

New Resource for Educators

LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Your Involvement Needed!

We are creating a website to host multimedia resources to promote teacher learning and enhance the quality of education offered to African American English (AAE) speakers and English Language Learners (ELLs). Visitors to this website will be able to explore multimedia tools to understand how student linguistic and cultural practices can be used as assets and resources to support student learning. A key focus is to provide teachers with resources that enhance ELLs' and AAE speakers' learning. The resources will be designed for use in professional learning activities with groups of practitioners in formal short-term events or in long-term efforts of professional learning communities. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs¹, this website will be a living archive of current practices.

What do we need?

We need you to submit examples of best practices to educate students who are (1) struggling academically and/or behaviorally and (2) use AAE or are ELLs. Selected submissions will be featured on a new website that will offer resources for practitioners working with speakers of AAE and/or ELLs. The selected examples will be clearly attributed to their authors on the website. This website will be available for free use beginning in December of 2008. The website for submission is equityallianceatasu.org

Who are the Target Student Groups?

- *English Language Learners*: an English language learner is a student whose home language is other than English and who is in the process of learning English.²
- *African American English Speakers*: students who engage partially or fully in a set of communication patterns and practices, which have linguistic features that make AAE a language in its own right, distinguishing it from "Standard English."³

Description of the Website

Resources will be organized in four domains on the website as follows:

- (A) **Dispelling Myths about AAE and ELLs.**

¹ NCCREST, and LASER have collaborated in this project with the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), and the University of South Florida.

² Ovando, C. J., Collier, V. P., & Combs, M. C. (2003). *Bilingual & ESL classrooms: Teaching in multicultural contexts*. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

³ African American language derives from the interaction of Niger-Congo and/or Creole languages and European American English. Smitherman, G. (2000). *Talking the talk: Language culture, and education in African America*. New York: Routledge. We acknowledge that the term "Standard English" is problematic because it suggests that European American English is the normative language, which is not the case in many schools. However, we use this term because it is the most commonly used.

This domain identifies misconceptions about ELLs and AAE as a way to present key foundational ideas. Thus, myths will be stated and selected examples will dispel them. Some of the misconceptions featured in this domain will include:

- *ELLs can learn to speak English in one year through full immersion.*
- *ELLs are not proficient in any language.*
- *Traditional language assessments present a clear picture of linguistic proficiency.*
- *AAE indicates low intelligence among its users.*
- *AAE represents a poor version of “Standard English.”*

(B) Practice dilemmas in the education of AAE speakers and ELLs.

This domain covers concerns or challenges teachers face when working with ELLs and AAE speakers. The selected practices featured in this domain will help practitioners address issues related to planning, teaching, or assessment. Examples of practices featured in this domain will address the following questions:

- *Do I focus on covering as much content as possible or should I pace my instruction based on the different performance levels of the subgroups in my classroom (e.g., ELLs, AAE speakers and speakers of other languages and dialects)?*
- *What does it mean to have high expectations for all of my students when some ELLs and AAE speakers are struggling?*
- *Is it fair to use the same grading criteria for all learners? Is it fair to give more time to ELLs and AAE speakers to complete assignments?*
- *Can I use assessment evidence obtained with tools that were adapted or modified for ELLs and AAE speakers?*
- *How can I enhance my ELLs’ and AAE speakers’ motivation?*
- *Can I do this myself? In what ways will I need support to successfully carry out best practices for ELLs and AAE speakers?*

(C) Optimal learning environments for ELLs and AAE Speakers.

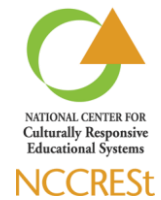
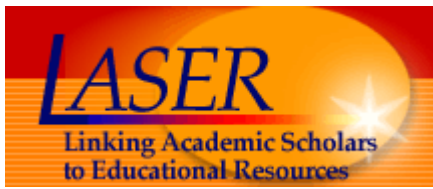
This domain covers socio-cultural teaching and learning principles. It is concerned with the question, what do teachers need to know/do to promote learning with ELLs and AAE speakers. Examples of this domain may include:

- *The use of students’ culture and language as an asset for teaching and learning.*
- *The use of students’ language to mediate their full participation in classroom activities.*
- *The assistance of learning through multiple teaching and assessment tools.*
- *The use of teacher-student and/or student-student interactions to facilitate novice-expert apprenticeships.*
- *The use of outside-school learning experiences to design instructional activities.*

(D) Strategies to support the learning needs of struggling ELLs and AAE speakers.

This domain covers challenges or disruptions teachers face when struggling learners need additional or different kinds of support or assistance. Examples may address the following questions:

- *What considerations about second language or AAE should I take into account when planning academic interventions for ELLs and AAE speakers who are struggling to learn?*
- *To what extent do cultural practices or beliefs explain this student’s behavior and how can I use cultural practices to enhance my interventions?*
- *What alternative explanations for students’ lack of progress should I consider? How do I build on students’ strengths when planning interventions?*



What can you submit and what are the selection criteria?

We need you to submit examples of best practices that you have used or are currently using to serve students who are (1) struggling academically or behaviorally and (2) use AAE or are ELLs. You will be asked to identify the domain in which your submission fits best (see domain description above).

The content in each of these domains will include a variety of resources and types of evidence such as student work samples, curriculum samples, video clips of lesson segments, administrator, teacher, student, and parent interviews, assessment tools and rubrics, lesson plans, teaching strategies, behavioral support techniques, teacher written or oral reflections about the issues addressed in the domains, or other relevant practices.

These resources can be related to various topics germane to the education of ELLs and speakers of AAE such as multi-tiered instruction, social relationships, discipline referrals, family communication, parent-teacher conferences, collaboration among education professionals, special education assessment, identification, placement, and IEP development. The website will be full of detailed information to improve the learning experiences of ELLs and AAE speakers and the knowledge and skills of teachers and other practitioners.

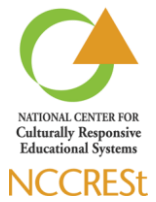
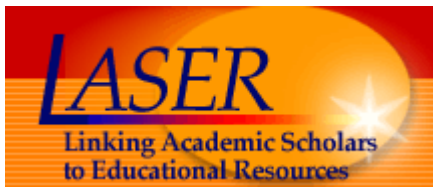
Submissions will be considered for publication on the site by a team of practitioners and researchers. Please be aware that not all submissions will be included in the website. The decision to include a practice in the website will be based on several criteria. Specifically, a practice **must** fulfill the following four criteria:

1. *Target Student Groups:* Focus on improving outcomes for students who are ELL and/or AAE speakers. The examples may also target students that may no longer be considered ELLs by the school but still have limited English language skills.
2. *Settings:* Submissions should provide examples of practices used on or off school campuses as well as during the school day or in after-school programs.
3. *Evidence-based:* The practice should be supported by clear outcome evidence. For example, you may submit documentation of students' work before using the target practice, a video clip of the practice implementation, and student work after the target practice. Alternatively, charts with ratings of student performance in tasks or assessment results covering a period of time to reflect the impact of the practices are other examples of evidence.
4. *Replicability:* The practice has a clear structure and/or procedures that would allow other practitioners to use it in their schools. The submitted examples must describe details about the practice such as the duration, directions, curriculum materials, procedures, sequences, and supplemental resources.

Other Desirable (though not required) Features of Practices

- *Inclusivity:* Practices demonstrate results with learners with a variety of abilities, languages, gender, and/or grade levels.
- *Multiple Audiences:* Your submission should be conscious of audience, targeting a variety of school professionals. For example, a practice that is relevant and clear not just for teachers, but also for principals and literacy coaches.

We will begin reviewing and uploading submissions on November 15th



To submit an artifact please visit our website at equityallianceatasu.org and follow the instructions.

Project LASER, Grant #H326M000002, and the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCREST), Grant #H326E0060001, are funded by the Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education.