

# Facilitating Professional Learning Communities That Support Struggling Readers Who Are English Learners in the Southwest



## Purpose

The *Professional Learning Communities (PLC) Facilitator's Guide* assists PLCs in applying evidence-based strategies to support struggling readers who are English learners.

## Research Base

The *PLC Facilitator's Guide* aligns with the *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School* educator's practice guide, produced by the What Works Clearinghouse, Institute of Education Sciences.

The practice guide presents four evidence-based recommendations:

- 1. Academic vocabulary:** Teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities
- 2. Content-area instruction:** Integrate oral and written English language instruction into content-area teaching
- 3. Structured writing instruction:** Provide regular, structured opportunities to develop written language skills
- 4. Small-group intervention:** Provide small-group instructional intervention to students struggling in areas of literacy and English language development



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Supporting Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School

REL 165

- ★ Activities and content for 8 PLC sessions
- ★ 31 handouts
- ★ 23 videos

## Benefits for Educators

- ▶ Evidence-based strategies to help K–8 English learners acquire academic language and literacy skills
- ▶ Collaborative professional learning experience for reading, discussing, sharing, and applying the practice guide's key ideas and strategies
- ▶ Activities and content for eight 75-minute PLC sessions
- ▶ Systematic five-step cycle that encourages PLCs to debrief, define, explore, experiment, and reflect and plan



## Testimonials From PLC Facilitators:

- ★ "Resources are invaluable . . . videos are super"
- ★ "The recommendations, the videos, and the graphic organizers . . . refocused my thinking and clarified the best methods for helping ELLs"
- ★ "Excellent resources for creative, effective PLCs"
- ★ "The resources and research base was most effective"
- ★ "The presentation of research evidence, including the degree of evidence for each of the focus recommendations" [about what was most helpful]

## Video Series

- ▶ **4 introductory videos** cover the practice guide recommendations
- ▶ **19 classroom videos** show actual instruction at three grade levels: 2–3 (combination), 4, and 6–8 (newcomers)
  - » Pre-Teaching Vocabulary\*
  - » Using Videos to Anchor Instruction
  - » Activities to Promote Word Learning
  - » Completing a Graphic Organizer
  - » Providing Review
  - » Using Graphic Organizers in Writing\*
  - » Word Parts and Cognates
  - » Most popular topics

## Success

- ★ Series titles account for the top 5 most watched videos on the Institute of Education Sciences's YouTube channel.

## Conclusion/Scholarly Significance

The *PLC Facilitator's Guide*, along with the companion educator's practice guide, is intended to foster a deeper understanding of how scientifically based research on educating English learners may be applied to classroom practice. The research on effective instruction for English learners provides the basis for the guide's content, while the PLC format provides teachers with a structure for shared learning and improvement as they apply evidence-based concepts to classroom practice.

This PLC model is a key component of coherent and high-quality professional development (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). Through this evidence-based and collaborative approach, the *PLC Facilitator's Guide* helps educators align the needs and learning goals of English learners with school curriculum and school- and districtwide change efforts.