

Summary Report of the Alliance for College Readiness **ELL Subcommittee on Transitions**

Subcommittee Members

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Purpose of the Subcommittee

The larger ELL Alliance for College Readiness Committee was broken up into two subcommittees during our first meeting of the year. The mission of the subcommittee on Transitions was to:

1. Identify the common issues that all ELL students within Community College District 509 face as they transition to Elgin Community College specifically or to college in general
2. Identify the ways in which ELL's are served in the varying school districts comprising District 509
3. Learn and share strategies from each other in the way we currently service ELL students in order to create smoother and more successful transitions to college

English Language Learners in District 509

It was discovered early on that there are many differences in the way that ELL's are serviced by the various high schools in Community College District 509. This is largely due to the disparity in sizes of ELL populations between districts. For example, U-46 has such a large ELL population that at three high schools (Elgin, Larkin, and Streamwood), there is a counselor assigned specifically to work with ELL students. On the other end of the spectrum, District 301, with only 10 total ELL students, assigns ELL students to counselors alphabetically, as they would with any other high school student. In the middle of these two extremes is District 300, which has one school, Dundee-Crown, mirroring Elgin, Larkin and Streamwood – two counselors assigned specifically to ELL students. On the other hand, Jacobs High School has one ELL class of under 30 students and Hampshire High, similarly to Central High School in District 301, has only nine current ELL students. St. Charles District 303 was not represented on the subcommittee, so information on the size and scope of their ELL population and services was unavailable.

Because of the massive disparity in the sizes of ELL populations from district to district and school to school, ELL's in District 509 come out of high school having experienced a wide variety of levels of support and assistance.

Common Issues Identified By All District 509 High Schools (Lingering Questions)

- Bilingual Parent Advisory Councils (BPAC's), while open to all ELL students, tend to primarily focus on Spanish-speaking families. ***How can these become focused equally on all different types of ELL's?***
- Varying types of "parent universities" or workshops intended to educate parents on the American education system are sparsely attended. ***How can districts get more parents to turn out for such events?***
- Many parents of ELL students question whether education beyond high school is truly necessary. Also, parents of ELL students tend to find the American college system and the wide variety of options within it to sometimes be overwhelming and confusing. Culturally, we also see some students struggle to articulate what their own personal educational and career goals are when they come from a culture where family is stressed over individualism. ***How can we simplify the explanation of the American college system for parents of ELL's?***
- All high school representatives on the committee reported a lack of a clear pathway when sending ELL students to ECC. There seems to be no central point of contact for a high school counselor to direct an ELL student to at ECC. ***How can we identify an established person or office that ELL's can be directed to when they first apply to ECC to make sure they are getting the services they need?***
- Communication with ELL parents can be difficult especially when, in the case of languages other than Spanish, there may not be a high school staff member able to speak the home language of the family. This often leaves the ELL student in the position of having to try to translate vital and complicated information from the high school counselor to the parent. ***How can we find more effective ways of communicating with ELL parents?***
- There is a lack of "college knowledge" for many ELL students, and choices that some students make for their post-secondary education is not in their best interests. For example, many ELL students are drawn to the marketing campaigns of proprietary schools (i.e. Everest College, Westwood College) for programs they could achieve for far less cost at ECC or other not-for-profit institutions. ***How can we better educate ELL students and their parents about making wise choices in terms of where to enroll for post-secondary education and what is a reasonable amount of money to pay for such education?***

Common Issues Identified by Elgin Community College (Lingering Questions)

- Most information available on the ECC web site is not available in Spanish. ***Would it be possible (and beneficial) to have more information available on the web site in Spanish?***
- Does the current ECC application provide enough information to identify a student as one who has received ELL services in high school? Once a student is identified as having had ELL services, what should ECC be doing for that student? Should a separate developmental track for ELL students be created?
- How should ELL students be initially screened? Should they take the COMPASS test, an ESL assessment, or both?
- In the past, ELL's were put through a separate type of orientation. **Should this be reinstated?**
- Do staff working with ELL students need more specific professional development regarding how to work with English language learners?

Ideas/Suggestions for Next Year

- Create a PLANS-type event at ECC for ELL students;
- Offer learning communities/student cohorts for ELL students in College 101;
- Establish a peer mentoring program for incoming ELL students;
- Create a Spanish language area on the ECC web site;
- Develop a clear, set point of contact at ECC for ELL students to be directed to;
- Determine definitively how ELL students will be identified;
- Consider our various options for assisting and advising ELL students once they are at ECC;
- Professional development for high school and college faculty in how to work with ELL students;
- Explore possibility of Summer Bridge program for ELL students;
- Identify ways to proactively steer students away from proprietary schools.