Advocating for Diverse ELs in Minnesota: Issues and Strategies

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Overview

• Why advocate for English learners: urgency
• Defining advocacy
• Choosing which issues to focus your advocacy on
• Examining 3 key advocacy issues for ELs in MN
• Sharing tools for advocating for each issue
• Applying your advocacy skills to one issue
WHY ADVOCATE FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS: URGENCY
My Entrance into EL Advocacy & Advocacy Focus
EL Advocacy Issues

• EL deficit paradigm
• EL parents’ voices
• Immigration
• Collaboration & co-teaching
• Perceptions of language
• Common Core/CCR
• Assessment
• Teacher evaluation
TESOL and NBPTS Standards

**TESOL P-12 Professional Teaching Standards**
Candidates take advantage of professional growth opportunities and demonstrate the ability to build partnerships with colleagues and students’ families, serve as community resources, and advocate for ELLs.

**National Board for Professional Teaching Standards’ English as a New Language Standards**
Accomplished teachers of English language learners contribute to the professional learning of their colleagues and the advancement of knowledge in their field in order to advocate for their students.
Advocating for English Learners

1. Need for Advocacy
2. Creating a Shared Sense of Responsibility
3. How Teachers Can Collaborate
4. Advocacy Overview for Administrators
5. Increasing EL Families’ Involvement as Advocates
6. Advocacy Through Effective Instruction
7. Advocating for ELs in Assessment
8. Advocacy for ELs’ Success Beyond Grade 12

Corwin/TESOL, 2014
DEFINING EL ADVOCACY
• How do you define advocacy for ELs?
Definitions of Advocacy

• Advocacy
  • Comes from the Latin *advocatus*, meaning “one called to aid”
  • Speaking or acting on behalf of another
• Advocate cognates: *abogado, advogado, avocat*
My EL Advocacy Definition

- Working for ELs’ equitable and excellent education by taking appropriate actions on their behalf
- Knowing about each EL student’s and family’s background to be able to know which appropriate action to take
- Providing a voice for those students—and their families—who have not yet developed their own strong voice in their education
Scaffolded Advocacy

• Advocacy needed dependent upon ELs’ background
• Gradually remove advocacy support
• Goals
  • All educators advocate for ELs
  • ELs & families advocate for themselves
Scaffolded Advocacy

EL and Family Needs vs. Amount of Advocacy
Sharing Responsibility & Joy

Sharing responsibility for ELs’ education

- Educators’ beliefs and expectations about language and working with ELs
- Collaboration among ESL teachers, content teachers, and administrators
- Educators’ reflection on their own culture and its impact on their teaching
- Empathy for ELs and their families
Changing Role of ESL Teacher in New Era of Standards

- Program models that include ESL teachers in intentional and systematic ways
- Co-teaching and close collaboration
- ESL teachers as experts, advocates, and consultants
- Content teachers - content and language
- PD for content teachers
CHOOSING WHICH ISSUES TO FOCUS YOUR ADVOCACY ON
Examining Your Sphere of Influence

• What do I have control over in my environment?
• What do I not have control over in my environment?

Gorski, P. (2012)
Advocacy Ripple Effect

- One teacher advocating for ELs in his or her classroom
- Same teacher advocating for ELs and teachers outside his or her classroom
- Group of teachers advocating for ELs in the school
- Group of teachers advocating for ELs in the district
Reflecting on Advocacy

1. How would you describe your current sphere of influence (classroom, grade, school, district, etc.)?

2. With whom can you collaborate - who could your allies be - to widen your sphere of influence in your context to further support ELs?
EXAMINING 3 KEY ADVOCACY ISSUES FOR ELS IN MN
Three Selected MN Issues from K-Adult

1. Change to co-teaching or inclusion model (K-12)
2. Significant refugee and SLIFE population (K-12)
3. Shift to focus on College and Career Readiness Standards (Adult Education)
1. Change to Co-Teaching or Inclusion Model

- Move toward co-teaching models
- Some teachers are unprepared to collaborate and co-teach
- Leadership skills and specialized knowledge required
2. Refugee and SLIFE population

• 10% average for US; 48% for MN
• Wide variety of languages -> lack of materials & resources
• Short-term vs. long term language skills
• Administrators and content teachers need training
3. CCRS in Adult Education

- ELs are >40% of adult education (AE) students
- 61% of low literate learners in AE are ELs
- ELs must meet state-adopted academic content standards (CCRS)
- English language acquisition classrooms may not prepare adult ELs for CCRS
STEPS & TOOLS TO ADVOCATE FOR EACH ISSUE
NEA 5 Step Advocacy Framework

1. Isolate the issue
2. Identify your allies
3. Be clear on the rights of ELs
4. Organize and educate others
5. Identify your outlets for change

National Education Association, 2015
Advocacy Tool 1: Build on Interpersonal Skills to Advocate for ELs

• Involve your administrator

• Begin thoughtfully & prioritize issues

• Build alliances first with those who seem open

• Learn about your colleagues & draw from their expertise

• Offer support, time for collaboration, and/or “goodies”

• Keep focus on the students & strengths

• Model positive EL public relations

Advocacy Issue 1: Coteaching or Inclusion Model
Advocacy Tool 2: Create a Program Plan

- Program goal
- Program objectives
- Type of program
- Collaborators & roles
- Action steps with timeline
- Resources needed
- Community partners
- Challenges & ways to address them

Adapted from DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009
Advocacy Tool 3: Create a Shared Vision

• Create a vision for where you need to go
• Understanding of the destination allows all stakeholders to align their improvement efforts
• Key ideas, values, and beliefs
• Involve the entire faculty

*Note: ELP Standards for Adult Education

Advocacy Issue 3: CCRS in Adult Education
APPLYING YOUR ADVOCACY SKILLS
Advocacy Application

1. Choose one advocacy issue
2. Discuss steps you would take to advocate on ELs’ behalf with a partner (refer to NEA’s 5 steps)
3. Choose & use one advocacy tool or create your own tool
   • Issues:
     1. Co-teaching & inclusion
     2. Refugee & SLIFE
     3. CCRS in Adult Education
Breakout Sessions & Book Signing!

- Honing your Advocacy and Leadership Skills to Support ELs
  - 9:40 – 10:30 Plaza 6
  - 1:15 – 2:05 Plaza 1
- 12:10 – 12:40 Book signing in exhibitor area
Thank you!

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