than satisfactory, and were rated so by just two (3%) of the 59 respondents. Satisfaction ratings were high, 3.3-3.6 (average = 3.4) on a 4-point scale.

The vast majority of the responses to the technical assistance offered was positive. Respondents cited specific examples of student learning, teacher feelings of increased competence and ability to have a positive impact on student outcomes, and improved tracking and monitoring procedures. They also stated the new systems would help them to keep students on track, identify students who were not exiting the status in a timely manner, and those who might need additional assistance.

While most TA information was captured, the names and roles of all participants in group meetings may not have been entered 100% of the time. Some undercounting of these activities is to be expected. Data on the number of students impacted by the

¹ ODE is transitioning from the use of the term English Learner to emergent bilingual. In this report, the specialists are referred to as ESD EL Specialists and the students are referred to as emergent bilinguals. English language development (ELD) is the name typically given to teachers working with these students. These terms may be used interchangeably in quotes.

technical assistance was difficult to ascertain, as the number of EL students a person was working with was not always available for documentation.

Recommendations were gleaned from the data collected, including interviews with ESD EL Specialists and TA recipients. They include:

1. Continue to work with schools and communities to increase technical assistance efforts to families of EL students and community leaders to support these students.
2. Continue to provide support as identified by local educators. This has helped to develop trusting relationships between the ESD EL Specialists and school personnel, and has given these personnel a sense of ownership in both the process and outcomes.
3. Explore ways to track and document increases in identification of EL students as a result of the services provided, as well as reviewing ELPA scores or other observation instruments to assist with determining the impact on students.
4. If possible, review the territories each ESD EL Specialist covers to ensure efficiency in travel time.
5. Ensure ESD EL Specialists working in districts outside of their ESDs have a “friendly face” to introduce them to the district team. This may occur at the ESD level, where future contracts are co-developed by ESDs sharing an ESD EL Specialist. It may also be accomplished through an ESD using newsletters or time in district meetings to introduce the specialists and the work they do.
6. As future ESD EL Specialists are added, consider the skill sets of the current specialists and seek out those with other skill sets. One example of this would be balancing the number of elementary and secondary specialists.
7. Assist ESDs to understand the administrative requirements of the job. Where necessary, review job descriptions and organizational charts to determine the appropriate position in the chain of command for the ESD EL Specialist.
8. Work with the ESD EL Specialists to develop a format for developing action plans and/or contracts with districts to provide districts with the specifics of what they can expect from their ESD EL Specialist. This may also assist in future evaluation efforts.
9. Ensure ESD EL Specialists have the training to understand the impact of the intersectionality of disability and emergent bilingualism. Support ESD EL Specialists in their efforts to educate districts about language acquisition theory.
10. Review the separation of emergent bilingual and Title III technical assistance and determine if there are areas where it would be appropriate for the ESD EL Specialists to provide this information. If this is not appropriate, clearly communicate the issues to districts to reduce their frustration directed towards the ESD EL Specialists.
11. Develop a conceptual map of how the work of the ESD EL Specialists connects to other ODE initiatives, such as the Student Investment Act, to help elevate the work they do.
12. Support the ESD EL Specialists in their work to move beyond working with administration only. Even though this is an important aspect of their work, when they are only working with administration, the impact of their work is less likely to trickle down to teachers, classrooms, and students.

Summary of Activities Conducted and Participants Reached

This report provides a summary of the Year 3 activities regarding the services provided by the seven ESD EL Specialists. There are four separate evaluation activities: an overview of ESD EL Specialist activities, a summary of the satisfaction survey to the TA recipients, interviews with the ESD EL Specialists about their work, and interviews with recipients of TA services describing their experiences. The report concludes with recommendations for the next year of the implementation of this project.

Methods

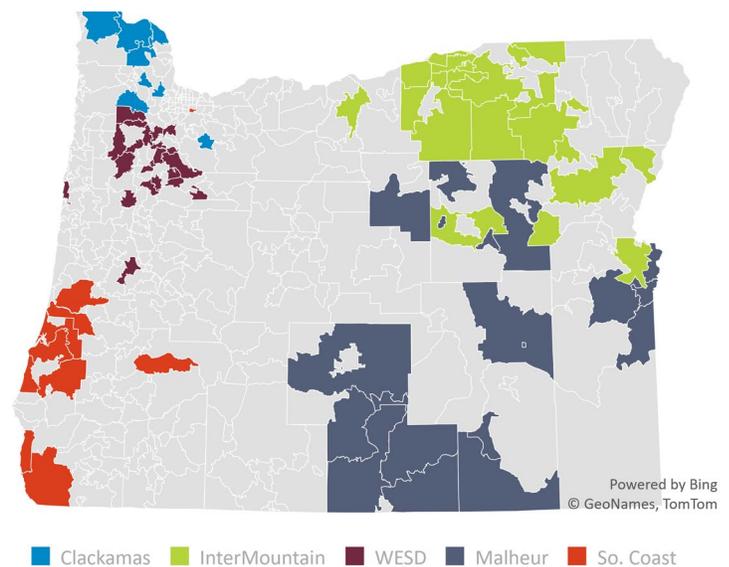
ESD EL Specialists log their daily activities to track the services they are providing. Center staff used Excel to develop the tracking log. Dropdown lists such as typical TA activities and district names were developed to ease data entry and to facilitate summarization of data. The categories and the logs were revised from the previous year based on input from the ESD EL Specialists. In order to capture the roles of people involved, ESD EL Specialists were asked to enter meetings with multiple attendees in separate records. To avoid counting the entries as multiple TAs, ESD EL Specialists indicated the group nature of the meeting. In some cases, multiple attendees were included in one record if they had the same role. It is also possible that ESD EL Specialists did not capture 100% of the attendees. Thus, data presented here may underrepresent the actual work conducted. ESD EL Specialists submitted the logs monthly. Logs were combined into one working Excel spreadsheet for analysis. The time period covered is August 2019 - May 2020.

Findings

Sites included ESDs, district offices, school settings, and the community. By ESD, the number of districts served were: Clackamas-8; Malheur-23; InterMountain-23; South Coast-11; Willamette-22. The total number of districts served was 87.

ESD EL Specialists were asked to record the amount of time they spent in travel and the amount of time spent in actual technical assistance. During this 10-month period, they logged 648 hours of travel time and 703 hours of technical assistance. This has not been converted to FTE because ESD

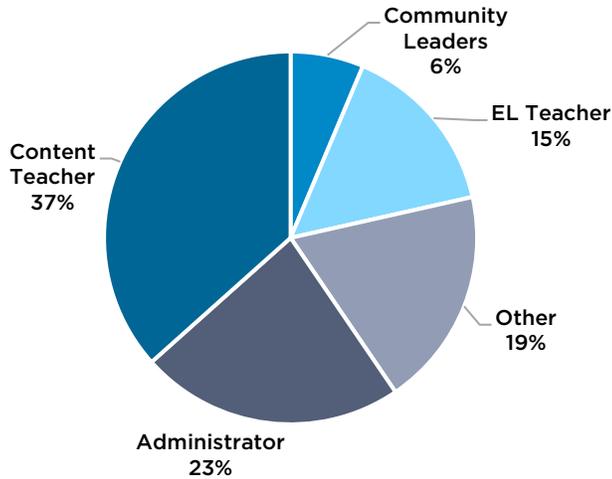
Figure 1. Zip Codes Served by ESD EL Specialists



EL Specialists often travel outside of their regular work hours.

ESD EL Specialists were directed to include in their logs the names of individuals involved in each TA session, and to provide their roles. ESD EL Specialists met with at least 489 individuals (many more if group professional learning sessions are included), often multiple times. ESD EL Specialists made 1409 entries with 703 sessions indicating up to four areas of technical assistance for each meeting.

Figure 2. TA Recipient Role (n=489)

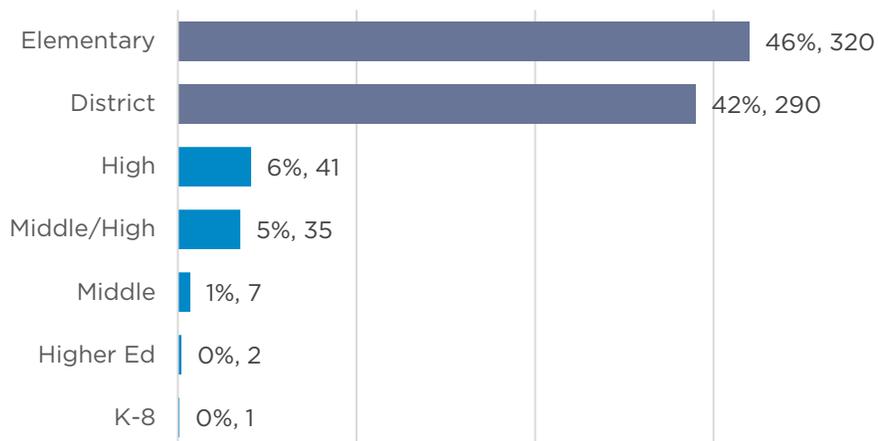


The chart to the left provides a breakdown of the roles of the recipients of technical assistance. These percentages are based on unduplicated individuals (n=489). Note that in group sessions, individual participants were not always listed.

Content teachers (i.e., those typically without EL experience) (37%), **administrators** (23%), and **EL teachers** (15%) were the largest groups of recipients of TA. *Other* included parents, students, classified staff, counselors, and others.

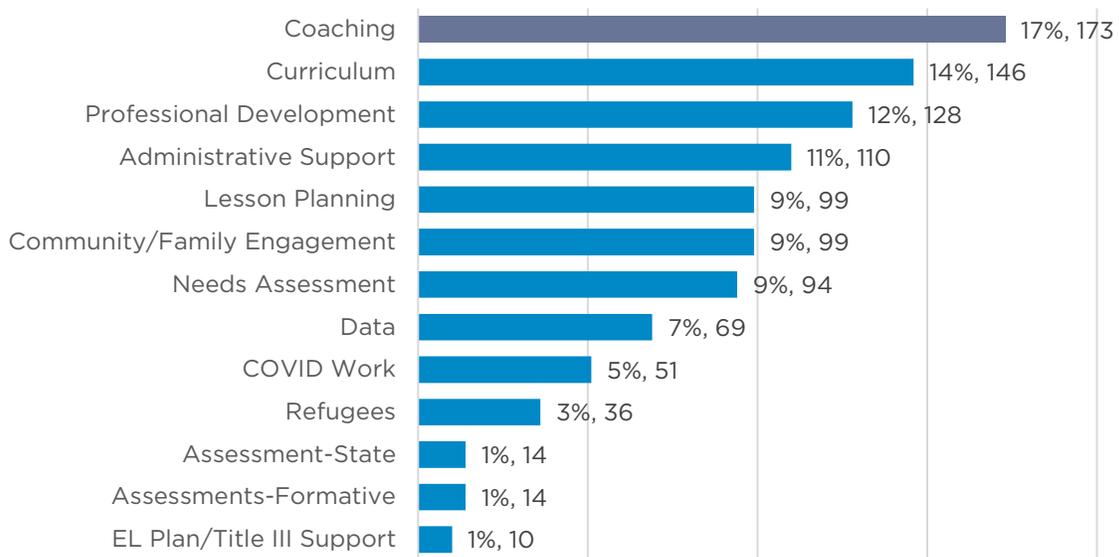
Grade levels associated with all TA recipients, including those with multiple sessions (n=696) can be found in Figure 3 below. The majority of TAs were directed at those working in *elementary* and *PK-20 (District)* programs.

Figure 3. Elementary and Districtwide Programs Received the Most TAs (n=696)



ESD EL Specialists could choose up to four TA categories to describe their work with a site. Fully 81% of TA areas fell into the 7 out of 13 categories, found in Figure 4. *Coaching*, including debriefing, establishing language objectives, providing feedback, math coaching, modeling teaching techniques, providing newcomer support, observation, setting up physical space, and content teacher ELD support, was the focus of the TA 17% of the time, followed by *curriculum development and support* (14%). The least selected TA categories (1% of the time or less) were *support for state and formative assessments*, and *EL Plan/Title III Support*. *COVID Support* was a new category this year. This category included only the work conducted by ESD EL Specialists for their ESDs.

Figure 4. Coaching was the Most Often Selected TA Area (n=1043)



Perceived Impact on TA Recipients and Their Stakeholders

One hundred twenty-five individuals receiving technical assistance were sent invitations to participate in the survey. A total of 59 responses were received resulting in a 47% response rate. The survey opened May 27, 2020, and remained open for three weeks to compensate for end-of-the-school-year schedules. Participant contacts were provided by the ESD EL Specialists. A range of 5 to 45 (average 25) names were provided by the ESD EL Specialists, with response rates per ESD EL Specialist ranging from 40% to 56%. Respondents were 17 administrators, 31 ELD teachers or coordinators, and 11 teachers. Forty school districts and ESDs were represented.

Three individuals indicated they had an introductory initial consultation only. ESD EL Specialists make these contacts to ensure districts are aware of the services. One of the three indicated they did not have any students requiring EL services this year. One respondent indicated they would have liked to have met more. One person’s response was “Tried to.” without further explanation. This person is interested in getting services next year. The other two indicated they might be interested.

The largest frequency of contacts was four to six, at 36%. Forty-four percent had seven or more contacts.

Table 1. Number of Contacts	N	%
Initial consultation visit/contact only	3	5%
1-3	8	14%
4-6	21	36%
7-9	15	24%
10-12	2	3%
More than 12	10	17%
Total	59	100%

Ninety-six percent of the respondents who received technical assistance (54 out of 56) felt that the frequency of visits was adequate. Both indicated they were satisfied with the services they received. One is planning on continuing to work with the ESD EL Specialists in the coming year. Along the same vein, 96% felt the length of the visits was adequate, while 4% (n=2) would have liked more time.

Table 2. Interest in EL Services Next Year	N	%
Yes	44	75%
No	3	5%
Maybe	12	20%
Total	59	100%

Almost 75% of the respondents indicated they wanted to continue working with the ESD EL Specialist into the next year. Of the 12 *maybe* responses, 5 were administrators, 3 were ELD specialists who were not sure they would need assistance in the next year, and 4 were content teachers.

There were 19 different categories of technical assistance tracked, and respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the services they received. The number of respondents to each item depended on whether or not the respondent identified receiving service in the area being measured. There were a total of 650 responses, with sites selecting from 1 to 19 areas (average = 3). (One person did not indicate any TA areas, stating that they required minimal support.) Fully 99% of the responses were *satisfied* or *very satisfied*. Across the 19 categories, 94-100% of respondents were *satisfied* or *very satisfied*. Unlike previous years, the category of *Math Coaching*, which received only 17 responses, had a satisfaction rating of 100%, compared to the previous year at 77%. Items making up combined categories can be found in Appendix B.

Figure 5. Ratings of Satisfaction with the Technical Assistance Provided

Technical Assistance Area	Average Rating (4=High)	% Satisfied or Very Satisfied	Total Selecting TA Area
Professional Development	3.6	98%	52
COVID- Distance Support	3.4	100%	47
Curriculum Support	3.5	95%	42
Coaching /Obs/Feedback	3.5	100%	41
Assessment	3.4	100%	40
Data	3.3	97%	40
Administrative Support	3.5	100%	40
Documentation	3.3	100%	38
Establishing Language Objectives	3.5	100%	36
Provide Classroom Materials	3.5	97%	36
Lesson Planning	3.4	97%	35
Monitoring Support/Protocol	3.4	94%	33
Model Teaching Techniques	3.5	100%	32
EL Plan	3.4	100%	32
Newcomer Support	3.5	97%	31
Exiting Support/Protocol	3.3	97%	30
Family Night/Parent Eng	3.3	100%	25
Math Coaching	3.4	100%	17
Starting ELD Program	3.3	100%	17

There were a total of 10 *dissatisfied* and 0 *very dissatisfied* responses given by two respondents. One person indicated four areas (Respondent A), and the other (Respondent B) indicated six areas. The eight areas marked as *dissatisfied* are listed

in the table below, along with an indication of which respondent selected that area, and the comments they provided.

Table 3. Dissatisfied Responses and Comments

Area Dissatisfied	Respondent	Comment
Provide Classroom Materials	A	A. I don't feel like I was able to improve find materials, create materials and lessons, or find GOOD curriculum for ELs.
Lesson Planning	A	
Curriculum Support	AB	
Monitoring Support/Protocol	AB	A. We only began to talk about monitoring and never came to a good solution.
Data	B	B. We just feel lost sometimes with the number of students we are supporting and the lack of information and support on what curriculums are good for kids and the best way to support those in monitoring status.
Exiting Support/Protocol	B	
Newcomer Support	B	
Professional Development	B	

In an effort to obtain more specific information about the type of impact of the services provided, respondents were asked two open-ended questions: *“What changes have you made in your practices or policies as a result of the emergent bilingual support you received?”* and *“What has been the impact on the child, student’s family, classroom, teacher, or administrator resulting from the emergent bilingual support you received?”* Sample quotes from each ESD EL Specialist area are provided below.

 *“What changes have you made in your practices or policies as a result of the emergent bilingual support you received?”*

I have been able to get a greater amount of support to other teachers as a result of the practices at WESD, and I have been able to put into practice trainings as a direct result of the practices. Gervais SD, Willamette ESD

I have been able to understand the testing process (ELPA screener and summative) better. La Grande SD, InterMountain ESD

Many of our staff received SIOP training and are much more qualified to instruct our EL population. Reedsport SD, South Coast ESD

...This year, the ELD specialist has focused heavily on helping me begin using co-teaching model in the district, but has also provided professional development opportunities, and administrative support at the district level. Banks SD, Clackamas ESD

We have changed our curriculum offerings, changed service providers in-house, extended our program into our kindergarten classroom to offer EL services, in effect, to all students and greater understanding of the program itself. Annex SD, Malheur ESD



“What has been the impact on the child, student’s family, classroom, teacher, or administrator resulting from the emergent bilingual support you received?”

Overall, this support has had great impact in each of these areas. Most importantly providing explicit role specific support to our ELD teacher, who is the only such service provider in the district. It has been great for her. Banks SD, Clackamas ESD

I now have a stronger connection with families; which in turn created support from home. Nyssa SD, Malheur ESD

Our students made tremendous growth on the ELPA21 Summative assessment this year. Also, one of our building principals attended the SWEL training, which helped deepen her understanding of EL students’ needs. Milton-Freewater SD, InterMountain ESD

We are seeing more involvement with our ELL families and more communication from them. N. Bend SD, South Coast ESD

12 of my students who tested on ELPA this year exited! Focusing on lesson planning and getting support from other ELD specialists, experts, leaders, has made a huge impact for me. N. Santiam SD, Willamette ESD

Finally, respondents were asked if they had any *additional comments* they would like to add to improve services to them. Most of the 37 responses expressed gratitude for the services, often praising their ESD EL Specialist by name.



Do you have any additional comments to share?

I appreciate that each of the specialists has not come in with a pre-determined agenda, but instead offer help based on the needs of the district at the time. They have been wonderful! Banks SD, Clackamas ESD

[ESD EL Specialist] is THE best that I have worked with in my thirty-six years of working with EL students and programs. Annex SD, Malheur ESD

I really appreciate our support we get for our ELD program and EL students from the IMESD and [ESD EL Specialist]. Her support and position has allowed us to bring high level instruction and engagement to this underserved population of students. Milton-Freewater SD, InterMountain ESD

This is a necessary component to better serve our ELL students. Coquille SD, South Coast ESD

I hope that these services continue to be offered next year. The ELD PLC meetings helped me understand my role, connect with others, share information and learn from other ELD teachers. The SWEL training and support helped me develop my leadership and coaching skills. Mt. Angel SD, Willamette ESD

Lessons Learned: Interviews with ESD EL Specialists

Most ESD EL Specialists have been in their positions for the full three years of the project. While the populations they were to serve were clearly spelled out from the beginning, how the actual work was conducted evolved over time. To get a better understanding of how the ESD EL Specialists do their work, we asked them to reflect on the characteristics of districts that shaped their work, how their work has evolved over time and the most important lessons, the impact of the COVID school closures on their work, and considerations for ODE for the future of the project.

Characteristics of Districts

All the specialists focus on rural sites with 20 or fewer emergent bilingual students; however, they are able to be flexible through contract language indicating they could take on working with sites with more students as time allowed. The ESD EL Specialists appreciated this flexibility. In working with districts, there were requests from schools with fewer than 20 in a building, especially at the high school level. Without this flexibility, they would not have been able to support these programs. In addition, they have been able to include a broader audience, space permitting, when they have hosted events.

By far, though, ESD EL Specialists are working with rural and pioneer districts. One specialist in particular indicated she had several districts with a single teacher. The smaller districts face not only a lack of specialists who have the expertise to work with emerging bilinguals, but all personnel wear multiple hats. Superintendents may also serve as principals and bus drivers. Whereas districts with a critical mass of emergent bilingual students may have grade level teams, smaller districts may have one person, if that, who is responsible for the entire district...and that person is likely to have other responsibilities as well. One specialist spoke of weekly visits to schools that did not have ELD teachers to coach classroom teachers on tools they could use throughout the week. When rural districts are able to hire someone with English language development skills, they are challenged to fill these positions if that person leaves. One district has a person responsible for English language learning the equivalent of three hours per day for the entire district. This district has eagerly trained 130 teachers and aids in SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) through the ESD EL Specialists. They understand that this instruction improves outcomes for all students, not just those learning English.

Some regions were geographically larger than others. Some specialists had 2-3 hour drives to some sites, while others had 4-6 hour drives. One concern raised was how regions overlapped each other. As can be seen from Figure 1, this was especially true for the Malheur and InterMountain ESD EL Specialists. One specialist remarked, "I drive past [another specialist's] schools on the way to some of mine."

Building trust and relationship was a theme heard from all seven ESD EL Specialists. The first year of the project was spent "cold calling" districts to introduce their services. Districts were often initially suspicious of their intentions and the ESD EL

Specialists ties to ODE. Usually, meeting in person and helping districts to understand they were not required to accept the help of the specialists helped to build trust. Some specialists indicated the challenges gaining the trust of some districts was lessened because of the established relationships the ESD had with districts.

At the same time, the ESD EL Specialists are housed in only five of the 19 ESDs in the state. This means they often worked with districts outside of their ESDs. This was especially problematic for two ESD EL Specialists who were housed at one ESD, but had only one district within that ESD. All other districts were part of another ESD. Because the districts did not have relationships with that ESD, specialists speculated that it was easier for a district to turn down their services. One ESD EL Specialist indicated that until she visited a site with their REN (Regional Educator Network) coordinator, she had not been able to establish a relationship. The district is now open to working with her, and she hopes that even with the challenges presented with COVID restrictions that she will be able to pursue this relationship in the next school year.

ESD EL Specialists were asked for their thoughts about why districts may have chosen not to work with them. The typical response is, “We don’t have any ELs. We are a small district.” While this is a possibility, as one specialist posited, “You don’t find what you don’t look for.” According to one specialist, there was a concern that districts who did not identify any EL students in their districts did not complete an EL Plan. All districts should have an EL Plan on file as students can move in and out of districts at any time. The other common response was, “We only have a couple, and we are doing ok.” The more relevant information might be if the district is satisfied with their rates of students moving into monitoring and exited statuses.

Access to teachers also depended upon whether the specialist was able to get the buy-in of the administration. Specialists have found that teachers and administrators often do not understand what *language development* means. It often takes getting in the administrator’s door to be able to get to the teachers and classrooms to do the work.

Some districts who initially did not respond or who chose not to accept services changed their minds later. The ESD EL Specialists believe that by continuing to reach out and let them know how they are working with other districts, they come to understand the benefit the specialists can provide.

How Work has Changed over Time

When the ESD EL Specialists first approached their work they lacked some of the tools they needed to be their most effective. For example, initially they did not have a tool to assess EL programs. Over the years, these processes and procedures have been implemented.

When asked about how their approach to their work has changed over the years, the specialists indicated they are moving from “doing for” to building capacity. One

specialist relayed that in the first year, she would help sites with their EL Plans to the point of basically developing it for them. She later understood that those plans were likely put on a shelf and never looked at again, and that she needed to be teaching them about the elements that went into it.

Specialists started with working one-on-one with many districts, and still do, but now have added communities of practice or professional learning communities (whether in person or on line) to their repertoire. This has been an important community builder to districts. ELD teachers often have no peers in their districts to brainstorm and problem solve with. By building networks among districts, these teachers now have resources beyond the ESD EL Specialist. This was the strongest message from the focus group conducted at one ESD...along with ensuring the continuation of the communities of practice.² The work is also focusing on helping teachers to understand how to advocate for what they and their students need, and to empower them to become the “go-to person” for that building or district.

The Impact of the COVID School Closures

Most specialists felt, prior to the COVID closures, that while more could be accomplished if there were more of them, they had adequate capacity to do their work. Specialists were as frustrated as districts with the closing of schools. They described the expectation that Spring activities would be the culmination of three years of hard work. There were to be celebrations of the successes districts had gained, that all had to be cancelled.

Besides engaging in their own professional learning to address the new reality, the ESD EL Specialists stepped up to assist districts with distance learning resources for EL students, moving in-person professional learning groups to on-line so support could be continued, and providing chromebooks and hot spots for students in rural areas without computers or internet access. Some districts have continued participation and have remained in touch; for others, though, the speed of the drastic changes to their practice meant they were no longer able to participate.

Specialists report having to cancel all Spring activities, including conducting equity focus groups requested by one ESD, having funds frozen in their ESD, missing visiting classrooms, and feeling disconnected from the EL students in their districts. As one specialist remarked, “I just reach out and don’t expect a response. I’m here if they need me.” ESD EL Specialists also report being put on committees at the ESD to assist with responding to the COVID crisis. Several of the specialists have young children at home and have faced their own challenges adjusting to distance work.

Feedback for ODE

ESD EL Specialists provided feedback to ODE focusing on both their own work and ODE’s continued role.

² The evaluators had planned on conducting focus groups in each ESD EL Specialist’s territories, but only one was completed before schools closed due to the pandemic.

Several specialists mentioned the need to reexamine the territories each specialist covered to reduce travel time and increase their efficiency. They also wondered if it might be appropriate for ODE to take the lead in encouraging ESDs to collaborate with each other to assist in encouraging participation by districts. This might also be done by ESDs through jointly contracting for the services.

Looking to the future, specialists reflected on how their individual skill sets supported each other. For example, at one ESD, the two specialists have different backgrounds (secondary and elementary), and are able to team up in their travel to assist schools at different grade levels. They suggested that if specialists were added in the future, it would be helpful to have more people with secondary backgrounds as many high schools they serve have fewer than 20 emergent bilinguals. They also suggested that teachers and administrators need to learn about language acquisition theory, but they would need more capacity to be able to accomplish this. They were concerned that some children were being identified for special education services, when what they need is language development.

A few of the specialists indicated they have challenges at their home ESD because they lack an administrator's title. As one stated, "We are in a 'no man's land' between TOSA and admin." They would like to see an acknowledgment of the administrative element to the job so that they are able to directly interact with the business office regarding budgeting and other administrative duties.

The specialists also had suggestions about tools they would like to have. They mentioned the need for a format for developing action plans with districts, as this would be helpful to them in tracking activities with districts. It would also provide the district a type of contract so that they would know what to expect from the specialists. Another suggested, "We needed more tools, like the common observation tool that we never developed."

The specialists valued the time they had together in book studies and collaborative meetings, and would like to have more training or professional development together. As one person stated, "We could learn so much from each other as we unpack what we learn."

They greatly appreciate the work of the ODE Lead in making sure the collaboration happens. They indicated how helpful she had been in responding to agency questions with clarification about their work, and what is and is not allowable. They also commented that others at ODE are very responsive to their questions and requests for help.

Looking at the bigger picture, the specialists appreciated the work that had been done to include them in the HB 3499 Advisory Group meetings, and they would like to continue this as well as participate in other meetings relevant to their work. They expressed concern about how long it has taken to make this happen, commenting that their part of the program often feels like an afterthought to HB 3499. They would also like to see how their work fits with other initiatives. For example, the SIA

includes a focus on emergent bilinguals, and they felt it would be helpful to clarify how they might work together or how the jobs are different. Another example is Title III. They would like to see more collaboration with Title III. They report that their districts indicate to them they do not know what ODE wants in Title III. Because they are out in the districts, district personnel often bring their questions to them. Even though it would require additional training, the specialists believe they could be an important liaison in this area. They also described some districts as being disturbed about the apparent compartmentalization of their work from Title III.

Finally, the specialists expressed appreciation for the attention ODE has given to emergent bilinguals in rural areas. “The value that ODE has placed on not just communities with large populations, but remembering rural America has needs too...that piece of caring for rural communities is important. ...This info and strategies can open up a world of learning for this group.” Another stated, “Without this part of HB 3499, so many of the rural ELs would just be swept along. ...Whoever came up with this idea, it was stellar!”

TA Recipient Input

Districts Responding

The TA Recipient interview process was conducted at the end of the school year, in the last week of May and the first week of June. Participants represented four of the five ESD EL Specialist territories. The school year ends in May in the districts in the Malheur ESD service area and they were unable to participate.

ESD EL Specialists provided contact information for schools and districts where they had had a long-term technical assistance relationship. Nine individuals participated in Zoom interviews, and six additional recipients responded via email. Five participants were in the Clackamas ESD area, three from Willamette ESD, four from the South Coast ESD area, and three from InterMountain ESD.

These small, rural districts described a number of challenges in common. The numbers of emergent bilingual students can vary greatly for them from grade to grade, year to year and term to term. Even when there are relatively larger numbers, a critical mass is rarely met in a particular grade or building. These students also vary in their language development level, making service delivery more of a challenge.

With fluctuating numbers, these schools face challenges keeping ELD teachers in their employ and recruiting for any position is a challenge in rural programs. Staff serving emergent bilingual students often serve the entire district, not just one school. Many schools have no dedicated individual to serve emergent bilinguals.

Because of the size of these districts, financial support is often limited. They face challenges providing appropriate curriculum, professional development for teachers and staff, translation and interpreter services, and materials in the student's language of origin. This last item can be quite onerous, as even small districts may have students representing as many as 15 different languages. Some sites face challenges getting staff buy-in to nurture bilingualism. There are high rates of poverty, and internet access is often sketchy. Children may be spread out geographically with few other children around with whom they can practice their skills. Small districts also indicate that developing sustainable practices can be a challenge because their situations change from year to year. As one person stated, "You have to remember that what works changes from year to year because students change and people change."

The impact of COVID-19 has been especially difficult for small districts. Besides the issues that most programs are facing, such as families losing jobs and getting all staff trained in distance learning techniques, they also face the challenges of the lack of internet access, poverty, and distance creating even fewer opportunities for language practice with peers. While staff are often willing to connect with families as needed, simply providing them the technology does not solve the problem. Many families without computers will also lack the skill to use the technology provided. Hot spots are also required for those living in areas where internet connections are weak.

The need for additional instruction will likely arise in the next school year. Many programs were providing activities, but not necessarily instruction this year.

Benefits of Technical Assistance

Respondents indicated a number of areas of benefit of the ESD EL technical assistance. The ESD EL Specialists have taken some of the pressure off teachers serving multiple roles, often without support. When working with the ESD EL Specialists, specialized staff have networking and support, as do classroom and content teachers. One respondent stated, “[The ESD EL Specialist] helped us increase the rigor of writing tasks and scaffolding activities, and we saw improvement in their writing.” Staff indicated they are now exiting and monitoring students, where in the past they had not. Staff have a broader perspective of what they can provide to students and families. Besides providing professional learning opportunities, the ESD EL Specialists also informed staff of grant opportunities that they would not otherwise have been aware.

Staff have indicated they appreciate not only the support networks they have developed through the professional learning offered by the ESD EL Specialists, but also benefit from the ESD EL Specialist being fully networked. The ESD EL Specialists are resources to each other when problems arise that may be outside of their expertise. School staff also appreciate how improving academic outcomes for emergent bilingual students is a priority for the ESD EL Specialists. As one respondent stated, “It feels good to have this be someone else’s priority, too.” Another shared, “Success is more achievable when we work as a team and support one another.”

ESD EL Specialists are also able to provide some financial support to districts for specific activities. For example, funding was made available for registration and substitutes when teachers attended workshops and other professional learning activities. They have assisted with chrome books and hot spots when needed. They have also organized and provided SIOP and GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) training, which has benefitted ELD and content teachers alike. In fact, to overcome the issue of not being able to recruit ELD teachers, one district trained all of its teachers in SIOP.

School staff are concerned about the upcoming school year. They expressed doubt about the ability of staff to sustain providing distance education, especially where supplemental instruction is required. They mentioned how helpful the PLCs have been, how useful coteaching training has been, and having the opportunity to share knowledge and ask questions of others. They fear the requirements placed upon them in the upcoming year will mean they will lose the progress they have made in so many areas of services to emergent bilinguals.

Recommendations for the Future

Respondents had several suggestions for the work of the ESD EL Specialists in future years. One respondent perceived that ODE has limited the ability of the ESD EL

Specialists to provide support about Title III in general. They felt that, combined with their very remote location and lack of their own Title III coordinator, it would be helpful if ESD EL Specialists were able to “wear different hats” and provide Title III support. Others brought out the importance of coaching and mentoring to rural districts. Even though some expressed discomfort at having someone from the outside come into their class to observe, they felt it was “entirely worth it.” Districts often want to provide mentors, but are unable to or don’t have staff skilled in the area to provide the mentorship. One respondent stated, “[Having the ESD EL Specialist] has really helped the district see the bigger picture. Tell ODE we want them back!” Another stated, “Learning is social. Without access to a coach, a small district like mine would be a team of one. The initial work [the ESD EL Specialist] did with the district office didn’t trickle down [to the classroom]. Coaches need to be persistent to get to the boots on the ground level.” Thus, while some in administration may express some suspicion of ODE involvement, classroom teachers simply want the support that is available so that they can improve the academic outcomes for students.

Limitations

Evaluation of the third year of this project has provided an opportunity to establish effective data collection tools and methods, and to improve upon procedures for future years. In-depth support provided via phone, email, or through other virtual media was not consistently captured. ESD EL Specialists have a better understanding now of the purpose of the data collection and when these types of interactions should be documented; however, a great deal of the work they conducted during the last few months of school was responding to email questions. These brief TA sessions were not captured in their logs as it would have been cumbersome to document at a time that everyone was learning new skills and revamping their approaches to work. Data on the number of students impacted by the technical assistance was difficult to ascertain. This was because some of those involved in support took the information back to others in their schools, and the number of EL students a person was working with was not always available for documentation. Finally, neither districts nor specialists were asked about service provision to emergent bilinguals who may also experience disabilities. This is an important area that needs attention and should be explored in future program evaluations.

Recommendations

Several recommendations can be gleaned from the data collected this year. Many of these recommendations were expressed by ESD EL Specialists and by the TA recipients.

1. Continue to work with schools and communities to increase technical assistance efforts to families of EL students and community leaders to support these students. Be prepared to continue to offer distance support and technology for students.
2. Continue to provide support as identified by local educators. This has helped to develop trusting relationships between the ESD EL Specialists and school personnel, and has given these personnel a sense of ownership in both the process and outcomes.
3. Explore ways to track and document increases in identification of EL students as a result of the services provided, as well as reviewing ELPA scores or other observation instruments to assist with determining the impact on students.
4. If possible, review the territories each ESD EL Specialist covers to ensure efficiency in travel time.
5. Ensure ESD EL Specialists working in districts outside of their ESDs have a “friendly face” to introduce them to the district team. This may occur at the ESD level, where future contracts are co-developed by ESDs sharing an ESD EL Specialist. It may also be accomplished through an ESD using newsletters or time in district meetings to introduce the specialists and the work they do.
6. As future ESD EL Specialists are added, consider the skill sets of the current specialists and seek out those with other skill sets. One example of this would be balancing the number of elementary and secondary specialists.
7. Assist ESDs to understand the administrative requirements of the job. Where necessary, review job descriptions and organizational charts to determine the appropriate position in the chain of command for the ESD EL Specialist.
8. Work with the ESD EL Specialists to develop a format for developing action plans and/or contracts with districts to provide districts with the specifics of what they can expect from their ESD EL Specialist. This may also assist in future evaluation efforts.
9. Ensure ESD EL Specialists have the training to understand the impact of the intersectionality of disability and emergent bilingualism. Support ESD EL Specialists in their efforts to educate districts about language acquisition theory.
10. Review the separation of emergent bilingual and Title III technical assistance and determine if there are areas where it would be appropriate for the ESD EL Specialists to provide this information. If this is not appropriate, clearly communicate the issues to districts to reduce their frustration directed towards the ESD EL Specialists.
11. Develop a conceptual map of how the work of the ESD EL Specialists connects to other ODE initiatives, such as the Student Investment Act, to help elevate the work they do.
12. Support the ESD EL Specialists in their work to move beyond working with administration only. Even though this is an important aspect of their work, when they are only working with administration, the impact of their work is less likely to trickle down to teachers, classrooms, and students.

Summary

This third year of the project has resulted in positive outcomes and the development of on-going technical assistance in most sites where services were provided. Recipients consistently expressed gratitude regarding the expert support they have received and feel empowered to positively impact student learning outcomes. Most ESD EL Specialists now have three years of experience in providing this technical assistance. The past few months have been the most frustrating, as all testing has been halted and schools have moved to distance learning activities and education. The ESD EL Specialists will need to continue with their advocacy work and training of districts to ensure that academic gains for emergent bilingual learners continue to grow in the face of distance education and the pandemic.

Appendix A: Background Information

HB 3499, passed in 2015, appropriated 12.5 million dollars every biennium to support improving emergent bilinguals' learning outcomes. Forty districts were identified as having the highest needs and the lowest outcomes. Fifteen were identified as higher need Transformation districts and were allocated \$180,000 per year, and 25 as Target districts, receiving \$90,000 per year. Technical assistance (TA) was included.

One requirement in the selection of target and transformation districts was that selected districts must have at least 20 identified emergent bilingual students. Nonetheless, the state recognized the need to support districts with numbers less than 20. To do so, up to \$2.5 million of the funds was made available to hire six teachers on special assignment (TOSAs) as English Learner (EL) Specialists who are housed at five education service districts (ESDs) throughout the state. The Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at ODE collaborated with the community and other offices throughout ODE to select the five ESDs. Several criteria were used: 1) geographic representation; 2) low EL numbers identified; 3) total number of EL students throughout the ESD; and 4) the number of districts within the ESD whose data shows a high level of needed support. Currently, the five ESDs are Clackamas, Willamette, South Coast, InterMountain, and Malheur. The commitment from the ESD to house an ESD EL Specialist was initially for the 17-18 to 18-19 biennium, and the five ESDs all continued these commitments into the next biennium.

ODE reached out to all districts in these five ESDs as well as districts in need of supports to determine how the six ESD EL Specialists could provide TA, and if it would be feasible to serve districts outside of the five ESDs. A guiding principle of the project is that TA is based on the individual district's perceptions of their needs. Although plans are made in conjunction with ODE, the district determines where they need TA, and if they want the assistance of the ESD EL Specialist. There is no requirement that districts participate. By maintaining a district-level emphasis, ODE is confident that it can achieve a systems approach to affecting change for the state's emergent bilingual students.

While the original planning would have potentially accommodated 85% of the districts in these ESDs, a number of districts turned down services. Word spread of the TA available, and additional requests came in. Ultimately, the ESD EL Specialists were able to serve more areas than originally planned.

By the Fall of 2017, the six ESD EL Specialists had been hired and were in place in each of the five ESDs. The ESD EL Specialists expressed their desire to the ODE Program Lead, to include external evaluation as a component of the project. WESD's Center for Education, Innovation, Evaluation & Research (The Center), was contracted by ODE in partnership with the ESDs to conduct these evaluations. In November, 2017, a research plan was developed that would satisfy the needs of the project. This report is a result of that effort. Future evaluation will be conducted after the selection of a contractor through the request for proposals (RFP) process.

Appendix B: Technical Assistance Groupings

Coaching

- Coaching
- Debrief
- Establish Language Objectives
- Feedback
- Math Coaching
- Model Teaching Techniques
- Newcomer Support
- Observation
- Physical Space
- Content Teacher ELD Support

Curriculum

- Curriculum Development
- Curriculum Support

Data

- Data Analysis
- Data Collection
- File Documentation

EL Plan/Title III Support

- Exiting Support/Protocol
- Monitoring Support/Protocol
- Starting ELD Program