



NATIONAL
CHARTER SCHOOL
RESOURCE CENTER

EL Instruction in Practice: Uplift Education



uplifteducation

well as inspire in students a life-long love of learning, achievement, and service in order to positively change their world.

Uplift Education began in 1996 as one school in Irving, Texas, started by a group of parents who wanted more for their children than what the local Irving School District was offering. Uplift's mission is to create and sustain public schools of excellence that empower each student to reach their highest potential in college and the global marketplace, as

Uplift Education now operates 43 public charter schools in Texas, serving 20,000 students. More than 30% of Uplift's students are classified as English Learners (ELs); 20 native languages are represented within Uplift's schools. At every grade level, Uplift takes a holistic approach to education that sees each student as a unique individual and supports their academic, social, and emotional well-being.

Please share details about your EL instruction program.

The network implements an English as a Second Language (ESL) program using both pull-out and content-based instruction. Each school in the network is served by a campus ESL Team. Campus coordinators oversee instruction and compliance, and scholars work directly with ESL teaching assistants and interventionists. ELs receive Tier I instruction, grounded in research-based language instruction, from their General Education (GenEd) classroom teachers, many of whom are ESL-certified. ELs who do not respond to Tier I instruction are moved into Tier II and Tier III for further support. Building out a strong and dedicated ESL team has allowed Uplift to move far beyond compliance to creating an instructional program that develops strong readers and writers.

EL students meet four times per week in a small homogenous group of four or five scholars for 30 minutes. These small groups are composed using results from the nationally normed Northwest Education Association's Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) assessment and prioritize instruction for scholars in Quintiles 1 and 2 (i.e., students scoring in the 1st through 40th percentile). Groups are led by interventionists or teaching assistants that design their work around the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) and Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

Uplift's Tier II for secondary students emphasizes push-in support for 9th and 10th graders enrolled in English I and II across the network's 11 high schools. Many of its

older ELs may not be on grade with their reading levels, so the network aims to provide instruction their GenEd classroom teacher might not be able to provide.

Uplift’s administrators and teachers are constantly working to improve its practices related to EL instruction. Two years ago, Uplift formalized small group instruction and selected a new curriculum to support its goals. In the upcoming school year, Uplift will also begin using a new phonics-based program that will help EL scholars build the skills and confidence necessary for strong communication.

Recently, Uplift fully integrated its ESL team within the network’s Teaching and Learning Team. The network recognizes the primary source of instruction for ELs is Tier I GenEd classroom teachers. With that in mind, the team has delivered training to all teachers and leaders via the network’s professional development structures.

Each school and student population across the network is different. These programs are used widely across the network in addition to more targeted approaches in schools based on student need.

What are your keys to success in the education of EL students? What lessons have you learned to pass along to your peers?

Uplift recognizes there is no silver bullet. The network seeks to embrace flexibility and invest in its teachers to educate and prepare them for best serving EL students. Below are a few strategies Uplift employs to best support EL students:

- **Ongoing Professional Development.** Uplift’s campus coordinators offer ongoing professional development to teachers throughout the year on topics such as sheltered instruction and affective needs.
- **Leverage Technology.** Uplift has adopted technology platforms to help better support EL student learning. It provides instructional strategies and other tools to support staff and teachers across schools.
- **Advocate for EL Students.** Insist that EL students have a seat at the table when decisions are made.
- **Be Flexible.** Provide teachers and staff with full toolboxes so that they can be flexible in their work with scholars.
- **Be Candid with Students and Families.** Learning a new language is hard, but they’re not on their own. Uplift focuses on building relationships with families.
- **Be Persistent.** Uplift admits that while they don’t always do things perfectly, they are persistent in the work above all else. They recognize its scholars are brilliant and talented, and that it is their job to do everything they can to help students find success.