

Unit 1 Content  
**The Big Picture: English Language Learners (ELLs) in Context**

Broward County Public Schools educates students from over 160 countries and more than 50 language backgrounds. Cultural and linguistic diversity is a large part of who we are. Was that the case when you were growing up? Were you surrounded by diversity as a child? Now take a moment to think about the school where you currently work.

- How many languages are represented at your school?
- Has the number of students that speak a particular language increased or decreased in recent years? If so, what are the reasons for the shift?

Being aware of who our students are, including their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, is a fundamental step in the process of planning instruction that is accessible to the learning needs of all. And not all English language learners (ELLs) have the same needs.

Throughout this course, we will unwrap the layers of learning that need to be considered when designing instruction for ELLs. Let's start by taking a look at how the ELL student population in the United States has shifted recently and how schools and districts continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of their students. As part of this week's content and assignment, read the two articles:

**1. *Focus on Adolescent English Language Learners***

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar07/vol64/num06/Focus-on-Adolescent-English-Language-Learners.aspx>

**2. *English Language Learners: An NCTE Policy Research Brief.***

As you read, consider the following question:

- What do I know about the diverse language needs of the students in my class/in my school?

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**Language Planning & Policy**

As the nation's sixth largest school district, and home of one of the most substantial populations of ELL students in the country, our approach to ELL education is a defining one. By now, you have probably heard about the **META Consent Decree**

<http://www.fldoe.org/aala/cdpage2.asp>. This legislation, when passed in 1990, was the first to hold all Florida school districts accountable for the quality of education that their English learners receive. In a nutshell, the META Consent Decree mandates that all districts provide their ELLs with equal access to school programs as well as comprehensible instruction taught by qualified personnel. That is where we come in: the "qualified personnel" part. But what does this really mean? How does this affect what we do? And how does this translate into our everyday practice in our classrooms? Think about your school again. There are ways that we see the META Consent Decree and other policies being implemented. What are they? School-wide staff development about Broward's ESOL program? Documentation of ESOL strategies in lesson plans? These are two concrete examples of things schools are doing to educate personnel and meet ELLs' learning needs. They are visible and quantifiable. However, they are not the only kinds of language policies present in our schools. Much of our policies, in fact, lie under the surface. Their presentation may be subtle, but their effects can be powerful. Chapter 11 of *The Crosscultural, Language, and Academic Development Handbook* examines language planning and policy at the national, district, and school level.

Read pages 296 - 303. As you read, compare the topics and scenarios to that of your own school. Prepare to develop a thorough response to each of the following:

- How does James Tollefson's work on *language equity* apply to your students? Consider the explanation about how language diversity can be seen as a problem, a right, or a resource.
- How might Michel Foucault, Pierre Bordieu, and Jim Cummins describe the social, cultural, and language *currency* used to empower students in your class or at your school?