

# Brief Insights | Co-Designed English Learner Improvement Networks

From 2019 to 2021, LMU-CEEL and the Improvement Collective (IC) co-led and facilitated an English Learner Improvement Network (ELIN) in an urban school district and charter organization serving between approximately 50% to 80% of students who had ever been classified as English Learners (ELs). ELIN grantees defined their current needs and capacities, improvement science approach, and EL goals. Through the ELIN, they implemented practices to address inequities and improve EL's education, language acquisition, and overall achievement. Below are the key themes and recommendations that emerged from an analysis of interviews of ELIN leads, grantees, and artifacts:

## Key Themes:

1 EXPERT PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT

2 CONTEXT IMPACTS IMPROVEMENT

3 SMALLER STEPS LEAD TO LARGER CHANGES

4 COLLABORATIVE COACHING COUNTS

5 TEACHER LEADERS SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION



## Why Does This Matter?

- **Addressing Inequity:** Research indicates that addressing inequities for English learners involves implementing policies and practices that ensure equitable access to educational opportunities and outcomes. These LEAs identified a problem of practice within their systems and focused on implementation of practices to improve ELs' education.
- **Improving English Learner Education:** A networked approach bringing together scholars and educators with diverse skillsets and knowledge has the potential to increase teacher expertise. Through integrating an EL focus with an Improvement Science process, this ELIN research highlights the benefits of such collaborative models in translating research into effective practices for ELs.
- **Empowering Educators:** A teacher leader model fosters leadership and provides direct access to teachers to drive improvements that change classroom practice for ELs, validate their work, and facilitate cyclical learning.
- **Responding to Challenges:** ELIN grantees were faced with changes in their local contexts, including leadership transitions and the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted priorities and project implementation. However, their focus on ELs throughout these challenges contributed to their success.
- **Change is Incremental:** Although large goals are important in guiding LEAs' mission, modifying them into smaller, actionable steps and changes in practice is critical to laying the foundation for larger change down the line.

## Recommendations

This case study contributes knowledge of networks' ability to support education for ELs and clarifies the factors that contribute to success, showcasing the benefits of intense collaboration between experts in EL education and Improvement Science. Themes from this case study and prior research suggest the following recommendations:

**Acknowledge the importance of deep content and process knowledge and expertise to implement effective change.**

**Ensure that coaching from content and process experts and site teacher leaders is frequent and on-going.**

**Expect the unexpected, remaining flexible and ready to adapt plans and processes to stay the course.**

**Time and funding are essential to learn and apply new approaches.**

Linda R. G. Kaminski, Ed.D.  
Magaly Lavadenz, Ph.D.

Elvira G. Armas, Ed.D.  
Grecya V. López, M.S.

Director of Research and Policy, Affiliate Faculty  
Leavey Presidential Chair of Ethics and Moral Leadership, Executive Director  
Director of CEEL, Affiliate Faculty  
Research Associate

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Loyola Marymount University  
Center for Equity for  
English Learners

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