MiMap

Creating a Supportive Teaching and Learning Environment for English Language Learners

Why go this route?

It is necessary to build the environment that will support learning. It does not just magically appear. It takes time, commitment, and belief in oneself and one's students. All students can learn, given the appropriate supports and models, once the barriers to responsive education are eliminated. These barriers include:

- Climate barriers
- Expectational barriers
- Cultural barriers
- Language barriers
- Content barriers
- Resource barriers
- Delivery barriers
- Assessment barriers
- Community involvement barriers (SEE INSERT C for Step 2)

In a supportive and responsive environment students feel more confident and capable of accessing the language and content, and teachers feel more competent, and know they have done their best to meet the needs of their students.

You'll know you've arrived when...

- When students have built meaningful and trusting relationships with other students and adults in the school
- Students take risks in interacting with others and producing language
- English Language Learner (ELL) attendance rates increase
- ELLs are motivated to learn
- There is active involvement by parents
- Students are ready to learn!

Construction Zone

It's about TIME

- It is imperative that the entire staff increase their intercultural competence, based on the nine areas. This can be facilitated by someone who is well versed in cultural topics, and is able to present a wide range of engaging activities for staff to increase their competence.

- It would be wise to administer an attitudinal survey to staff based on the nine areas of intercultural competence, to increase their self-awareness and determine staff needs.

- Staff should be involved in activities designed to enhance their ability to develop and maintain effective staff-student relationships.

Potential COSTS

- Workshop presenters and/or speakers to facilitate the dialogue. The costs for these sessions can range from $500-$3000 per day, in addition to possible teacher stipends and substitute costs.

- Materials should be made available to staff on the various cultures and religions represented in the student body.

The Process

A step-by-step guide to developing a shared school vision.

NOTE: Steps marked with a ● are accompanied by one or more inserts, included in this packet.

1 **Get to Know Your Students** Get to know them as a whole individual, not just as an English Language Learner.

Each student comes into our school system with a cultural/linguistic background that we need to become familiar with. Understanding these unique aspects of our individual students makes the difference between the student being ready to learn or not. (See INSERT for Step 1.)

2 **Build Connections and Relationships** It is important that the child see that you value them as a person, and are willing and eager to become an important part of their lives.

Assign the student a buddy, not necessarily a same language peer. This will help them acquire English, and get them to speak English more readily. Do not have them depend too much on a native language peer to translate, or they will not strive to understand English, and will just wait for the translation. Additionally, we must encourage teacher-parent, parent-teacher relationships, which can only be initiated when the student feels comfortable enough to bring the parent into the setting. (See INSERTS A, B and C for Step 2.)

3 **Increase Your Cultural Knowledge** Learn as much as you can about the language and culture of your students.

Encourage students to express their points of view and opinions on different issues and share information about their culture. Bring language and culture into the classroom. Culture is a recipe for behavior, whether it be social or academic behavior. The better we understand a student's culture, we can more fully accommodate their social and academic behavior. (See INSERT for Step 3.)

4 **Create an Environment of High Expectations** English Language Learners must strive to achieve the same goals as native speakers, and are capable of achieving those goals if proper supports are put in place for them from the onset.

5 **Develop a Student-Centered Approach to Teaching and Learning.** Students can better acquire language when activities are planned that actively involve students.

We can only get meaningful student input once we have established trusting relationships with our students. (See INSERTS A-C for Step 5.)

Getting more mileage from creating supportive teaching and learning environments for ELLs

How creating supportive teaching and learning environments for English Language Learners benefits your school in regard to the following initiatives:

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

- Title III of ESEA requires that schools ensure children who come from homes where English is not the primary language (ELLS) are assessed annually for English proficiency to determine if they are achieving adequate yearly progress in English Language acquisition.

State Accreditation System

- A component of each school's annual report card is assessment data on student performance of which ELLs are one of the sub-populations for AYP. In order for these students to experience fair access to the curriculum and the entire educational experience, they must feel supported in their efforts in a system that recognizes their uniqueness and builds on their strengths.

Michigan Continuous School Improvement Process (Mi-CSI)
Michigan School Improvement Framework
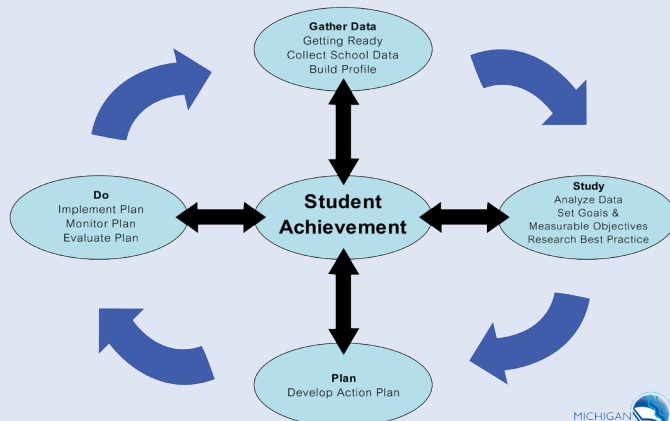
Data relating to English Language Learners must be disaggregated and strategies must be included in all aspects of the continuous school improvement process.

Resources

Books, Articles, Websites

The Principal's Book of Lists
Ramsey, John Wiley & Sons, 2002.

The Compassionate Classroom: Relationship Based Teaching and Learning
Sura Hart and Victoria Kindle Hodson, Encinitas, CA: Puddle Dancer Press, 2004.

What Every Teacher Should Know About Diverse Learners
Donna Walker Tileston, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2004.

Relationship-Driven Classroom Management
John M. Vitto, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2003.

Cultural Competence: A Primer for Educators
Jerry V. Diller and Jean Moule, Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth, 2005.

Intercultural Development Research Association

San Antonio, TX
http://www.idra.org.

Website for the Responsive Classroom

http://www.responsiveclassroom.org.

Link to Multicultural Education Based Websites

http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/sites1. Html/

National Assocation for Multicultural Education

http://www.nameorg.org/

The Southern Poverty Law Center

http://www.tolerance.org/

People

Intermediate School Districts/RESAs can serve as a resource.

For more information, contact:

Michigan Department of Education

Office of Education Improvement and Innovation
517-241-3147

School Improvement Unit
517-373-8480

Curriculum and Instruction Unit
517-241-4285

Office of Assessment and Accountability
517-373-0048

Office of Early Childhood and Family Services
517-241-3592

Office of Field Services
517-373-3921

Special Populations Unit
517-373-6066

Office of Professional Preparation and Teacher Certification
517-373-6505

Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services
517-373-9433

Community and Faith-based Organizations in your area for suggestions and support.

MICHIGAN Department of Education
Office of School Improvement

www.michigan.gov/mde