

Introduction

Twelve EL site facilitators participated in a one hour long focus group on February 22nd 2021 to examine (a) areas of success during the implementation of the new ELD Model, (b) challenges implementing the model, (c) types of professional learning EL site facilitators offer at schools, and (d) their recommendations regarding future implementation of the model. What follows is the results of a brief thematic analysis of the responses provided during the focus group, including sample quotes to illustrate each theme.

Describing the Philosophy of the ELD Model

The EL site facilitators indicated the new ELD model involves two components; (a) working with teachers on language learning for both EL and non-EL students, and (b) working with individual students and their families on academics more generally. The EL facilitators are designated to two or three school sites, where they are expected to be an integral part of the PLC and the MTSS process. The EL facilitators work closely to build relationships with staff at each school site to provide professional learning on the resources available for language learning instruction as well as provide follow-up (i.e., modeling, coaching, and co-teaching). The EL site facilitators' involvement in the professional learning and MTSS process allows the EL facilitator to work directly with EL students at every grade level as well as with teachers.

Areas of success implementing the ELD Model

#1) The EL site facilitators (many of whom were former EL teachers) report that the model allows them to work with more students and have the opportunity to form close relationships with students' families.

- The new model allows facilitators to get to know more students and their families.
 - “We work with students across all the grades “
 - “You can stay with a kid from Kinder through the grades”
 - “There is a misconception out there that we do not work with students.”
 - “We do get to directly communicate with families, something I did not get to do as an EL teacher.”
 - “We get to be the PIF in places where there are not enough ELs to warrant having one.”
 - “When you're an EL teacher, your radius of help is small. With this model you can help all the kids at one school, and as currently constructed, we help all the kids at multiple schools.”
 - “We do get to work with students a lot, as well as have direct communication with their teachers.”

#2) The EL Facilitator Model enhances credibility with school staff on site.

- The new model allows the EL facilitators to work with more teachers (across all grade levels) than the traditional “pull-out” model.
 - “The new model gives the impression you are a part of the staff.”
 - “In the old ELD model, you just work with the students, and the staff does not get the language learning necessary to improve instruction.”

- “All students are language learners, and teachers who buy in, are finding the language PL helpful.”
- “Creates buy-in when it is presented as Tier 1 instructions”

Challenges Implementing the ELD Model

#1) The success of the model depends on principal/school site buy-in

-Facilitators all agreed that having the principal’s support is critical for implementation of the model, including being invited to PLCs and obtaining buy-in from the teachers.

- “Having a strong principal who buys in makes all the difference.”
- “The hardest thing is to get principals on board. The one’s not on board “do what we have always done.”
- “Having the principals communicate, as we often miss meetings or directives because we are not included in the emails to the rest of the staff.”
- “It’s important to align with what the school already has going on. If they are already doing *Ellevation*, the buy in is greater.”

#2) Some sites utilize the EL site facilitators more than others

-In the experience of the EL facilitators, only a few of the schools have the amount of buy-in to where they are an active part of PLCs and are able to be involved in the MTSS process.

- “Out of the 3 schools, one does the EL model fabulously, the other 2 are having a difficult time adapting.” (a view shared by the majority of the group)
- “I’m experiencing pockets of teachers who like to co-teach; the rest want to do what we have always done.”
- “One site I am on the PL calendar every time, the other I am lucky if I get 15 minutes.”

#3) Working at Multiple Sites Sometimes Presents Issues

-There are several concerns related to working at multiple school sites. One important area of concern that was repeatedly discussed was how working at multiple sites impedes collaboration with school administration, staff and students/families.

- “Working at multiple sites makes it hard for teachers to know when to reach out, make contact, and set up follow-up time. My availability is not always known.”
- “Working at fewer schools can allow us to dive deeper not only with teachers, but getting to know the student piece that so many are worried about.”
- “Having the principals communicate is important, as we often miss meetings or directives because we are not included in the emails to the rest of the staff.”
- “Some of the differences we see in buy-in from the staff and the principal, is in part, because they are split between schools.”

- “Sometimes I feel like I am not included in emails or invited to things because the administrator and/or the teachers are unsure if I am available.”
- Similarly, when EL facilitators work at more than one site, it is hard to attend more than one PLC on a Wednesday afternoon.
- “It’s hard to make it to multiple PLCs when we are at multiple sites and everyone does it on early release Wednesday.”
 - “Every school does it Wednesday afternoon, and I have 3 schools. Why can we not stagger the days schools take early release?”
 - “Having PLCs on zoom lets us overcome, perhaps so online PL can be used moving forward.”
- There are also issues completing all the responsibilities at every site. Several EL site facilitators indicated that they wish they had more time to dedicate to MTSS and student-level work.
- “I don’t feel I can really go deep into my responsibilities because I am stretched so thin.”
 - “I work with teachers, and coaching, and co-teaching; then I feel I do not get enough time on the student level data.”
 - “With people wanting us to work directly with kids, it’s hard when you’re stretched so thin with so many responsibilities, at multiple sites.”
- They believe more time at one school site, *similar to the role out model employed by the Curriculum and Instruction team with regard to support the new Math curriculum*, would be beneficial. Many of them suggested spending one month with a single team embedded in a school site to help implement the new model and create buy-in among the school staff, followed up with EL site facilitator’s current work.
- “I like the C&I Math model where the LS or facilitator or a team goes into a new school for a period of time to be sure to set up all of the logistics, do the co-teaching, the MTSS and all the things that’s are needed.”
 - “Going in and having a committed team creates credibility and buy-in from the staff.”
 - “It would go super deep into a school, and then the site facilitators could be the follow-up support that ensures implementation.”

Professional Learning and the New ELD Model

- The EL site facilitators were asked to describe the types of PL they provided at sites. Below is a list of the PL mentioned when prompted.
- Ellevations
 - “The WIDA ‘can-do’”
 - “The ELLevation student report - helps gets your foot in the door.”
 - “Benchmark Ellevation Document PD
 - “ELLevation strategy of the month.

- “I introduce the topic their interested in through an ELLevation strategy”
- GLADD
 - MTSS for ELs
 - Think-Pair-Share

Two Concluding Thoughts the Group Wants Emphasized

#1) It is important to build relationships from Day 1 at the school site and clearly describe the role of the EL Facilitator Role so staff understand their purpose.

- “In year one I felt I was left on my own, no direction, no guidance; and the principals I was working with felt the same way.”
- “Principals did not really know our role, and neither did we. Instead we came in and were like “hello” and had to start from scratch.”
- “My first year was mostly about building relationships not just with the principal, but with staff. It is important for them to know your intentions, and that we are there as a resource.”
- “It is important to figure out what they (the school site) are working on and piggy backing on that helps build trust while also showing your usefulness.”
- “The hardest part is getting your foot in the door.”
- “It took 2 years to really be invited into classrooms.”

#2) Some EL Teachers are worried about the new model and teacher leadership.

- “We need to think about the logistics.”
- “Some teachers are not clear on the process.”
- “They think they need to take classes to upgrade the position.”