

Project ELLA
(English Language & Literacy Acquisition)
Abstract*

The purpose of project ELLA is to implement a scientifically rigorous, longitudinal evaluation of alternative instructional models for primary grade students whose first language is Spanish. Specifically, we seek to compare Structured English Immersion and Transitional Bilingual Models when delivered with highest level of instructional quality and when delivered in a fashion reflecting more typical current practices. In the end, we seek to answer the pressing question of which instructional delivery model is most effective in helping native Spanish speaking children in acquiring English language and literacy skills. We also seek to know if certain children respond more favorably in one model while others respond more favorably to the other. Ultimately, we seek to be able to answer not just which model is “best”, but under what circumstances and for whom each model is best. To accomplish this goal, we propose a four-year longitudinal investigation with 1152 predominately Spanish-speaking students who will begin the study in their kindergarten year and end the study in their third grade year. These students will be assigned to either Structured English Immersion (SEI) or Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs by their schools (and matched for study condition), then assigned randomly to either an enhanced instructional version of SEI or TBE or to the same program type as typically delivered by their school. Once placed in to a condition, students will remain in that condition for the duration of the study. For each Enhanced Classroom condition, we propose two tiers of intervention. The first tier will consist of enhancing classroom level instruction through ongoing coaching an inclusion of Daily Oral Language Instruction. The second tier intensive English tutorials by trained paraprofessionals delivered in small groups. Further, we will include a parental involvement program targeted at aiding parents to develop their own English skills so that they can in turn facilitate the English language development of their children. This is one of the three national research project sponsored by the Institute of Educational Sciences, U.S Department of Education. Project ELLA was designed and is being implemented by Texas A&M University, Sam Houston State University, Southern Methodist University and Aldine Independent School District.

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