



There are many approaches to delivering language assistance to English learners (ELs). Under federal law, EL programs must be: (1) based on a sound educational theory; (2) adequately supported so that the program has a realistic chance of success; and (3) periodically evaluated and revised, if necessary. In the District of Columbia, five EL program models are commonly used, each of which is considered effective by experts in the field. These models have been designed to meet the varying needs and grade levels of students across English proficiency levels.

All EL program models provide instruction that:

- Recognizes ELs' unique needs as second-language learners, regardless of whether it is content-based or language-focused
- Includes a specific focus on literacy development
- Includes a specific focus on oral language development.

A newcomer program is one type of EL program model. Read this brief overview to learn about characteristics of newcomer programs.

Key Features

Newcomer programs are designed for a specific EL subpopulation of very recent immigrant students with interrupted formal education, often older than elementary. They generally provide specialized schooling designed to acclimate EL students to the American school setting and prepare them to participate in mainstream classes.

Delivery

While the actual program may vary, newcomer programs generally include instruction designed to familiarize newcomers with American culture and educational settings. Another common theme is providing instruction in numeracy and literacy to fill in gaps students may have experienced in their formal education.

Newcomer programs may last anywhere from a semester to four years. They may also range from a half-day, in-school program to a full-time, self-contained school.

Distinctions

Newcomer programs are not for:

- ELs with intermediate or advanced levels of proficiency in English
- ELs with uninterrupted formal education.



Benefits

Newcomer ELs can:

- Gain preparation to participate in ESL and academic programs that are not specifically for newcomers
- Build foundational skills in literacy and math concepts
- Receive assistance acclimatizing to the US.

Staffing and Scheduling

When implementing a newcomer program, it is recommended to:

- Provide instruction that helps students acquire the English language as well as basic academic skills
- Support newcomers in their transition to the US
- Staff the program with social workers and counselors to support students and families
- Find additional services for families such as adult ESL, GED, counseling, etc.

Dually-identified Students

ELs with disabilities are also known as dually-identified students. The student's individualized education program (IEP) must address their language development needs. The IEP team for a dually-identified student should include staff with specialized knowledge of second language acquisition. Dually-identified students must receive services through **both** the EL program and specialized education program.

References and Resources

- Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)
<https://osse.dc.gov/page/english-learners-els>
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/resources.html>
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition
<https://www.colorincolorado.org/sites/default/files/ncomertoolkit.pdf>
- iColorin Colorado! <https://www.colorincolorado.org/>

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