DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF
EDUCATION

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.

Sheltered content instruction is one type of EL program model. Read this brief overview to learn about characteristics of sheltered content instruction.

Key Features

Sheltered content instruction simultaneously introduces both language and content, using specialized techniques to accommodate ELs' linguistic needs. It may be used for EL-only classrooms or for mixed classrooms with ELs and non-ELs. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is a specific version of the sheltered content instruction model with a considerable research base and specific strategies associated with it.

Delivery

Instruction is likely delivered by a general education teacher but may be delivered by an ESL-certified teacher. The model's teacher-oriented central framework is a recursive cycle of planning, instruction, and review or evaluation. Instruction focuses on the teaching of academic content rather than the English language itself, even though the acquisition of English may be one of the instructional goals.

Distinctions

The sheltered instruction content model does not:

- Teach English for social interaction only,
- Segregate EL students from the general education classroom for long periods of the day, or
- Focus only on oral or written English.

Benefits

Sheltered content instruction is a modification of academic content instruction that:
- Helps remove language barriers; and
- Helps ELs overcome those barriers through intentional instruction.

Staffing and Scheduling

When implementing a sheltered content instruction EL program, it is recommended to:
- Provide very specific training for the general education teacher, if delivered within the general education classroom
- Anticipate the model's need for planning, instruction, and review/evaluation
- Avoid segregating ELs from their non-EL peers

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://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html
- Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol http://www.cal.org/siop/
- ¡Colorin Colorado! https://www.colorincolorado.org/

For question or more information on English language acquisition professional development and technical assistance, please contact Anika Harris at Anika.Harris@dc.gov.