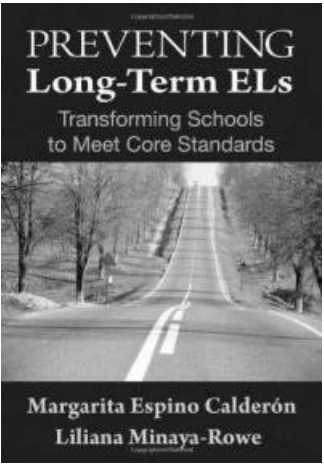


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Preventing Long Term ELs: Transforming Schools to Meet Core Standards

Author:	Margarita Espino Calderón & Liliana Minaya-Rowe (2011)		
Publisher:	Thousand Oaks: Corwin		
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147 pages	978-1-4129-7416-5	\$31.95 USD	

Authors of *Preventing Long-Term ELs: Transforming Schools to Meet Core Standards*, Margarita Espino Calderón and Liliana Minaya-Rowe, were both principal and coprincipal investigators of the 2003-2008 John Hopkins University/Carnegie Corporation of New York *Project ExC-ELL: Expediting Comprehension for English Learners*. The five-year study resulted in a refined staff development program for content-area teachers who have English Learners in their classrooms. Calderón and Rowe highlight the underpinnings of their project *ExC-ELL* in their book, *Preventing Long-Term ELs: Transforming Schools to Meet Core Standards*, all the while providing a well organized and approachable means to counteract the academic failure experienced this decade by upper elementary, middle, and high school English Learners.

As the number of English Learners (ELs) in U.S. schools continues to rise, Calderón and Rowe point out the fact that “schools and districts have been overwhelmed by the increases in the EL populations” (p. 2) More importantly though, the authors quote, “The unexpected and growing numbers of ELs means that these students are no longer only the responsibility of ESL or bilingual teachers. Entire school faculties must serve ELs, overwhelming mainstream staff” (p. 2).

The authors paint a disheartening image of the widening achievement gap that exists between White and Latino students and other minority students. They note that many students, who enter U.S. schools in kindergarten or first grade, are second- or third-generation immigrants do not developed the literacy skills needed to compete academically. Consequently, the idea

of graduating high school, for Long Term English Learners (LT-EL), becomes less and less attainable which in turn contributes to the high dropout rates by minority students.

The authors of this book therefore pose the following questions: What has happened or has not happened in our elementary schools that permits this kind of failure? Why are secondary administrators folding their arms and not providing appropriate immediate interventions?

A thoughtful review of current research led Calderón and her colleagues to carry out two field studies: *Expediting Comprehension for English Language Learners (ExC-ELL)* and *Reading Instructional Goals for Older Readers (RIGOR)*. Both studies provide “tools for schools” in addressing the needs of ELs. The book is structured around the four main components of the ExC-ELL and RIGOR staff development programs: (1) Quality Professional Development, (2) Coaching, (3) Measuring Teacher Implementation and its Impact on Students, and (4) Preparing Administrators to Support and Observe Literacy Instruction in Content Classrooms.

As Calderón and Rowe intended, the layout of the book is conceptually desirable as each chapter offers substantive concepts that could be presented on its own. Each chapter provides a framework for discussion as the issues surrounding LT-ELs are brought to light. Adequate statistics are provided placing particular emphasis on the number of U.S. born ELs that, due to a weak foundation in literacy, remain in the ESL program throughout middle and secondary school. The authors conclude that the most important factor in attaining EL success is the quality of instruction. As chapter one highlights, the rapid influx of ELs into U.S. schools has posed many challenges for schools and districts nationwide. Therefore, the authors contend that the academic fate of ELs lies in all of our hands, and teachers and school administrators should not place such responsibility solely on the ESL teacher(s).

Chapter three details the framework for preventing LT-ELs. Calderón and Rowe focus on 10 features and structures of quality instruction and effective schooling for ELs and school success. The 10 features of school success can be applied to a broad range of educational settings. The authors also provide topics for discussion, as well as a useful tool to rate the features of your current professional development instruction.

Through field studies and current research analysis, authors Calderón and Rowe outline the characteristics of high quality instruction, placing much emphasis on Vocabulary instruction and development. The book provides “the basic premises of vocabulary instruction that has helped ELs and struggling students accelerate their English learning and academic success” (Calderón, 2007). Three critical messages that the authors link to reading comprehension are recognized. The first of these suggests that vocabulary instruction begin in the early years, pre-school, and continue throughout the school years. Secondly, research proves that vocabulary instruction, if taught explicitly, can help develop phonological awareness and lead to increased reading comprehension skills. Therefore, vocabulary instruction should be long-term and comprehensive (p. 51).

Contrary to belief, the authors state, “Drawing pictures of the word does not necessarily mean that a word will be used by the student” (p. 52). We see this current method of instruction, illustration of key words, used in classrooms all too often. As suggested by the authors, a

more collaborative effort must take place to ensure the development of academic language. We are responsible for teaching vocabulary across all content areas (science, math, social studies, and language arts). Therefore, Calderón and Rowe encourage teachers to be selective and strategic when selecting words to teach. What are the vocabulary words most useful in learning the content and concepts student are about to read? The selection of words is a critical component to student success. Equally as important to the selection of words is the ability of ELs to orally describe, question, or summarize what they have learned. Language is acquired through and by oral discourse. Therefore, students need to play an active role in the classroom by participating in collaborative activities that provide ample opportunities to use their newly learned vocabulary. Perhaps, the most interesting component of Calderón and Rowe's findings is the integration of academic vocabulary in student writing. Teachers have become accustomed to false encouragement. All too often, we encourage our ELs to write "in their own words." Calderón and Rowe bring to our attention the detrimental effects that this instructional approach can have on student success. As suggested by the authors, a more appropriate and effective approach to language instruction involves "word categories." An in depth description as to how to cluster words for instruction (Tiers 1, 2, and 3) is outlined in chapter five.

In chapter seven, the authors discuss many writing strategies. These strategies are great to use with ELs, but can be implemented with struggling writers from any educational or cultural background. In order for ELs to be successful in school, they must develop both reading and writing skills. If they have not developed adequate writing skills, then they will never be fully literate. As teachers then, it is our moral duty to provide the quality instruction that Calderón and Rowe outline in their book. Since reading the book, I have tried to be more explicit in my expectations for writing. I no longer allow my students to write "in their own words".

The authors of this book have done an incredible job honing in on the issues surrounding LT-ELs. Their research and experiences with ELs are a valuable contribution to educational communities worldwide. Calderón and Rowe's "tools" for meeting the immediate needs of ELs can be applied in and among any educational setting. The education of nontraditional students is a commonality that every educator is faced with in his or her career. This book offers concrete models and case studies of "best practices and optimal language acquisition models" that are approachable and have proven success.

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