

## English Language Learner Updates

By Ana Boyenga, Director of ELD

I want to extend my personal admiration to all school staffs for preparing students for state testing at the end of the month. There has been a tremendous amount of effort, time, and real introspection in preparing students for the “BIG GAME.” I believe the extended ELL day for our English Language Learners will move us from our short term goal of raising test scores to our long term goal of high quality, engaged student learning. Note: We have 71 teachers serving 637 English Language Learners across the district during the extended ELL day. *This is Outstanding!*



Think about this —

“The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it is the same problem you had last year.”

(John Foster Dulles)

**Go TEAM ATWATER!!!!**

### RECLASSIFICATION NEWS

During the months of January and February reclassification meetings were held at all school sites to reclassify English Language Learners to fluent English proficient status. Reclassification is the goal for all of our English Language Learners.



We had a **total** of **206** meet the criteria to be reclassified during the 2007-2008 school year. To celebrate we will be taking these newly reclassified students on a tour of UC Merced and each student will receive a certificate to acknowledge their success. A huge **THANK YOU** to **ALL** for your work with our English Language Learners!

Following are the number of ELLs that were reclassified by school site for the 2007-2008 school year:

<b>Aileen Colburn</b>	25	<b>Mitchell Senior</b>	18	<b>Thomas Olaeta</b>	25
<b>Bellevue</b>	60	<b>Peggy Heller</b>	13	<b>Shaffer</b>	25
<b>Elmer Wood</b>	11	<b>Mitchell K-6</b>	29		
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>206</b>

### Looking Ahead

English Language Learner Criteria Forms will once again be available on-line. This is an opportunity for teachers to provide input on the new ELD level for the 2008-2009 school year. A memo with details will be sent out the week of April 21st.



# Motivation

**Question:** How can we involve parents of English language learners?

**Concern:** Parent Involvement

## **Scaffolding Strategies:**

- Encourage parents to have primary-language conversations with their children each day about school events and activities. Model or send home a list of the kinds of questions parents can ask.
- Encourage parents to read books with their children. Help them find resources through the library, local bookstores, and community services.
- Explain the value of homework (and then make homework tasks valuable). Ask parents to provide a quiet space and to designate a regular time for homework. They should discuss the work in the primary language and help, if possible, or perhaps a sibling or a school-assigned tutor can help.
- Invite parents to attend orientation workshops, parent-teacher meetings, open houses, school performances (especially involving their children), seminars, and English as a second language classes for themselves (geared toward the English they need for understanding and helping their children adjust to school).
- Invite students and their parents to come to school for portfolio nights (i.e., children-led parent conferences) and family learning nights (e.g., children-led centers to share such learning activities as science experiments, storytelling, math games, and mapping-the-world-by-heart activities).
- Be sure to prepare for the kinds of barriers that might prevent parents' involvement by providing such services as translated notices, on-site interpreters, transportation, and child care.
- Encourage your school to hire a parent liaison to make home visits and calls and to provide insights into the linguistic and cultural factors that may affect parental involvement.

## **Commentary:**

- Parental involvement can have a significant effect on students' success in school, especially when it comes to literacy and cognitive development. However, teachers often ask parents to speak English to their children in an attempt to increase students' proficiency. In fact, research dictates that parents should interact with their children in the languages in which they are most dominant and comfortable. It is the nature of the parent-child interaction rather than the choice of language that develops literacy-readiness skills. Children who experience elaborated exchanges with their parents come to school with a cognitive maturity that other children may lack. As they acquire English, this level of cognitive development with transfer in English.
- Parental involvement is multifaceted and reciprocal. Schools need to provide background socio-cultural information and training to teachers and school staff so they can work effectively with parents and families (i.e., without being judgmental). Methods of two-way communication need to be institutionalized and not be dependent on the few persons who are bilingual. Outreach efforts need to take into account the practical barriers which may impede parental involvement. Schools need to link the curriculum to home through learning activities and scaffolds. Parents need to feel and be empowered to be a part of the decision-making process. Families with special needs must be assisted through community services (e.g., sponsoring agencies, religious institutions, and key community leaders.)
- Above all, it is important to establish a climate that makes each and every parent feel welcome. This may require some self-reflection on the part of schools, especially as it pertains to the parents of English language learners.