

# **The English Language Acquisition and Development (ELAD) Endorsement: An Opportunity for Preparing a Resilient Pre-service Teacher Workforce in the State of Nevada**

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English learners (ELs) refers to students who speak a native language other than English in the home, and for whom speaking, reading and writing in English is a targeted educational outcome. In mid-2016, the Nevada State Board of Education voted in favor of mandating that future pre-service teacher graduates of the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) be required to complete an English Language Acquisition and Development (ELAD) endorsement to better prepare new teachers to respond to the multi-dimensional needs of PK-12 ELs. This mandate is being phased in through 2022, providing a window during which incoming pre-service teachers can be prepared for both ELAD-related coursework and the real-world application thereof. Opportunities include exposing pre-service teachers to high quality endorsement-related coursework (e.g. curriculum development, assessment, practicum, etc.), which can be co-developed via collaborative networking among NSHE institutions, school districts and instructional leaders.

## **Nevada Facts & Statistics**

- In 2010-11, Nevada was identified among the states with the fastest EL demographic growth.
- Nevada is considered a “new growth state,” with an immigrant population that doubled between 2000 and 2006.
- The number of EL students in Nevada’s schools increased 208 percent between 1994 and 2005.

## **U.S. Facts & Statistics**

- With approximately 4.7 million ELs in U.S. public schools, this constituency represents the fastest-growing group in the primary and secondary public education system.
- By 2040, it is projected that ELs will comprise 40 percent of the U.S. school population, with Spanish-speakers constituting the fastest-growing subgroup
- Nationally, more than 25 percent of ELs speak a language that is not Spanish-dominant
- The majority of general education teachers from urban (67 percent), rural (82 percent) and centrally located (58 percent) cities report that they have never participated in professional development experiences related to EL learning.
- Many teachers admit that their knowledge related to ELs is underdeveloped and is acquired via on-the-job experiences.

## **Recent Actions in Nevada**

- A full ELAD endorsement for Early Childhood

Education (birth to grade 2) and elementary (K-8) teacher preparation programs is required by 2020.

- Secondary teacher preparation programs must include ELAD-endorsements by 2022.
- The Nevada State Board of Education’s decision was based upon input from the English Mastery Council, the Commission on Professional Standards in Education, and the Teaching English as a Second Language subcommittee.

## **Considerations for Future Actions**

During the implementation period for the ELAD endorsement, the state has an opportunity to prepare future NSHE preservice teachers by:

- Developing teacher residency programs in which expert teachers work in the university teacher education programs, participating in interactive activities to develop their leadership competencies while supervising and organizing the preservice teacher practicum experience.
- Integrating modes of best practices into university coursework.
- Teaching university courses entirely or partially in school settings, affording preservice teachers the opportunity to observe teaching in a field environment and utilizing debriefing sessions to bridge knowledge and practice gaps between university coursework and the “real world.”

## **Statewide Benefits of Future Action**

- The ELAD endorsement will increase the

state's capacity to provide preservice teachers with strategies to improve the quality of instruction and supports for EL students.

- Implementation of those strategies will promote quality instruction that fosters the development of academic content and language for all Nevada students.
- This additional support promotes teacher resiliency and tolerance for instructional challenges, potentially mitigating educator turnover in the state.
- Bolstering this aspect of preservice teacher education produces an opportunity to evaluate student learning and causes for low achievement among ELs.

### **Implications of Maintaining Status Quo**

- The percentage of ELs in Nevada's public school system is large and projected to grow during the coming decades; failure to adopt proactive measures designed to improve academic performance among this group of students will exacerbate existing challenges.
- Addressing learning challenges faced by ELs and other student populations in a classroom setting contributes to Nevada's high teacher turnover rate. Absent mitigation, this problem will persist, creating ongoing issues for both schools and the communities they serve.

### **Introduction**

In the summer of 2016, the Nevada State Board of Education voted in favor of mandating that future graduates of the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) institutions' preservice teacher education programs be required to complete an English Language Acquisition and Development (ELAD) endorsement to better prepare new teachers to respond to the multi-dimensional needs of PK – 12 English learners (ELs). Specifically, ELs are students who speak a native language other than English in the home and for whom speaking, reading, and writing in English is a targeted instructional outcome. In U.S. classrooms, these students are acquiring academic knowledge in a second language while still developing their native oral language abilities in the home or at school (Garcia, Kleifgen, & Falchi, 2008; Goldenberg, Hicks, & Lit, 2013).

Although being able to speak two lan-

guages is an asset with far-reaching benefits (e.g., cross-cultural sensitivity, executive functioning, analytical thinking) (Bialystok & Craik, 2010; Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994; Rodríguez, Carrasquillo, & Lee, 2014), the persistent underachievement of ELs in the nation (e.g., National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP] 4th and 8th grade U.S. History, Science, and literacy) (NAEP, 2011; 2012) and state (e.g., 90 percent of Nevada's ELs in grade 4 scored below reading proficiency in 2011) (Mokhtar, 2012) is a dismal reminder that school systems have failed to ensure that ELs have equal access to a quality education as specified by federal law (e.g., explicit English language development instruction and quality general academic knowledge) (Zacharian, 2012).

The mandated ELAD endorsement, therefore, provides an historic juncture or opportunity to bridge research with practice to build a future PK-12 teacher workforce that is better equipped with the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions that support interacting with a "new mainstream" of learners (Enright, 2011; pg. 111). These culturally and linguistically diverse learners are not characterized by traditional European, middle-class, English-speaking experiences (Lee & Luykx, 2007) and require explicit guidance from teachers in how to navigate the discontinuity between home culture and U.S. academic environments. Because ELs are not a homogeneous group, they arrive to school with varied educational backgrounds, exposure to English, and second language proficiency (Gutiérrez, Zepeda, & Castro, 2010). One goal of the ELAD endorsement, therefore, is to address the professional learning needs of general education practitioners in rural and urban settings who often do not speak the native tongue of the students they teach, and who may feel overwhelmed because they are unequipped to attend to the wide range of language demands that impact their daily instructional planning (Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Goldenberg, 2008).

In short, the ELAD endorsement was proposed by the English Mastery Council, an intellectual think-tank across the state composed of NSHE faculty, policy makers, school district administrators, parents, teachers, and other community stakeholders who were charged in 2013 with the responsibilities outlined in Nevada Senate Bill 504 (Sec. 1.4):

"Make recommendations to the Superintendent

of Public Instruction, the Commission on Professional Standards in Education and the State Board for:

- a. The adoption of regulations pursuant to NRS 391.019 concerning the requirements for an endorsement to teach English as a second language, including, without limitation, the teachers who should be required to obtain the endorsement; and
- b. After the adoption of the regulations pursuant to paragraph (a), any revisions to those regulations as deemed necessary by the Council.” (Nevada Department of Education, 2014).

The 3.1 ELAD endorsement represents a culmination of recommendations and dialogues across NSHE institutions with feedback and guidance from the Commission on Professional Standards in Education (COPS), some members on the Nevada State Board, and the English Mastery Council (EMC) TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) Subcommittee. The 3.1 ELAD endorsement is summarized below:

In an effort to improve the quality of instruction for all English language learners in PK-12, all Nevada teacher preservice preparation programs and Alternate Route Licensure (ARL) programs will include the ELAD endorsement. We propose that:

- The first stage requires that Early Childhood Education (ECE) (birth to grade 2) and elementary (K-8) teacher preparation programs include an ELAD endorsement in the state of Nevada by 2020.
- The second stage would include an ELAD endorsement for secondary teacher preparation programs in the state of Nevada by 2022.

The culmination of this effort is full ELAD endorsement for all preservice and Alternate Route Licensure (ARL) teachers by 2022 or no later than six years after adoption of the regulation by the regulatory board. (EMC, 2016).

### **The Potential Impact of the ELAD Endorsement**

The English Master Council (EMC) emphasized the following four points regarding the potential impact of the mandated ELAD endorsement on teacher and student outcomes:

- The EMC recommendation would build capacity in the state by providing Nevada’s System of

Higher Education four to six years to ensure that future Nevada-prepared educators receive an ELAD endorsement upon graduation. This can be accomplished via continued university collaborations, dialogues, and sharing of resources.

- The ELAD endorsement will build the state’s capacity to provide teachers with strategies to improve the quality of instruction and supports for EL students in Nevada.
- The strategies implemented by future ELAD-endorsed teachers will promote quality instruction that fosters the development of academic content and language for all Nevada students.
- The Endorsement will provide extra supports to teachers in meeting the needs of their students and, thereby, promote teacher resiliency and tolerance for instructional challenges—dispositions that may be essential to decreasing the educator turnover rate in the state. (English Mastery Council, 2016)

The potential long-term benefit for EL students in the state of Nevada is improvement in educational achievement that supports future career options. The potential long-term benefits for preservice teachers include the development of skill competency, professional knowledge, and a “higher tolerance for ambiguity” (Attencio, 2012; pgs. 45-46) and change—a personality variable that influences the formation of teacher identity. Although tolerance may be a malleable personality trait that benefits all teachers, cultivating greater tolerance may especially empower EL teachers of to put forth their very best instructional practices to address the complex instructional needs of an increasing population of diverse learners (Attencio, 2012).

### **The Increasing Population of EL Students**

With approximately 4.7 million or more ELs in U.S. public schools (The Progress of Education Reform, 2013), ELs constitute the fastest growing group in the U.S. with the most rapid growth occurring in grades seven through 12 (e.g., middle and high school years) (Batalova & McHugh, 2010). From 1990 to 2000, the national EL population grew by 46 percent, superseding the national population growth (17 percent) in individuals from ages five to 17 (NCELA, 2002). Pragmatically, the number of EL students educated in

U. S. public schools doubled (e.g., from 2 million to nearly 5 million students) between 1990 and 2004 (NCELA, 2004).

By the 2030s, it is projected that ELs will comprise 40 percent of the U.S. school population (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2015; Magruder, Hayslip, Espinosa, & Matera, 2013), with Spanish-speakers constituting the fastest growing group (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013; Passel, Cohn & Lopez, 2011). More than 25 percent of ELs, however, speak a language that is not Spanish dominant (Education Commission of the States, 2013).

In 2010-2011, the states that experienced the largest EL demographic growth were South Carolina, Kansas, Hawaii, and Nevada (ECS, 2013). Nevada, therefore, reflects national EL population growth trends (Mokhtar, 2012) and has earned the designation of a “new growth state” (Terrazas & Fix, 2008; pg. 1) with an immigrant population that doubled between 2000 and 2006. The term immigrant is used for individuals born without U.S. citizenship (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Immigrants who move to Nevada are attracted to the potential of obtaining economic advancement via low-skill, low-wage jobs (e.g., gaming, construction, hospitality, and repair) that do not require a high school diploma. Overall, this Nevada labor trend mirrors broader national labor market trends (e.g., employment in maintenance, construction, and service occupations) for adults who may be limited in their career advancement due to limited skills and English proficiency (Zong & Batalova, 2015).

Further, in 2006, immigrant workers without a high school diploma earned a median annual income in Nevada that was 28 percent higher than the earnings of their immigrant peers in other states (Terrazas & Fix, 2008). Because of the accessible economic prospects, immigrant families will continue to move to Nevada and play a critical role in the national and state labor market. Likewise, these growing numbers of immigrant families will continue to depend on public school systems to educate their EL children.

Due to this search for employment, the number of immigrant children in Nevada has increased dramatically since 1990 and includes both foreign born and second-generation EL children who were born in the U.S. with at least one parent who was born in a foreign location (Terrazas

& Fix, 2008). The percentage of second-generation children, however, has experienced the most growth in Nevada increasing from 11.7 to 30.5 percent of Nevada’s total population of children.

Overall, the number of EL students in Nevada schools increased 208 percent from 1994 to 2005. Clark County School District (CCSD), the largest school district in Nevada and the fifth largest in the nation, opened approximately one new school monthly from 2004 to 2006 to accommodate the increasing number of students including both ELs and native English-speaking students (Terrazas & Fix, 2008).

### **The Reality of EL Teacher Preparation**

The unprecedented growth of EL students in public schools is accompanied by a growing national concern that general education teachers are not equipped with the competencies and professional knowledge base that could support improved EL learning. Many teachers admit that their knowledge related to ELs is acquired via on-the-job experiences (Goldenberg, 2008; Téllez & Waxman, 2004). This current concern, however, is rooted in a history of neglect in which the preparation of EL teachers was ignored in the professional development field until the 1980s (Téllez & Waxman, 2004). Even during the early movement in the 1960s towards bilingual education, teacher preparation programs did not emphasize specific language strategies, scaffolds, or pedagogical approaches to facilitate EL school learning. In contrast, bilingual teachers were advised to speak Spanish while English language development teachers were told to speak English (Téllez & Waxman, 2004).

Further, current evidence suggests that most general education teachers from urban (67 percent), rural (82 percent), and centrally located (58 percent) cities report that they have never participated in professional development (PD) experiences related to EL learning (Flynn & Hill, 2005; Lewis, Parsad, Carey, Bartfai, Smerdon, & Green, 1999). Overall, teachers in densely populated urban areas with higher percentages of EL students (e.g. 63 percent) plausibly receive greater PD experiences around teaching EL students than their peers in schools with fewer numbers of ELs (e.g., 25 percent) (Cosentino de Cohen, Deterding, & Clewell, 2005).

The sheer growth of EL students nationally and locally, however, warrants that the issue of

EL teacher preparation can no longer be ignored. The implication for NSHE preservice teacher preparation programs is that higher education institutions must take the lead in providing more comprehensive preparation for novice teachers prior to entering the field where PD experiences related to EL instruction may be limited. The mandated ELAD endorsement coursework provides an opportunity for such preservice professional support. Without these targeted pedagogical experiences, new teachers may follow the path of previous generations of EL teachers who:

“...grope for quick-fix strategies, often becoming stressed at their lack of success. Such teachers can “burn out” quickly, leaving the profession or remaining in teaching but without the motivation to provide a quality education or obtain the requisite skills.” (Téllez & Waxman, 2005; pg. 2).

#### **The Next Six Years in Nevada**

Passing the mandated ELAD endorsement in the state of Nevada does not mean that our educational mission is complete. In the next six years, NSHE institutions must ensure that preservice teachers will have access to high quality endorsement related coursework (e.g., curriculum development, assessment, methods, etc.) with in-depth learning experiences across urban and rural Nevada—these are professional learning experiences that could be co-constructed via collaborative networking (e.g., NSHE institutions, school districts, instructional leaders) and critical resource sharing.

The next six years, therefore, serve as a critical window through which we can better understand typical PK—12 EL instructional practices in Nevada (e.g., research-driven field-based observations, disaggregation of global teacher practice trends as measured by the Nevada Educator Performance Framework) to leverage field-based knowledge to increase the relevancy of preservice ELAD related coursework and learning experiences. Likewise, teacher preparation faculty can design meaningful learning experiences around ELAD coursework discussions to dispel common myths, identify teachers’ beliefs about ELs, and to strengthen connections between university preservice courses and inquiry-based field experiences in schools.

#### **Opportunities to dispel myths**

Three common myths that pose obstacles to improved EL academic achievement are presented below:

#### ***Myth #1: Previous generations of immigrants in the U.S. learned English without special accommodations or instructional practices.***

Historically, individuals who were not English proficient have always struggled in the U.S. to learn English for school or employment purposes and benefited from explicit second language support (Gil & Bardack, 2010). Further, the U.S. Immigration Service documented in 1911 the high percentages of immigrant EL children who were under achieving (e.g. behind one or more grade levels) in U.S. schools (e.g., 77 percent of Italian heritage, 60 percent of Russian heritage) in comparison to native English-speaking nonimmigrant children (Haynes, 2002). Preservice teachers in the state of Nevada must graduate with the understanding that EL children’s academic success is grounded on explicit instructional support during content instruction. A “sink or swim” (Gil & Bardack, 2010; pg.10) approach is ineffective.

#### ***Myth #2: By the time EL students reach middle or high school, they are English proficient.***

A strong early oral language base is often missing in long-term ELs (LTELs) who have attended U.S. schools for six years or more and have not reached a threshold of adequate English proficiency. These students are at risk for underachievement because they struggle with the language that is required in academic discussions and comprehension tasks due to limited English syntax and content related vocabulary knowledge (Olsen, 2014).

Long-term ELs (LTELs) represent a growing percentage of ELs who will enter kindergarten and never attain English proficiency due to insurmountable language barriers—partially attributed to early instructional inconsistencies—and the false expectation that they will “just catch up” in becoming English proficient. There is an increasing number of LTELs in middle and high school settings.

Further, there is an increasing population of EL students who enter U.S. schools during the middle and high school years with gaps in their formal education background and English language abilities (Hakuta, August, and O’Day, 2009). EL

students with limited English abilities (51 percent) or who speak English with difficulty (51 percent) are therefore prone to drop out of school (NCES, 2004). Preservice middle and secondary teachers in the state of Nevada must graduate with the understanding that middle and high school enrollment is not a guarantee that ELs are English proficient; however, providing explicit English language development during middle and high school subject-area instruction is a good practice (Gil & Bardack, 2010).

***Myth #3: Dual language bilingual education approaches promote language delays and confusion for EL children who are acquiring English as a second language and native English speaking children who are still developing their English abilities while acquiring a second language.***

There are benefits for both EL and native English speaking students who participate in dual language bilingual program models. Specifically, Thomas and Collier (2002) noted in a longitudinal study that EL learners benefit from language interactions with their peers while monolingual English speakers maintain their English competencies while learning a second language. Additionally, EL students enrolled in bilingual education models have acquired English competencies at the same rate as ELs immersed in English-only programs (Thomas and Collier, 2002)

Overall, native oral language maintenance provides a strong foundation for second language literacy and academic achievement without promoting language confusion and/or delays (Goldenberg, 2013; Garcia, 2009; August & Shanahan, 2006). This instruction is premised on the theory that conceptual understandings acquired in one language transfer to other languages (Cummins, 1981; Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey, & Pasta, 1991; Yoshida, 2008). Preservice teachers in the state of Nevada must graduate with the understanding that native language instruction does not hinder English language acquisition and that native-English speakers benefit from dual language instruction.

**Opportunities to shed light on the influence of EL teacher beliefs**

Beyond the opportunity to dispel myths about second language learning, the ELAD endorsement courses can provide opportunities to

ensure that preservice teachers are more aware of their beliefs about EL students and their families. There is evidence that teachers' beliefs are translated into actions, which are related to children's academic growth (August & Calderón, 2006; Greenfield, 2013). Positive perceptions of EL's language competence and culture can influence teachers' motivation to "engage" with students, resulting in higher or lower student engagement and academic success (Greenfield, 2013). In one study, when general education teachers viewed EL children's emerging English language proficiency status as an obstacle, (Greenfield, 2013), these beliefs were translated into decisions and actions that led to unnecessary special education placements. Preservice teachers must understand the consequences of how their students may be different from themselves.

**Opportunities to strengthen university courses and inquiry-based field connections**

A culminating experience in the mandated ELAD coursework is a practicum experience which allows preservice teachers to implement and practice skills and strategies that they have been taught in a real school setting under the supervision of a mentor teacher. Zeichner (2010) suggests that practicum experiences are important; however, their impact on university-school transitions can be diluted when the following occurs:

- a. Preservice teachers have limited exposure to the decision-making process of experienced teachers in the field (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005).
- b. Preservice teachers participate in loosely constructed or sequenced field experiences that are the result of disconnected university coursework/school experiences (Zeichner, 1996).

In the next six years, NSHE institutions can investigate the feasibility of implementing practicum models that provide more relevant university/school connections for preservice teachers of EL students. Three possible options include teacher residency programs, the integration of models of best practices into university coursework, and teaching university courses (e.g., methods course) entirely or partially in a school setting. A summary of the three approaches follows:

- 1. Teacher residency programs.** In teacher residency programs, expert teachers work in the university teacher education programs (e.g., teaching

of courses, recruitment of students, supporting preservice teacher graduates in the field, etc.), participate in seminars to develop their leadership competencies, and upon completion of their residency return to the field (e.g., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Teachers in Residence program).

**2. Integrating models of best practices into university coursework.** This is an alternative to teacher residency programs in which the goal is not to bring the expert teacher to the university program but to bring a “representation” (Zeichner, 2010; pg. 488) of the teacher or representation of expert teaching into university coursework. This can include incorporating teacher generated research, writing, or other forms of teacher-generated knowledge into coursework so that preservice teachers have models of teachers’ practices and decision-making processes which depict how teachers in the field learn from their own instructional decisions. In a national research initiative, the Carnegie Foundation collaborated with K-12 teachers to develop technology driven (e.g., web-based, multi-media supports) representations of their teaching practices. Teacher educators across the nation then incorporated these multi-media representations in courses for preservice teachers (e.g., integrating the website of an inner city high school English teacher’ classroom experiences in an English methods course at Stanford University). Teacher educators can also develop representations of best practices (e.g., videotaped instructional vignettes of specific strategies or best practices) to accomplish the same goal.

**3. University courses taught in school settings.** In this model, a university preservice course (e.g., a methods course) can be taught entirely or partially in a real school setting. Here preservice teachers have opportunities to observe teaching with debriefing sessions that serve as opportunities to bridge gaps of knowledge and practice between university coursework and the real world. This model includes opportunities for mentor teachers to assume a more active role in (a) assisting pre-interns to analyze field-based observations of specific instructional practices or (b) making explicit connections with the assistance of a teacher educator between specific course syllabus content and field-based applications and demonstrations

(Zeichner, 2010).

Overall, these three approaches to preservice field placement experiences provide opportunities for future teachers of ELs to gain in-depth knowledge about the daily dynamics (e.g., on-the-feet thinking) of school teaching. This deep understanding is lost when intentional efforts are not made to connect university coursework with field applications to facilitate “school to work transitions” (Zeichner, 2010; pg. 491).

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The major goal of the mandated ELAD endorsement is to improve PK-12 EL student achievement by taking intentional steps to provide a higher quality of instruction in urban and rural Nevada so that future EL public school graduates will have access to a higher quality of life. Preservice NSHE teachers, will play a major role in this process and will depend on NSHE institutions and scholars to use scientific approaches and tools to build and extend teacher knowledge and expertise. The ultimate goal is to bolster preservice teachers’ instructional decision-making abilities so that they are able to plan quality instruction, implement appropriate strategies, evaluate student learning and causes for low achievement, and think on their feet during complex scenarios that require both linguistic and academic scaffolding.

At the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, faculty in the English Language Learning Program are engaged in cutting edge research around professional development practices for teachers of ELs in urban and rural settings. In two National Professional Development grants funded by the Office of English Language Acquisition in the U.S. Department of Education, researchers will answer important questions related to:

- a. Effective coaching models that can be utilized remotely (e.g., Apple devices) to provide feedback loops on EL teachers’ practices in early childhood settings;
- b. The feasibility of eWorkshops to provide cost effective yet rigorous opportunities for professional knowledge building and online supported field-applications in 4th and 5th grade rural settings;
- c. The potential use of tools that measure shifts in EL teachers’ beliefs and culturally responsive practices; and
- d. A deeper and more nuanced understanding of

EL teacher practices across the state.

Knowledge from these studies will be used to restructure ELAD related coursework and field experiences for preservice teachers who graduate from UNLV teacher education programs. Additionally study outcomes will be disseminated to NSHE institutions across the state via a permanent website that includes representations of EL teaching practices (e.g., videotaped instructional vignettes of best practices). Future research opportunities that aim to build the state's capacity to support EL learning can only take place when NSHE institutions and stakeholders (e.g., the Nevada State Department of Education, school districts, etc.) are committed to working as a unified Nevada that supersedes rural, urban, north, and south boundaries.

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