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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Ann Mabbott, Dutch-Indonesian refugee to the United States and professor emeritus of the Second Language Teaching and Learning Program in the School of Education at Hamline University. Thank you for setting an example for how we can mobilize systems that support our newest neighbors. Your career laid the foundation for the ELM Project and this book. We are forever appreciative of your expertise and your mentorship.



INTRODUCTION

Maggie and Cindy are birds that live at the Iguazu Falls bird sanctuary in Brazil. They are a lesbian macaw couple who were born in captivity and have been adopting rollaway eggs from other macaw couples for the duration of their 14-year relationship. The conservationists explain that despite their attempts to avoid teaching the macaws Portuguese, the birds repeatedly squawk “ARARÁ!” throughout the day. *Arará* means *macaw* in Portuguese. Because they heard it so often in their lives, they assumed it was the sound that macaws should make. As a result, they cannot be released to the wild; they would not be safe because of their lack of proficiency in macaw. (In their natural habitat, macaws can respond with hostility to those who are not fluent in the local dialect.)

For those who are reading this book, you know that language matters. Language is the vehicle through which we express our identity, opinions, needs, and wants to others. Without it, we are as vulnerable as Maggie and Cindy. We see this in the lives and hear this in the stories of the newcomers in our communities. We are currently living in the greatest global refugee crisis in history. Each day, 44,400 people are forced to leave their homes, resulting in 68.5 million displaced people worldwide (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018). Unfortunately, we seldom acknowledge the critical role that educators play in the resettlement process or how language is intricately woven into the experiences and identities of immigrants and refugees.

HOW SWEL CAME TO BE

Think about the English learners (ELs) in one of your classes. What percentage of each day do they spend with a trained English as a second language (ESL) teacher—one who has studied second language acquisition and language teaching? Depending on where you live, answers to this question will vary drastically, given that states vary in their credential requirements for teachers and that some areas are experiencing teacher shortages, which may result in hiring teachers with less formal training. For many, it is a small percentage

of time. Professor emerita and cofounder of the English Learners in the Mainstream (ELM) Project at Hamline University Ann Mabbott shares, “It gradually dawned on me that preparing excellent ESL teachers was not enough. All teachers, regardless of their discipline, need to be prepared to meet the linguistic and cultural needs of their immigrant and refugee students.” We know that the majority of the time that ELs spend in school is spent with general education (non-ESL) teachers. For this reason, we can no longer continue to produce ESL teachers who aspire to only work with ELs as direct service providers. ESL teachers also need to be equipped to be language experts and instructional coaches for their general education colleagues. Failing to respond to this need is failing our ELs. They deserve enriching curriculum and instruction *throughout* the day, not just for the short period that they work with an ESL teacher. If your child received 25 minutes of comprehensible input during a school day, you would be appalled. When it comes to general education teachers serving ELs, the most significant equity issues facing ELs today include negative teacher dispositions, limited teacher knowledge, and missing teacher skills.

In 2014, Minnesota teachers and legislators combined forces to draft what would become the most comprehensive piece of EL legislation in the nation. Authored by Congressman Carlos Mariani and Senator Patricia Torres Ray, the Minnesota Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act put in statute an increased emphasis on EL support in schools. Legislation included provisions in early childhood, elementary, secondary, adult, and teacher education intended to support the academic success of Minnesota’s EL population (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.). As the state with more refugees per capita than any other in the country (Lutheran Social Service, 2019), Minnesota has become a leader for education models, services, and policy in EL education. It is for this reason that many were quick to take action when this legislation was not implemented in the way that its proponents had expected.

Under the Minnesota LEAPs Act, all preservice teachers must learn about research-based practices for ELs in teacher preparation coursework. Additionally, all practicing teachers must demonstrate professional development (PD) in the area of working with ELs in order to qualify for licensure renewal. Minnesota teachers are generally relicensed every 5 years (Education Minnesota, n.d.). Unfortunately, the implementation of this policy was far from its proponents’ intent. At the time that the law was enacted, Minnesota teachers were asked only to write a reflective statement on their experience working with ELs. Though proponents of the legislation were glad to have the responsibility for serving ELs legally shared by all teachers, the application of this statute did not represent the spirit in which it was written. The task of writing a reflective statement does not sufficiently demonstrate that teachers have engaged in professional learning around promising practices for ELs, much less changed their practices to support EL academic development.

As former Minnesota ESL teachers and advocates for our state’s ELs, we were crestfallen as the legislation that we rallied so arduously for resulted in a surface-level task that held little promise for transformed teacher practice. For this reason, when the U.S. Department of Education notified institutions of teacher education that the Office of English Language Acquisition would offer National Professional Development grants to improve the educational experience of ELs, we decided to apply. We dreamed up what we thought teacher PD *should* look like: It should be teacher led, immediately relevant, contextualized, and continual. It should not rely on outside experts. One of us (Michelle Benegas) and Ann Mabbott, professor emeritus, were the authors of the grant. We spent 2 months dreaming and toiling over what such a model would look like. With our combined 30 years of experi-

ence training general education teachers to work with ELs, we infused our knowledge and passion into what would become the ELM Project.¹

Over the course of the (5-year) grant, the ELM Project will train more than 350 ESL teachers who will launch the ELM Project integration on-site in their schools. All ELM Coaches—ESL teachers who are trained by the ELM Project—agree to coach up to 10 general education teacher colleagues and deliver at least 6 hours of targeted PD. As of December 2019, 200 ELM coaches have been trained and more than 450 general education teachers have worked one-on-one with an ELM coach in order to differentiate instruction for ELs. Although there are few studies that examine cross-content-area peer instructional coaching, the ELM Project is based on vetted models of instructional coaching (Knight, 2007; Aguilar, 2013), where ELM coaches train their colleagues to incorporate academic language instruction across the school day. ELM coaches are given the tools needed to implement the ELM Model of Teacher Leadership and Peer Coaching. These tools are open sourced and can be accessed on the ELM Project website (www.tinyurl.com/elmproject).

You may notice a shift from ELM to SWEL (school-wide English learning) in this text. While the SWEL model is informed by the ELM Project, the ELM Project is a federally funded grant initiative that is intended only to support implementation in Minnesota schools from 2016–2021. The SWEL model expands upon what was learned in the implementation of the ELM Project and offers a guide for others who wish to implement a similar teacher leadership model in their schools.

TERMS

The field of English language teaching is complicated when it comes to terms. Across states, systems, and spaces, we use different terms to refer to our profession, our students, and our colleagues. Though we appreciate the healthy debate over the propriety of these terms, we hope that you can transfer the concepts in this book to your context, even if our naming differs from yours. The terms used in this text are as follows:

English learner (EL): A student who is learning English while learning academic content.

ESL teacher: A practicing teacher who has received a state-endorsed license or credential to teach English as a second language and who is employed in a capacity to serve English learners.

General education teacher: A practicing teacher who has received a state-endorsed license or credential to teach *any area other than* English as a second language.

Educator: A practicing teacher, instructor, educational assistant, or school employee who serves English learners in an educational capacity.

Peer coach: A practicing English as a second language teacher who supports general education colleagues by observing their instruction and providing feedback, strategies, and resources.

Coachee: A practicing general education teacher who is coached by a peer coach.

¹The ELM Project was developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the ELM Project materials do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education and are not endorsed by the Federal Government.

Note: An undergirding premise of the book is that all teachers are teachers of ELs. For this reason, we do not use the term EL teacher. The specialization of ESL teachers lies not in the population that they serve, but in their knowledge of the discipline of English language instruction.

DISCLAIMERS

1. The authors of this book acknowledge the tension behind the concept of academic language. In many ways, suggesting that there is one right way for people to project themselves academically is problematic. There are certainly systems of White supremacy and cultural elitism at play that cannot be denied (see, e.g., Baker-Bell, 2020; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017). On the other hand, academic language is a tool for social capital—a currency that allows for social mobility. The SWEL model promotes a) providing ELs with the linguistic tools needed for social mobility outside of school and b) legitimizing multilingualism and multidialectalism in academic and professional spaces.
2. The SWEL model is designed to transform general education teacher practice. It takes complex theories and linguistic structures and makes them accessible to teachers who do not have a background in linguistics, pedagogical grammar, or second language acquisition theory.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

This book is designed to facilitate reproducing SWEL at any school that serves ELs, whether they make up the majority of the student body or are a smaller group within the school. By capitalizing on the expertise that is *already* in the building, schools can transform the educational experience of ELs throughout the school day. SWEL is the product of the work of many teacher leaders in the field. In Chapter 2, you will see excerpts from Madeline Benson’s (2019) master’s thesis on the roles and identities of ESL teacher leaders. Madeline is a first-grade teacher who previously worked as an ESL teacher. In Chapter 6, we present Amna Kiran’s English Learner Profile—a tool that she developed and continues to use for ELs in her district. In Chapter 8, we share an adapted version of ESL teacher Stephanie DeFrance Schmidt and school principal Catherine Rich’s action plan. This plan was thoughtfully curated to respond to the needs of their school’s EL population. In addition, woven throughout the book, you will see sections called “Voices From the Field.” These are quotes from actual ESL teachers and peer coaches who are enacting the SWEL approach in their schools.

The SWEL model is a school-wide system for EL support throughout the school day. We acknowledge that many of the strategies and approaches presented in this book will benefit a variety of learners, not just ELs. However, given the long-standing opportunity gap that our ELs experience (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.), it is critical that we respond to their specific needs with urgency. All students are academic language learners, and academic language learners benefit from explicit attention to language. For this reason, the focus of this guide is on ensuring that all educators have preparation to better serve ELs, with the caveat that these practices benefit all learners.

We have arrived at the materials in this book after years of working in both K–12 schools and teacher preparation programs within the higher education context. Despite our many years in the field, we recognize that our experiences are not universal. We both

identify as native-English-speaking, cisgender, White women from the Midwestern United States. We acknowledge that the privilege we have may influence our perspectives, and we work continuously to better understand our positionality and how it influences and impacts our work as teachers and advocates of ELs.

This book is intended for a variety of audiences:

1. Preservice ESL teachers who are preparing for the leadership roles of professional development delivery and peer coaching that may be part of their future positions
2. In-service ESL teachers who would benefit from a guide for professional development delivery as well as tools for peer coaching
3. School administrators (e.g., principals or assistant principals) who are interested in improving the EL learning experience through a distributed leadership model
4. District administrators who are interested in designing school systems that position ESL teachers as language experts and teacher trainers as well as direct service providers

This book is organized in four parts. It can be read sequentially or in an order that best suits the reader's needs. The following provides an overview of the three parts of the book.

Part A. Foundations in Building School-Wide Systems to Teach Academic Language Across the School Day

This section presents an overview and the conceptual frameworks underpinning the SWEL model. We recommend that all who are interested in the model read Chapter 1, “The Need for a School-Wide English Learning Model.” This chapter substantiates the need for teacher leadership and provides a comprehensive program design for academic language learning. Chapter 2, “Teacher Professionalism, Distributed Leadership, and Peer Coaching,” presents how distributed leadership is well suited to support ESL teacher leaders. We highly recommend that those in administrative positions focus on this chapter. Chapter 3, “The SWEL Model of Academic Language Instruction” takes the complex domains of language (semantics, morphology, phonology, syntax, and pragmatics) and makes them accessible to a general education teacher audience. This chapter is most critical for anyone who is tasked with teaching content while attending to language or with training colleagues to teach content while attending to language.

Part B. Application of Teacher Professional Development of Dispositions, Knowledge, and Skills: Professional Development Plans

This part of the book provides ready-to-use PD plans for SWEL coaches to use with their general education colleagues. The plans in these three chapters are recommended for anyone tasked with providing PD to general education colleagues about the needs of ELs. They are all designed to be refined for local contexts, and we encourage those who facilitate any of the PD activities included in this book to consider how they might personalize them to ensure their relevance to the ELs in a given school or region.

Chapter 4, “Teacher Dispositions Needed to Effectively and Respectfully Serve English Learners,” delineates six critical dispositions. Teacher dispositions are the beliefs or mindset that teachers have toward working with ELs; activities in Chapter 4 are centered on teacher mindset. Chapter 5, “Teacher Knowledge Needed to Effectively and Respectfully Serve English Learners,” presents six key areas of knowledge. Teacher knowledge is defined as mastery of the content area of instruction. The PD plans in Chapter 5 are based on discrete

areas of knowledge that will serve educators of ELs. In these PD plans, readers learn new concepts about the multifaceted experience of the EL. Chapter 6, “Teacher Skills Needed to Effectively and Respectfully Serve English Learners,” provides six skill areas that are critical for all educators of ELs. Teacher skills are defined as pedagogy. In this chapter, readers hone skills that enhance ELs’ experience in their classrooms.

Part C. Application of Peer Coaching Using a Directed, Cyclical Approach

This section offers a how-to for peer instructional coaching. Chapter 7, “Setting up Teachers for Success” presents a variety of tools that coaches can use, such as the coaching cycle and the academic language teacher observation. This chapter is recommended for anyone who is planning to engage in peer instructional coaching on serving ELs. It is also useful for administrators to identify how these systems might complement existing systems in districts and schools.

Part D. Putting SWEL to Work in Your School: Setting the Stage With Intentional Planning

This part of the book will be of interest to anyone planning to implement a continuous and sustainable ESL teacher leadership program in their district or school. Chapter 8, “Drafting an Annual SWEL Action Plan,” guides readers through the process of writing a targeted action plan that is informed by the needs of the school community and guided by SMART goals (Doran, 1981). Finally, Chapter 9, “The Cyclical Nature of the SWEL Model,” offers key considerations for implementation so that SWEL can serve as a sustainable approach to continuous improvement for ELs.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

How you use this book depends entirely on your context and position within your school. As mentioned earlier, the book can be read sequentially or in an order that best suits your needs. Regardless of how you approach the SWEL model, *Teacher Leadership for School-Wide English Learning* is a practical guide for implementation, and navigating the many resources it provides is easy.

Chapters 1–3 introduce the foundations and principles on which the SWEL model is based. Chapters 4–6 provide a wealth of PD plans centered around the teacher dispositions, knowledge, and skills needed to effectively enact SWEL. Each PD plan is easy to find:



This “PD Plan” icon indicates the beginning of a PD plan, each complete with objectives, time needed to complete the activity, materials and resources, preparation required, and step-by-step instructions to carry out the plan.

Chapters 7–9 provide detailed and practical steps and resources for making sure the SWEL model is well planned, successfully implemented, and continuously improving—as all professional development should be.

All online resources can be found on the companion site for this book,
www.tesol.org/swel-leadership

Be sure to also take advantage of the Resources Index, which lists the many resources—handouts, articles, websites, and videos, among others—referred to in this book. All of these resources can be also be found on the companion site for this book, www.tesol.org/swel-leadership.

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