

Colorín Colorado®

Before- & After-School Support for Adolescent ELLs

By: Nancy Cloud, Judah Lakin, Erin Leininger, and Laura Maxwell (2010)

Before- and after-school programs can play an important role in ELLs' success by providing a place and time for homework, extra academic support, and enrichment activities. These programs are particularly helpful for older students who may not have access to academic resources or help at home, or those with responsibilities such as working or caring for younger siblings. Learn more about the elements of an effective before- and after-school program for ELLs from this excerpt of *Teaching Adolescent English Language Learners: Essential Strategies for Middle and High School* (Caslon Publishing, 2010).

Given all the challenges that ELLs face, we will certainly want to insure that ELLs access meaningful before- and after-school opportunities to both assist with their academics and acclimate them to the United States and the daunting bureaucracy of secondary schools. It is important, when possible, to provide these opportunities both before and after school, as many ELLs will not be able to make one time or the other because of family or work obligations. The following paragraphs present ideas for the types of programs that we think are particularly useful.

Types of programs

Orientation programs

One before- or after-school support option could center on orientation to life in their new community and useful knowledge and skills needed by young adults in the United States. Many of our students will have no idea how to do basic social tasks and because they are secondary school students may be too embarrassed to ask. It would be preferable to integrate such support into the ESL curriculum, but when it is not possible to do so, support should be offered in a structured way before or after school.

One strategy is to run mini-workshops where you educate your students on things like:

- "What Services Are Available at the Post Office?"
- "Where Do You Go for Bus Passes?"
- "How Do You Get a Lunch Number?"
- "How Do You Set Up a Bank Account?"

Sometimes students have other people who can help them with these types of activities, but often they do not, and providing them a safe and nonjudgmental place where they can learn is important. If we expect them to be successful, we need to make it our responsibility to give them not only academic skills but also life skills.

Tutoring programs

The second service that we suggest all schools serving ELLs have is a before- or after-school tutoring program. As secondary students are required to do "double the work" — learn English and content — it is often a daunting task to try and keep up with as many as eight subjects at a time (Short & Fitzsimmons,

2007). Many also face the challenge of working or family obligations that can consume many hours of their week as well. Although some of them actually want to do work at home, they simply may not have a space where they can quietly study because of small living quarters or large families.

Additionally, they may also need access to a computer for much of their homework and not have one available to them at home. For all of these reasons, it is important to try to provide a well-structured before- and after-school tutoring program at your school that is developed not solely by teachers but by guidance counselors working in collaboration with teachers and families. Although every school and community is different, we have found that certain elements will help improve the efficacy of the program, and so we make the following practical suggestions.

Effective Elements of a Before- and After-School Tutoring Program

- **Staff and coordinate the program with ELL teachers and ELL guidance counselors:** English language learners will be more likely to come if their teachers and guidance counselors will be there because their presence will provide a certain level of comfort.
- **Properly train volunteers:** In addition to teachers, it is useful to have volunteers to provide students with more individualized instruction. It is important to remember, though, that these volunteers need to be equipped to properly assist the ELL students without simply giving them the answers. (You can get tutors from many sources, but college students in teacher preparation programs are good sources to tap, as their participation benefits them and your students.) Consider the following:
 - Explain your student's situation as background for the tutor.
 - Provide the tutor with a certain level of background information on how ELLs learn (conversational fluency versus academic language proficiency, L1 literacy and its connection to L2, etc.; these concepts will be explained more fully in the chapters that follow).
 - Give the tutor a specific task for the day and ask the tutor to report back at the end of the day on the progress made.
 - Allow the tutor time to simply get to know the student and form a relationship.
 - Provide the tutor with a white board and marker to give immediate explanations and work through problems that may arise during the tutoring session.
- **Provide computers and printers:** For many students this will be their only opportunity to work on a computer and be able to print material, so it is really important to try and provide these materials.
- **Provide incentives:** Students enjoy getting little gifts or prizes, or extra points, for attendance or hard work, and these show the program recognizes and values their hard work.
- **Contact parents:** Many parents of ELLs are very nervous about their students staying after school for a variety of reasons, and they are also often suspicious of why their students do not come home right away. As a result, it is a good idea to tell those parents that you will contact them at the beginning of tutoring to let them know that their child is there, and you will contact them when their child leaves, to let them know that their child is on their way home. This is only a slight inconvenience to you as a teacher or counselor, but it usually makes a world of difference for the parent or guardian, and allows students to get the extra help that they need.

- **Partner with classroom teachers:** It is important to try and be in touch with your students' other classroom teachers who do not participate in tutoring to tell them how their students are doing and find out if they think the tutoring is helping. They may also have suggestions on what they would like their students to be doing in tutoring. Such communication will also allow the students to see that you are in contact with their classroom teacher and will show that their work is being noticed by multiple adults and is paying off.

Source: Cloud, N., Lakin, J., Leininger, E. & Maxwell, L. (2010). *Teaching Adolescent English Language Learners: Essential Strategies for Middle and High School*. (pp. 46-48). ©Caslon Publishing. Printed with permission, all rights reserved.

References

References

Click the "References" link above to hide these references.

Short, D.J., & Fitzsimmons, S. (2007). Double the work: Challenges and solutions to acquiring language and academic literacy for adolescent English language learners. A report commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education. Available at http://www.allred.org/publication_material/reports/double_work.

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/38578?theme=print>

© Copyright 2008. All rights reserved. Colorín Colorado receives major funding from the American Federation of Teachers. Additional funding is provided by the National Institute for Literacy and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. iColorín Colorado! ® is a registered trademark of WETA.

Stay informed! Subscribe to our **e-mail newsletters**.

