Advocating for ELL students and their families at the school level

Educator advocates in their schools for English Language Learner (ELL) students and families using a five-step action plan

Key Method

The educator develops and implements an ELL advocacy plan based upon the five steps that can be implemented in their school community.

Method Components

Who are English Language Learners (ELLs)?

At the federal level, an English Language Learner (ELL) is defined as a student:

A. Who is aged 3 through 21;

B. Who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary or secondary school;

C.

- i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant OR
- ii) (I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; OR
- iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant AND

D. whose difficulties speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual –

- i. the ability to meet the State’s proficient level of achievement on the State’s assessments described in section 1111(b)(3);
- ii. The ability to achieve successfully in the classrooms where the language of instruction is English, or
- iii. The opportunity to participate fully in society.
What is advocacy?

Advocacy for ELLs can be described as action taken to work for ELLs’ access to high-quality education and equitable educational opportunities. There are many different components to advocacy for ELLs including equitable access to content, equitable assessment opportunities, effective collaboration with families, and clear and transparent processes for identification, monitoring, and exiting of ELLs.

As ELLs and their families become more familiar with the U.S. educational system and learn to advocate for themselves, they will require fewer advocacy efforts from others to obtain equitable educational opportunities. Educators should practice this scaffolded advocacy strategy so ELLs can become self-advocates.

What is educational equity?

Educational equity means that all students, regardless of culture, race, economic status, background, or other personal circumstances should have equal access to opportunities, resources, and support needed to achieve academically.

What are the key strategies to advocate for English Language Learners (ELLs)?

Educators will have the opportunity to practice advocating for ELLs with a step-by-step process that will enable them to identify an advocacy issue and work to bring about change in their school community. It is important to note that the order of the steps is non-linear. 5 Steps to ELL Advocacy:

1. **Isolate the issue**- Clarify the source of an issue facing your ELL students and their families so appropriate action steps can be planned.

2. **Identify your allies**- Consider advocating alongside partners in the school community with a variety of perspectives about the issue.

3. **Be clear on the rights of ELL students**- Having a clear understanding of the local, state, and federal policies and laws pertaining to ELLs and their families empowers you to advocate for what is ethically right and legally justified.

4. **Organize and educate others**- You are not alone in this work and need to expand your network of allies so you can work with others in your school setting and wider community.

5. **Identify your outlets for change**- Think of what incremental steps can be taken to bring about change in your classroom, school, district, and community.

Supporting Research


National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL). NNELL provides leadership, advocacy, and support to early language learning and teaching. http://nnell.org


Resources

Advocacy for ELLs Defined and the Need for Advocacy. This webinar provides a working definition of advocacy for ELLs and introduces the concept of scaffolded advocacy. It also highlights why advocacy for ELLs is needed and targets some specific areas of advocacy.

Advocating for English learners: A guide for educators Chapter 2. This chapter describes the need to create a shared sense of responsibility for ELLs as a way of advocating for them and provides some tools for helping to accomplish this. In addition to reading the chapter, you should complete the chapter activities.
http://bit.ly/AdvocatingforELLsDSF


Colorín Colorado. Offers a wide range of resources in various languages to teachers and parents of English Language Learners in Pre-K to 12. Their resources are in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, and Hmong. This section is specific to advocacy.
http://colorincolorado.org/advocacy-ells-recommended-resources

English Language Learners face unique challenges (NEA). This document explores how ELL students are impacted by school policies, services, and programs.
nea.org/assets/docs/HE/ELL_Policy_Brief_Fall_08_(2).pdf

ELL advocacy: Tips from educators. A video describing how ELL teachers can advocate for their students and the difference supportive administrators can make in helping those efforts.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4L0LRDJqOVY&feature=youtu.be&list=PLoU659hwTdDZapa9arvY1xZuu6EmeoTTw

Expanding Your EL advocacy sphere of influence. At the TESOL International Association 2014 Advocacy Summit, Diane Staehr Fenner, President of DSF Consulting, explains how educators can collaborate to increase their “sphere of influence” in their advocacy for English learners. She describes the ripple effects of advocacy from the classroom to the school, district, state, and national levels.
https://youtu.be/7twD2CxlX6I

You are already a leader: Identifying your leadership skills on behalf of ELLs. This article highlights some diverse leadership experiences of ELL educators and shares ideas for identifying and honing your own leadership capacity.
http://colorincolorado.org/article/you-are-already-leader-identifying-your-leadership-skills-behalf-ells

National Education Association. NEA advocates for English Language Learners by supporting educational policy, professional development, and quality instruction (including bilingual ed) facilitating ELL achievement.
http://www.nea.org/ell

Defining advocacy for English learners. What does advocacy for English learners really mean? At the TESOL Advocacy Summit 2014, Diane Staehr Fenner, President of DSF Consulting, defines the new concept of “scaffolded advocacy” for ELLs.
https://youtu.be/8juUp13pwTY

Who are English Language Learners? A webinar that looks at the federal definition and the demographics of ELLs, and looks at the opportunity and achievement gap.

5-Step Action Plan
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4L4PKSr_CVnXzBta1NSTWNsa1U/view?usp=sharing

Ensuring English learner students can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs. This document, jointly-issued by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice for state education agencies (SEAs), public school districts, and schools highlights the responsibility that SEAs, districts, and schools have to ensure that ELLs can participate in educational programs in equal and meaningful ways.

All in! How educators can advocate for English Language Learners

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria
Respond to each question and submit for assessment.

**Part 1. Overview Questions**

200 word max

How have you helped or how can you help ELLs and their families learn to advocate for themselves?

- **Passing:** Educator completely answers each of the three context questions using personal examples and supporting evidence clearly illustrating your discoveries, experience advocating, and/or plan for advocating for ELLs. Writing is organized and easy to understand.

200 word max

After looking at issues affecting ELLs and their families, what do you feel is your role in bringing about change for ELLs and their families?

- **Passing:** Educator completely answers each of the three context questions using personal examples and supporting evidence clearly illustrating your discoveries, experience advocating, and/or plan for advocating for ELLs. Writing is organized and easy to understand.

200 word max

Which English Language Learner (ELL) issues needing advocacy most surprised you in general? In your own school community?

- **Passing:** Educator completely answers each of the three context questions using personal examples and supporting evidence clearly illustrating your discoveries, experience advocating, and/or plan for advocating for ELLs. Writing is organized and easy to understand.

**Part 2. Work Examples / Artifacts**

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following three artifacts:

1. Select three issues you wish to advocate for and write a five-step action plan (see Resources section) for each using the information from All In! How Educators Can Advocate for English Language Learners (see Resources section). (200-word limit for each part of the plan)

2. Select ONE issue that you will actually advocate for and write a letter to your principal where you request a private meeting or staff meeting time to go over the five-step action plan for this one issue. (500-word limit)

3. Create a Powerpoint presentation that can be used with your staff to share what you learned about advocating and the five-step action plan for your one issue.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Plan</td>
<td>Explicitly describes each of the five steps to advocate for ELLs</td>
<td>Describes the five steps to advocate for ELLs, but does not provide adequate detail for each step</td>
<td>Describes the steps to advocate for ELLs with so little detail that a clear picture of each step cannot be formed by the evaluator</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connections to the content from the ALL In! guide are evident throughout the advocacy plan</td>
<td>Connections to the content from the ALL In! guide are evident throughout some of the advocacy plan</td>
<td>Connections to the content from the ALL In! guide are not made in the advocacy plan</td>
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<td>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure enhance clear communication</td>
<td>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure does not inhibit clear communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
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<td>Business style letter explicitly includes the following components:</td>
<td>Includes research and demographics on ELLs nationwide and in school community</td>
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<td>The issue you are advocating for</td>
<td>Walks audience through selected Five-Step Advocacy Plan for issue affecting ELLs in school community</td>
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<td>The rationale for choosing this issue</td>
<td>Engages audience through active participation</td>
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<td>A request to meet to discuss the issue</td>
<td>Includes a call to action with explicit next steps for staff to take</td>
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<td>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure enhance clear communication</td>
<td>Includes relevant media and graphics to enhance the presentation and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>500-word limit</td>
<td>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure does not inhibit clear communication</td>
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<td>100- to 200-word limit per step</td>
<td>500-word limit</td>
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<td>Letter includes the following components, but does not provide adequate detail:</td>
<td>Includes general OR school-specific research and demographics on ELLs</td>
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<td>The issue you are advocating for</td>
<td>Shares a Five-Step Advocacy Plan for an issue affecting ELLs nationwide</td>
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<td>The rationale for choosing this issue</td>
<td>Limited audience participation</td>
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<td>A request to meet to discuss the issue</td>
<td>Includes a call to action</td>
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<td>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure does not inhibit clear communication</td>
<td>Includes some media and graphics to enhance the presentation and learning</td>
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<td>500-word limit</td>
<td>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure does not inhibit clear communication</td>
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<td>100- to 200-word limit per step</td>
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<td>Letter includes little detail about or omits the following components:</td>
<td>Includes some research and demographics on ELLs</td>
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<td>The issue you are advocating for</td>
<td>Shares template for Five-Step Advocacy Plan</td>
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<td>The rationale for choosing this issue</td>
<td>No audience participation</td>
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<td>A request to meet to discuss the issue</td>
<td>No call to action</td>
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<td>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure inhibits clear communication</td>
<td>All informational slides</td>
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<td>500-word limit</td>
<td>Grammar, spelling, and sentence structure does not inhibit clear communication</td>
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Part 3. Reflection

400 word min 500 word max

Reflect on the following guiding questions:
- What key insights did you learn about your role and steps you can take when advocating for ELLs and their families?
- How will your new learning about advocacy affect or change your role when working with ELL students and their families?

- **Passing**: Response thoughtfully addresses the impact the micro-credential has had on the educator’s practice in supporting and advocating for ELL students. Reflection includes personal examples and supporting evidence that is organized and easy to understand.

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