A. Home – This page is the main page for the website that will appear when a user enters the URL for this website or searches on the internet using key words such as ESL, ELL, community college.
**HOW CAN FAMILY PROVIDE SUPPORT?**

1. **Be a Mentor** - Older siblings who have attended college and learned to navigate the college system and the financial aid process are able to serve as role models to the younger children (Hurtado & Gauvin, 2007).

2. **Offer Encouragement** - Family members who have not attended post-secondary education and are therefore not able to assist with navigating the educational system are nevertheless able to provide support. These family members may motivate ELL college students simply with encouragement and acknowledgement that education will, in the long-term, create better job opportunities and improve the family’s future (Ramirez, 2002). A participant in a Ramirez’s (2002) study of Mexican-origin college students relayed the impact of encouragement. The participant stated:

   I didn’t have anyone that I could look up to...I knew that things had to be different, but I didn’t know how. I had the encouragement of my family and friends, but I didn’t know anyone in a profession. So when I decided to attend college, my family would say ‘andale mija tu si puedes’ [go ahead daughter, you can do it], so I attended college. And now everyone I talk to, I encourage them to go to college. (p. 156)

3. **Assist with Household Duties** - Women tend to be expected to fulfill their traditional household responsibilities in addition to working outside the home, making it difficult to find time to study (Chavez, 2015; Hanson, Maxwell, & Mulder, 2015).

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HOW CAN PEERS PROVIDE SUPPORT?

1. **Be a Mentor** - Older students who have been successful can offer advice and encouragement to younger students. During especially difficult times, reminding younger students of their goals helps to redirect their energy to persist in their education (De La Cruz, 2008).

2. **Develop Friendships** - Interviews with the Hispanic non-traditional students also revealed that, while going back to school was difficult, building relationships with other students who shared the same background helped them to become acclimated to college life (Chavez, 2015). Another study of Hispanic non-traditional students at Treasure Valley Community College in Oregon reiterated the claim that friendships motivated students to persist in school, especially when family support was lacking (Ramirez, 2016).

3. **Study Together in Learning Centers** - By way of offering a physical space to gather, learning centers also encourage peer support. For example, students who used the various services at the learning center at Portland State University not only benefitted from the staff’s expertise but also studied together and supported one another (Hanson, Maxwell, & Mulder, 2015).

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HOW CAN FACULTY PROVIDE SUPPORT?

1. **Offer Encouragement** - Faculty support may also have a very positive impact on a student (Henderson, 2009; Chavez, 2015). For example, a qualitative study of eleven Hispanic women, who were also first generation college students, indicated that encouragement from faculty was key to their success (Chavez, 2015).

2. **Promote Use of College Services** - While faculty can provide direct support to ESL students, faculty can also promote the use of college services that may be available, such as writing centers and tutoring services (Hanson, Maxwell, & Mulder, 2015). Initial use of these services by students may convince students of the value of the services and encourage continued use, setting up a cycle of continuous achievement.

3. **Collaborate to Provide Continuous Support** - Henderson (2009) purports that ELL students require continuous support. According to Henderson, this continuous support may be in the form of an English as a Second Language Across the Curriculum (ESLAC). The aim of the ESLAC is for instructors of developmental courses and instructors of content courses to communicate and collaborate. As a result of this partnership, the instructors of the content courses revise their lessons so that ELL students learn more in the content courses.

4. **Modify Instruction Delivery** - One of the concerns mentioned by some faculty teaching at community colleges was that students did not always communicate when they needed assistance or clarification. Henderson (2009) reports this finding in her study of ESLAC. It was suggested that instruction delivery can be tweaked to address the needs of ESL students. Some of the recommended changes to the delivery of instruction included speaking more slowly, avoiding use of idioms and using shorter sentences.
5. **Carve Time to Ask Questions After Class or During Break** - Provide time to ask questions either after class or during a break as some students hesitate to speak in front of the entire class. The instructors noticed that the changes had a positive impact on native speakers as well as the ELL students (Henderson, 2009).

6. **Include Service-learning Projects in Curriculum** - The effectiveness of ELL community college courses may be measured on students’ perception and their level of achievement. One creative addition to an ELL curriculum includes service learning. Douglas (2017) surveyed community college ELL students who participated in a service-learning community project. Almost all of the students who responded to the survey felt that they improved their English skills. Other benefits from this type of format allows students to work in teams, build relationships and become more integrated into the community. The study did not correlate the participation in service-learning community programs to completing community college; however, the various benefits may result in increased support among peers, which has shown to be important in student retention.

Elwell and Bean (2001) also incorporated a service-learning project into an ELL reading class and noted many benefits. The most important benefit was student engagement. Students read the John Steinbeck’s classic novel *Of Mice and Men* and subsequently participated in a collection drive for farmers who had recently lost most of their citrus crops during an unexpected freeze in California. The connection of the collection drive to the plight of the characters in the novel engaged the students. The instructors also noticed that the students’ previous reluctance to work on the group research project was replaced by interest and enthusiasm. More importantly, the students felt a sense of accomplishment in contributing their service. Again, although this study on the benefit of service-learning projects to ELL students did not specifically intend to increase the retention rate of ELL community college students, the increased engagement could certainly contribute to higher retention rates.
The organization Volunteer Match has a website that categorizes volunteer opportunities across the U.S. A faculty member is able to easily search for an opportunity that is relevant to the topic of study. For more information, visit their website at: VolunteerMatch. Another option is to review websites with volunteer opportunities specific to your locale. One example is a website that is specific to the Twin Cities metro area in Minnesota is: HandsOn Twin Cities. (K. Kessler, personal communication, October 7, 2018).
HOW CAN INSTITUTIONS PROVIDE SUPPORT?

1. **Provide Bilingual Education Grants** - A major barrier to attending college is finances and the government is able to assist by providing bilingual education grants. It is worth noting that all of the eight Hispanic participants in a study indicated that the grants allowed them to achieve their dream of attending college (Ramirez, 2002).

2. **Create Broad ELL Courses** - The common ELL support provided by institutions is in the form of ELL classes. These classes address students’ issues with their English language proficiency so that they can succeed in the content courses. At universities, these classes typically focus on improving academic writing. One study at a southeastern university sought to determine whether international students perceived the ELL class as beneficial. In this study, the ESL class did not focus solely on writing skills; it also concentrated on speaking, listening and reading skills. The general results were that the ELL class was helpful. From this study, the researchers recommend that ELL classes include instruction of both academic skills and general communication skills. The emphasis on the general communication skills is to help students actively participate in discussions with peers, faculty and the community members. The researchers also suggested that universities tailor their curricula based on specific needs of the students (Pathirage, Morrow, Walpitage, & Skolits, 2014).

3. **Give Credit for ELL Courses** – After studying policies of six community colleges in the U.S., researchers suggested that policies affect ELL student retention. For example, each community college determines whether an ELL class is credit or non-credit. In addition, community colleges may choose separate locations for the credit and non-credit ELL classes, creating physical distance between the two categories of students. The study revealed that the community colleges that had both credit and non-credit classes on the
same campus tended to have a higher retention rate. To eliminate this segregation, it is recommended to move some courses be from other departments to allow some ELL courses to be on the main campus (Ignash, 1995).

4. **Provide and Promote Learning Centers** - Portland State University expanded its support to ELL students by providing a variety of support in an Intensive English language program (IEP) learning center. Although this model is at a university, it is well worth considering for implementation in community colleges as well. Establishment of a learning center aiming at specific needs of ELL students has also been supported by researchers Hanson, Maxwell and Mulder (2015) who conducted a study on how students use learning centers (LCs) to obtain support. Based on student responses to this qualitative study, the motivation for using the LC included:

- The varied resources provided, such as tutoring and computer labs
- The location of the LC, which was centrally located on campus
- The physical space, which was comfortable and, because it was smaller, students were able to find English books more easily.
- The personal connections made with staff as well as other students

Most importantly, the researchers observed that the students felt a sense of community at this LC. This sense of community encouraged the use of the LC, making it easier for students to integrate into the college life and also build their English language proficiency skills and succeed in their content courses. Lastly, continuous promotion of these services such as email, social media, flyers and direct conversation is important (Hanson, Maxwell, & Mulder, 2015).

5. **Coordinate between Community Colleges and Employers** - Another way that institutions can provide support is through coordination between community colleges and employers. In Minnesota, manufacturers’ profits have increased; however, some manufacturers need to plan for the long-term and ensure that they have an educated
workforce to continue their success. To that end, Traci Tapani, co-owner of the Wyoming Machine metal precision shop in Minnesota, suggests that manufacturers partner with community colleges to prepare students with skills to work in factories which require more technological knowledge than before (as cited in Depass, 2018). The resource pool of workers may include ELL employees; therefore, community colleges may have to consider investing in ELL employees as well.

6. **Develop and Promote Bridge Programs** - Institutions may also provide support to ELL students via college bridge programs. One example of a college bridge program is Northern Virginia Community College’s (NOVA) Pathway to the Baccalaureate College Success Consortium. The Consortium coordinates with local high schools and assists each student individually in entering NOVA and subsequently transferring to a four-year university. This program offers grants and scholarships as well (Uvin, Aguirre, & Lehrman, 2016).

7. **Educational Opportunity Program** - An additional support mechanism is the Educational Opportunity Program at the University of California and California State University, whose goal is to encourage underprivileged students to enroll and complete their studies (Uvin, Aguirre, & Lehrman, 2016). Kanno and Varghese (2010) claim that these educational opportunity programs could assist ELL students but the programs do not make an overt effort to engage them.

8. **Coordinate between Community Colleges and Four-year Colleges** - In an article on ELL students’ challenges in transferring to a four-year college, researchers Kanno and Varghese (2010) recommend that community colleges forge a stronger partnership with four-year colleges/universities. Advancing to postsecondary education at a community college seems favorable to ELL students because tuition at community colleges is typically less than at universities and community colleges offer more direct support in the form of developmental courses and individualized attention from counselors and instructors.
However, support is necessary to make the transition from a community college to the four-year college/university that has higher demands and less personalized attention. When community colleges and four-year colleges/universities collaborate, they create a smoother path for students who wish to continue their studies (Kanno & Varghese, 2010).

While the premise of strong collaboration between the two types of institutions makes sense, increased retention results may not be as favorable as expected. Ironfield (1992) described a program called “Bridges to Business” in which Holyoke Community College in Massachusetts and the School of Management at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst partnered to encourage ESL students to obtain a bachelor’s degree. The two schools worked together to recruit students, establish criteria for guaranteed admittance to the university, provide advisors from each school and offer scholarships. By exposing students to the university while still in community college, the aim was to motivate students with an easier path to the university.

Although the schools addressed many of the obstacles in transferring to a university, they realized that other factors should also have been addressed. One of the most notable of these issues was that students had low expectations of themselves and lacked self-confidence. As a result, students were reluctant to commit to the “Business to Bridges” program. That is, students had committed to obtaining an associate degree but perhaps not stretching beyond that goal to a bachelor’s degree. Another notable issue was low-level math skills which required students to take developmental courses. These extra courses increased both the length of time and amount of funds to receive an associate’s degree. Finally, an important lesson learned in establishing this partnership is to agree on the goal of the two institutions. The goal of Holyoke Community College was to increase the retention rate of their ELL students; in contrast, the aim of the university was solely to recruit students (Ironfield, 1992).
Best Practices to Help English Language Learners Succeed in Community College

Purpose

Why help English Language Learner community college students succeed?

Background

According to a 2003 report from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, approximately only 50% of students who attend community colleges and intend to continue to a four-year college actually do. This statistic, along with a program on Minnesota Public Radio (Miller, 2013) on first-generation college students and the challenges that they faced, piqued my interest in understanding and increasing the success rate of English Language Learner (ELL) college students. I was able to relate to the individuals who called into the program because I am a first-generation Italian-American and first-generation college student.

This website was developed as a Capstone project for the Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language. One of the influences for selecting this topic was a report on first generation college students on a Minnesota Public Radio program (Miller, 2013). Individuals called into the radio program and shared their experiences of being among the first in their family to attend college. Many of them faced obstacles such as lack of knowledge in navigating the system of applying to colleges, lack of money and lack of moral support from family members. I could relate to these challenges because I experienced them too but the lack of support impacted me the most. I had already decided that I wanted to teach English as a Second Language to students at the college level, but listening to this radio program motivated me further.

The main entry point to higher education for ELL students is community college (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). Preparing students for college during their high school years is the ideal solution but that support is not always provided. Even the community college entry point can present obstacles such as navigating the system of applying or obtaining financial aid. Although students may overcome initial obstacles, it is important to provide various types of support throughout college. That is, they are close to their goal of a two-year college degree but may still need assistance in reaching that goal.
Ideas on my Capstone project evolved through reading articles, books and theses. Rather than focusing on what I alone can implement in a community college English as a Second Language course, I decided to broaden my project to include support that may be provided by the following strong influences: family, peers, faculty and institutions. Ideally, the support would be a combination from all of those sources to achieve a high retention rate at the community college level and possibly extend to a high transfer and retention rate to a four-year college or university.

**Benefits of Higher Education**

Helping ELL community college students stay in school provides benefits to society as a whole. First of all, the students benefit economically in the long-term. Without any postsecondary education, individuals may be relegated to low-wage jobs with few opportunities to advance to higher positions. Nonetheless, questions have been raised within the last few years as to whether a college degree is necessary anymore. Quiggin (2011) makes the case that individuals who earn an associate degree tend to earn 20% more than individuals who only have a high school diploma. In addition, with so many technological advances in the last 20 years, the focus in the U.S. is on more advanced and technical positions. Jobs requiring lower-level skills will always be needed, but the demand has decreased significantly. Moreover, employers in Minnesota have expressed concern that there is a labor shortage for positions requiring technological skills, resulting in recruiting individuals from other countries (Depass, 2018). For the individuals who are already in the U.S. and seek higher education, why not raise their skill level by helping them succeed in college? That inquiry led me back to my research question: what are some best practices that can be implemented to help ELL students succeed in community college?

**Expected Outcome of Website**

Community colleges have their own curricula and methods for addressing students' needs. Studies of successful methods are disparate and may take a significant amount of time for ELL professionals to gather, review and implement. This website will hopefully serve as a central location for some best practices and thus perhaps accelerate the implementation of improvements.
G. Getting Started – This page prompts questions to start implementation of a best practice.

## Best Practices to Help English Language Learners

### Succeed in Community College

### Getting Started

Below are some questions to guide you in implementing one of the methods of support listed on this website.

1. What statistics does your community college have on ELL students? Are there any statistics on retention/dropout rates?
2. Of the support methods listed, which methods have been implemented?
3. Of the support methods listed, which methods might be implemented to help ELL students succeed?
4. Consult with other instructors and reach a consensus on what additional support method might be implemented.
5. Seek any approvals/funding needed to implement the additional support method.
6. Plan timeline for implementation of support method.
7. Reflect on implemented change and discuss any positive or negative outcomes with other instructors. What modifications should be made to improve results?
8. Plan to meet regularly to discuss results and possible modifications.
H. Feedback – This page requests feedback to create community and share experiences.

Best Practices to Help English Language Learners
Succeed in Community College

Feedback

Please provide feedback on this website and share your experience on a method of support that has been most effective.

* Required

First Name *

Your answer

Last Name *

Your answer

Email *

Your answer

What is your role? *

- ELL student living permanently in the U.S.
- International student
- Faculty
- Administrator
- Other

Did you find this website helpful? *

- Yes
- No
Which method of support has been most effective? Please share your experience. *

Your answer

Your response to the above question may be added to this website to share with others, unless you click on the box below.

☐ Please do not share my response.

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.
I. References

Best Practices to Help English Language Learners Succeed in Community College

References


References for Images on Website

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