

# Chapter 13

## ILLs for ELLs: Using an Interactive Notebook Strategy to Foster Success for English Language Learners

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The number of U.S. residents who are linguistically diverse has increased significantly over time, and many of these residents are school-age children who are learning English and grade-level content simultaneously. The task of promoting success for these students while holding them to the same high academic standards as their native English-speaking peers can be a daunting one, as teachers also strive to encourage acceptance and a safe context for learning and growth to occur. This chapter highlights one classroom teacher who implemented an instructional strategy, Interactive Learning Logs, which allowed her to create a classroom environment that promoted acceptance, high expectations, and skillful differentiation to meet the needs of all of her students, including her ELLs. The chapter shares this teacher's personal experiences with the ILL strategy and how it enhanced ELL student performance through planned instructional supports.*

## INTRODUCTION: DIVERSITY IN DURHAM

The city of Durham is located in the heart of North Carolina, in the southeastern United States. Durham is part of Durham County, which is the 5<sup>th</sup> most populous county in the state. When compared to the state's major communities, Durham hails as the most ethnically diverse (Durham FAQs, n.d.). The population of Durham County mirrors that of the state, with the majority of the county's over 300,000 residents (56.8%) identifying as non-white.

Of the county's foreign-born residents, the most common country of origin is Mexico, followed distantly by India, Germany, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire), and Honduras (Data USA: Durham County, NC, n.d.). Census reports from 2016 indicate that the Hispanic population makes up approximately 13.4% of Durham's residents (City of Durham Demographics, n.d.).

Similarly, approximately 13% of Durham's residents speak a language other than English (Data USA: Durham County, NC, n.d.). The most common non-English language spoken in the county is Spanish, with 10.9% of Durham residents identifying as native Spanish speakers. Additional languages include Chinese, French, and Urdu. When compared to other counties in the state, Durham has a relatively high number of residents who are native speakers of African languages (Data USA: Durham County, NC, n.d.). While the overall percent of non-English Language speakers is below the national average of 21.6%, this increase has still given rise to conversations around strategies to address the needs of this population in the district's public schools (Latino Life in Durham, n.d.).

### Purpose

This chapter will share how one school district made the success of its English Language Learners a priority by recognizing the potential of these students and making educational and professional development opportunities available to teachers to foster student success. Additionally, the chapter will focus on one teacher in the district who took advantage of the resources to implement an instructional strategy (Interactive Learning Logs) which allowed her to easily differentiate her lessons to meet the needs of all of her students, including her English Language Learners (ELLs). The Keys to Success for ELLs, as outlined by the National Governors' Association Best Practices Center and the Council of Chief State School Officers (NGA/CCSSO), are provided as a backdrop to demonstrate how the ILL strategy can enhance ELL student performance through planned instructional supports which focus on students' individualized processing of information.

## BACKGROUND

### Support for ELLs in Durham

Much attention has been given to meeting the needs of English Language Learners in the public schools of Durham County, most of whom are Hispanic and Spanish-speaking. Annual data for dropout rates and scores on End of Grade and End of Course tests indicate that, historically, these students do not perform as well as their white, English-speaking peers (Accountability and Testing Results, n.d.). Obviously, stakeholders are concerned about these findings, and have put strategies in motion to ensure that the specific needs of these students are understood and addressed.

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