

THE STUDENT-TUTOR PLACEMENT PROCESS

The ESL Department spends several hours working on the student lists and tutor assignments. Small "tweaks" are still being made as schools and tutors update us with the data.

We have interviewed and selected several new tutors with the ESL Program. The new tutors are highly qualified - they are ESL teachers that taught abroad or in other states, bilingual individuals with teaching certificates or actively pursuing certificates, individuals with teaching certificates from other countries and teachers/retired teachers with a strong understanding of culture and strategies to improve the four domains of language.

For every child potentially eligible for services, a formula is used to place him/ her with a tutor that will best service the student's needs:

- First, the tutors are grouped according to languages spoken – bilingual or monolingual. Then, their preferences are taken into account - in terms of age of students with whom they would work and the districts in close proximity to their home.
- Next, the proficiency level of every child is gathered from many data sources (ELPA testing, SRSD, personal knowledge, and our student data list for Title III consortium from 05-06). Any student below LEPc (mid-intermediate), still developing oral language skills and BICS, in addition to academic language, I looked to place with a bilingual tutor who could speak that language. Accordingly, students at level LEPa or LEPb (a beginning speaker or low intermediate) were placed with bilingual tutors (who speak the native language of the student).
- After all students under the above mentioned criteria were placed, the remaining students that did not have a tutor that spoke their language **or** were at the higher levels of English proficiency (LEPd and LEPe) were grouped. With the focus being academic language and not interpersonal language, monolingual tutors (English only) were placed with students based on age and grade level, geographic location, and amount of English instructional services required. I tried to place the tutors in as few buildings as possible so that driving time would not limit the amount of student tutoring.

There have been guidelines set as a model to follow for junior high and high school ELL students for the amount of recommended tutoring hours per week dictated by the child's English proficiency level. We are also working to dispel the complete "pullout" method of tutoring. Depending on the child's language proficiency and other individual factors, we are working toward a 'push-in' model for many content classes that are usually the most de-contextualized and based on oral comprehension - without strategies to support the language (such as taking lecture notes). The goal is to schedule tutoring sessions during the child's Language Arts class as a pullout and have

it based on the content for the grade but through the ELP standards and its domains (reading, writing, speaking and listening). This will ensure that the instruction and student output are appropriate expectations for the child's current proficiency (based on the stages in language acquisition). For most other classes, much of the tutoring will be in class to clarify and support the instruction. Thus, for beginning level students at the middle school or high school, tutors may actually spend much of the day with just one student.

With school districts and our ESL department working together, information on accountability, the language acquisition processes, and ESL pedagogy is easily accessible to all building staff. Accordingly, there are many long term goals and we will be working toward them to improve the instruction and assessment of English language learners.

There are necessary components we will be introducing such as informing parents in a language comprehensible (as required by NCLB) by providing enrollment and literacy forms in their native language, developing a language development plan for each student, forms for providing a means of communication and progress reporting between classroom teachers and tutors, and much more. As part of this, the misinterpretation of the limitation of 60 hours per child has been identified and we will continue to work to clarify this problem. According to OCR and NCLB, schools have the responsibility and obligation to meet the needs of the ELL student. Mainstreaming a beginning or non-English speaker with sole after-school support does NOT meet these needs appropriately. Thus, at both at the macro county level and at the micro individual student level, many positive changes and improvements are being made to provide quality instruction to ELL students.