

Effective Instruction for English Language Learners

Since 1978, researchers at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (KUCRL) have investigated the type of instruction needed to ensure that students are ready for and can succeed in college or other demanding postsecondary educational options. Our studies have addressed many educational problems faced by diverse learners in different types of classrooms and schools. Our target student populations include students with disabilities and, increasingly, English language learners (ELLs).

We have found that our best results—the largest gains in student achievement—are obtained when we adhere to six rigorous research principles we have established for our work and the educational interventions we develop:

1. The intervention must enable students to successfully compete in challenging courses. That is, it must be relevant to their coursework.
2. The intervention must be easy to use and easy to integrate into ongoing classroom routines.
3. The intervention must lead to gains for the diversity of students found in most secondary classrooms. Low-, average-, and high-achieving students *all* must benefit in some way.
4. The intervention must actively engage students as partners in the learning process.
5. The intervention must require teachers to regularly monitor student progress so instructional adjustments can be made quickly.
6. The intervention must be highly valued by both students and teachers.

When these six conditions are met, teachers and students consistently use the intervention, and large gains in students' academic achievement can be realized.

These research principles have resulted in

interventions that help close the performance gap, the gap between what adolescents are expected to be able to accomplish in school and what they are able to do. Collectively, these interventions comprise the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM), a research-validated literacy program that helps adolescents learn how to learn, providing a means for them to achieve independence and success. In addition, lessons learned through our research efforts have led KUCRL researchers to describe a continuum encompassing the types of instruction needed to ensure academic success for all students. This continuum, called the Content Literacy Continuum (CLC), allows some students to receive gradually more intensive, systematic, and explicit instruction of content, strategies, and skills as their needs dictate.

RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

English language learners (ELLs) constitute the fastest growing portion of the K-12 student population. Many SIM instructional interventions align with the research-based practices recommended for improving academic outcomes for these students. Below is a synopsis of the significant findings from five reports that identify effective research-based practices for use with ELLs. After we summarize the practices described in these reports, we identify SIM instructional interventions that align with these research findings.

Study 1: Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth (August and Shanahan, 2006)

Significant findings:

- Instruction that focuses on the **key compo-**

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nents of reading (phonics, fluency, vocabulary, text comprehension) has clear benefits.

- In addition, **oral proficiency** in English is critical for reading and writing proficiency.
- Oral proficiency and literacy in the **first language** can be used to facilitate literacy development in English.
- **Individual differences** contribute significantly to English literacy development.
- Most **assessments** do a poor job of gauging individual strengths and weaknesses.

Study 2: Cross Cutting Themes and Future Directions (Snow, 2006)

Significant findings:

- The **reading comprehension** performance of language minority students falls well below that of their native speaking peers.
- **Vocabulary knowledge** can be enhanced by the use of vocabulary from the first language.
- Many instructional components known to be effective with **monolingual English** speakers also appear to be effective with ELLs.
- Instructional practices found to be effective in **special education** programs seem likely to be effective with ELLs.

Study 3: What Does Research Say about Effective Practices for English Learners? (Coleman and Goldenberg, 2009)

Significant findings:

- English oral language is best taught through **explicit, direct instruction** and interactive approaches.
- **Interactive approaches** provide opportunities for authentic communication.
- **Daily oral English language instruction** that targets language acquisition is recommended, about 45 minutes per day.
- Students need to learn **expressive** as well as **receptive** language.
- Grouping by **proficiency level** for English lan-

guage development instruction may be helpful.

- **Academic language**—not just conversational language—should be emphasized.

Study 4: The Critical Role of Vocabulary Development for English Language Learners (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005)

Significant findings:

- Students should be involved in **conversations about words**.
- Instructors should provide **definitions and contextual information** about words.
- Students need **multiple exposures** to new vocabulary.
- Instructors should teach students **word analysis skills**.
- Using knowledge of **cognates** benefits English language learners.
- Instructors must make sure ELLs know the meaning of **basic words**.
- Providing **extensive review and practice** opportunities helps student achievement.

Study 5: Effects of Instructional Conversations and Literature Logs on Limited- and Fluent-English-Proficient Students' Story Comprehension and Thematic Understanding (Saunders and Goldenberg, 1999)

Significant findings:

- Students should be involved in instructional **conversations about text**.
- Instructors should have students write **literature logs**.
- Students need to be taught **reading comprehension strategies**.
- Teacher **read alouds** are beneficial.

ALIGNING SIM INTERVENTIONS WITH EFFECTIVE RESEARCH-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR ELL STUDENTS

The following table identifies SIM interventions that align with the recommendations for effective instructional practices for ELL students identified in the studies described in the previous section.

Research-Based Practice	SIM Intervention or Program
Emphasis on key components of reading (August & Shanahan, 2006)	The Fusion Reading program includes all key components, and the SIM Learning Strategies Curriculum addresses main reading components.
Explicit, direct instruction (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2009)	SIM is one of the most highly regarded evidence-based explicit/direct instruction models in the field.
Interactive approach (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2009)	All SIM interventions and programs—including Fusion Reading—are designed as highly interactive programs that blend teacher/student interaction with explicit instruction.
Daily oral English language instruction (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2009)	Fusion Reading supports multiple daily oral language activities in reading and vocabulary. Content Enhancement Routines structure extensive oral language in discussion about critical concepts and course or unit questions.
Expressive and receptive language (Coleman & Goldenberg, 2009)	Fusion Reading's <i>Vocabulary Strategy</i> and the <i>Vocabulary LINCing Routine</i> from the Content Enhancement Routine series focus on both receptive and expressive vocabulary instruction.
Definitions and contextual information about words (August et al., 2005)	SIM interventions that address this practice include Fusion Reading's <i>Vocabulary Strategy</i> and the <i>Vocabulary LINCing Routine</i> from the Content Enhancement Routine series.
Multiple exposures to new vocabulary (August et al., 2005)	Fusion Reading incorporates this practice through its <i>Vocabulary Strategy</i> and class discussion of vocabulary during all reading activities. Within the Content Enhancement Routine series, <i>Concept Mastery</i> , <i>Concept Anchoring</i> , and <i>Concept Comparison</i> have a heavy focus on vocabulary.
Word analysis skill instruction (August et al., 2005)	Fusion Reading and the <i>Word Identification Strategy</i> from the Learning Strategies Curriculum teach word analysis skills.
Knowledge of cognates (August et al., 2005)	The SIM interventions that explicitly address this practice are the <i>Word Mapping Strategy</i> from the Learning Strategies Curriculum, Fusion Reading's <i>Vocabulary Strategy</i> and Thinking Reading activity, and Content Enhancement's <i>Vocabulary LINCing Routine</i> .

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Basic words instruction (August et al., 2005)	Fusion Reading's <i>Vocabulary Strategy</i> and <i>Bridging Strategy</i> teach basic words as do the <i>Word Mapping Strategy</i> and <i>Word Identification Strategy</i> from the Learning Strategies Curriculum.
Extensive review and practice opportunities (August et al., 2005)	All SIM interventions include extensive guided, partner, and individual practice with elaborated feedback from teachers
Student involvement in conversations about text (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999)	Fusion Reading's Thinking Reading and Book Study activities as well as all seven strategies in the Fusion Reading curriculum involve students in conversations about text. All Learning Strategies and Content Enhancement Routines support extensive conversation about text and concepts.
Student literature logs (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999)	Fusion Reading's Book Study activity and <i>Vocabulary Strategy</i> require students to write literature logs.
Reading comprehension strategy instruction (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999)	Multiple reading strategies are built in to the Fusion Reading program. The Learning Strategies Curriculum features five specific reading strategies. Two Content Enhancement Routines—the <i>Survey Routine</i> and the <i>ORDER Routine</i> — are specifically designed to improve reading comprehension.
Teacher read alouds (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999)	Fusion Reading incorporates daily teacher read-aloud activities that blend student and teacher voice and model expert reader skills.

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