Creating a Workplace ELL Program

Program Planning

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Questions? Contact Leya Speasmaker at lspeasmaker@cliniclegal.org.
Creating a Workplace ELL Program

I. The Need for Workplace English Language Learning (ELL)

The lack of English ability has a direct impact on the future success of industries employing high levels of foreign-born workers. The U.S. Department of Labor projects there will be a shortage of 10 million skilled workers in the next five years. Immigrant labor is the key to filling the impending gap, but business and labor alike will only be able to adapt to this change if foreign-born workers learn English, develop relevant vocational skills and integrate into the businesses and communities where they work by becoming U.S. citizens.

A large number of these LEP workers want to learn English. Yet in a survey of adults whose primary language was other than English, 27.7% of those surveyed reported that they are prevented from studying English because of barriers to accessing classes, including lengthy waiting lists resulting from a shortage of federal and state ELL funding.

The Department of Education reports that ELL instruction is the fastest growing area of adult education. Funding to support adult English instruction is severely limited across the country compared to the need. Waiting times are greatest for professionally instructed English classes and can range from several weeks to two years.

Many of these LEP individuals also wish to become U.S. citizens but are prevented from doing so because they cannot meet the English and civics requirements of the U.S. citizenship test.

The issue of English language literacy among the foreign-born is a shared concern among many institutions and groups, including: schools and universities; employers; civic groups; elected officials; law enforcement; faith communities and houses of worship; immigration advocates and literacy promoters.

Lack of English proficiency poses significant barriers to employment and naturalization, especially for recently arriving immigrants, who are more likely to live in poverty and less likely to be well-educated in their native countries or to speak English than immigrants who came before them.

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1 Elizabeth Rice in Workplace Education: Twenty State Perspectives (accessed December 10, 2007); available from http://www.nationalcommissionadultliteracy.org/content/parkerpolicybrief.pdf.
What benefits should an employer expect when offering a workplace ELL program?

- Enhanced worker skills
- Improved worker safety
- Enhanced communication between workers
- Better customer service
- Increased productivity
- Greater employee retention
Creating a Workplace ELL Program

III. Program Needs for Workplace ELL Programs

### Teachers
- Classroom space
- Access to copier
- Access to teaching supplies
- Curriculum designed to reflect employer and employee needs at the workplace
- Support from the employer to fund the classes and support the employees
- Appropriate number of employees interested in learning English

### Employers
- Employees who are Limited English Proficient (LEP)
- Knowledge of potential advancement opportunities for LEP staff
- Classroom space
- Resources to fund the program
- Willingness to support employees while they are enrolled in the English classes
- Willingness to work with the instructor to develop a curriculum specific to the workplace
- Realistic expectations for student progress and language acquisition rates

### Students
- Willingness to learn a new language
- Realistic expectations for language acquisition rates
- Commitment to the program
- Willingness to practice class material at the workplace
- Good attendance rates
## Creating a Workplace ELL Program

### IV. Planning for Your Workplace ELL Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes – Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources, contributions, investments that go into the program</td>
<td>Activities, services, events and products that reach people who participate or who are targeted</td>
<td>Results or changes for individuals, groups, organizations, communities, or systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Activities
- Determine knowledge and skills needed by employees
- Design workplace – specific curriculum and materials
- Market legal and language services
- Assess language level and place students accordingly
- Hold classes
- Gauge customer satisfaction
- Gauge employee language advancements

#### Participation
- Community businesses
- Agency leadership
- Community teachers
- Workplace employees

#### Short
- Increased client knowledge of workplace vocabulary
- Increased employee ability to interact with native English speakers
- Increased employer awareness of LEP employee needs
- Awareness of best practices
- Increased motivation to improve program

#### Medium
- Job advancement for employees
- Additional employees enrolling in courses
- Better informed agency decision-making
- Revised and improved curricula

#### Long
- Increased English Language proficiency
- Increased upward job mobility and job stability
- Workplace ELL program is institutionalized into business structure

### Assumptions
1. Are there enough affordable and accessible classes in your area?
2. Would your program address a need? How?
3. Do you see increasing numbers of immigrants struggling with job advancement opportunities?
4. Are employers interested in addressing the needs of LEP employees?

### External Factors
1. Is your program situated within a supportive community?
2. Are there potential partners that would support this initiative?
3. Is there enough need to create a new program?
Immigrant Integration Agency (IIA) drafted a list of three employers to approach for possible partnership on a workplace ELL program. During the meetings with the employers, IIA described the program, outlined its goals, and explained the benefits and advantages of employer participation. IIA also explained the employer’s responsibilities: provide a designated class space, advertise the class to employees, provide financial support to sustain the program, and ensure that employees will be encouraged and allowed to attend.

IIA chose an employer to host the classes and set to work advertising for and hiring an ELL teacher. After a few weeks, IIA hired an instructor who was qualified to teach workplace ELL. IIA helped the teacher set up a meeting with the employer to discuss what topics the employer wanted the employees to learn in the ELL class. The instructor also learned where and when the class would take place, what materials would be available, and information about the employer’s limited English proficient employees.

Using the information provided by the employer, the teacher designed a 12-week curriculum with realistic goals and objectives related to work activities. This curriculum was approved by IIA’s project manager. The teacher provided an information session for interested students, who then enrolled in the course by letting their employer know of their interest. The employer sent a list of students (course roster) to the teacher.

The teacher began the 12-week session, meeting with students for a total of four hours each week (two, 2-hour classes). The teacher gave students a pre-test at the beginning of the session in order to gauge their current knowledge and a post-test at the end of the session to determine what they learned. This data was provided to the employer. At the end of the 12-week session, the teacher gave the employer a link to a brief, online survey to obtain feedback on the workplace ELL project experience, and encouraged the employer to complete it. The teacher also gave the students a survey to determine student satisfaction.

Now, the teacher is preparing for the second 12-week session of classes. The employer is funding the cost of the teacher, the materials, and the staff time spent in class. The same students are enrolling in the course, and the teacher will meet with the employer to decide what, if any, changes need to be made to the curriculum.
Marriott began the Sed De Saber (Thirst for Knowledge) campaign in 2006, offering hand-held educational devices to Spanish-speaking employees who were interested in learning the English language. In 2008, Marriott expanded its workplace language learning program to include the Global Language Learning program, which partners with Rosetta Stone to offer language learning programs in over 30 languages in Marriott locations all over the world. Marriott also expanded the Sed de Saber program to include portable educational devices for English-speaking employees who seek to learn Spanish.

McDonald’s offers employees the English Under the Arches program, a nationally recognized workplace ELL program that provides English language instruction using a combination of technology and in-person instruction. McDonald’s developed the program after realizing that many staff members held great potential for workplace advancement yet lacked the language skills to fully compete for the positions. English Under the Arches provides training on vocabulary and skills specific to the job requirements of the employees. The classes are free and are paid for by individual franchises. English Under the Arches has received national recognition for its innovative workplace ELL program.

In Northern Virginia, the Fairfax County Office of Adult and Community Education has contracted with area employers, including restaurants, hotels, banks, construction companies, and landscapers to set up worksite English classes since the mid-1980s. The classes, which meet twice a week for 12 weeks, are customized for each employer’s needs and focus on vocabulary required for the job. Employers pay the county for the classes, purchase any necessary books, and pay their employees to attend. Approximately 25 to 30 employers participate in the program each year. Employers who have participated have reported better employee morale, improved safety, and better communication skills on the part of employees.

Trifinity Manufacturing, a company that makes air fresheners in Baltimore, MD, offers on-site English classes in partnership with Baltimore City Community College (BCCC). The company, formerly known as Medo, has sponsored this program since the early 1990s. BCCC pays for the instructors through a grant, and Trifinity pays employees half time to attend the classes. The classes are scheduled over an afternoon shift change so that employees can attend either at the beginning or end of their shifts. In past years, the company encouraged its employees to become citizens by offering citizenship preparation classes, reimbursing them for the cost of a naturalization application successfully completed, and honoring new citizen employees with a party. Over 30 employees successfully naturalized in this way. The company feels that the English and citizenship programs have paid for themselves many times over in terms of money saved on employee turnover. As a result of these programs, the company has an employee retention rate in the high 90s, loyal employees, and excellent morale.

Wegmans Food Markets, a chain based in Rochester, NY with locations in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia, and Maryland, began offering English classes to its employees in 1999. The classes are
conducted two times per week, and employees are paid to attend. The company decided to offer the English classes in response to the shortage of convenient, affordable classes in local communities and a desire to improve employee retention through better advancement opportunities. Wegmans found that it retains 80 percent of English class graduates. In addition, employees who complete the English classes are more comfortable interacting with customers. Wegmans views the English program as a worthwhile investment that greatly benefits the company as well as the employees. As a result of the company’s education programs and other employee benefits, Wegmans was ranked number two on Fortune magazine’s list of the “100 Best Companies to Work For” in 2006.
*Put on your agency’s letterhead*

Date

Name and Address of Employer

Dear Mr. or Ms. ________________:

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with [name of agency] to talk about a workplace English Language Learner’s (ELL) project. We believe this project is valuable to the community, and we are very excited to begin planning it.

One of the goals of the workplace ELL project is to promote immigrant integration through workplace English language classes. Many immigrant workers arrive in the U.S. with limited knowledge of English. They want to learn English but face barriers to accessing classes such as long waiting lists, limited time outside of work to study, and transportation issues. Many immigrants seek to become active and engaged U.S. citizens. Immigrant workers need assistance to learn English, develop relevant vocational skills, and integrate into the businesses and communities where they work. Workplace ELL classes can be offered in a variety of ways. Each employer has the flexibility to offer the classes in a way that is comfortable and convenient for the individual workplace. Additionally, workplace ELL classes work best when the curriculum is designed with both employer and employee needs in mind. Therefore, the employees will have the opportunity to learn the skills immediately applicable to the day-to-day operations of the company.

Employers benefit greatly when workers improve their English skills. Businesses that sponsor workplace English classes have reported lower employee turnover, improved worker safety, enhanced communication skills, and better customer service, among other benefits.

We hope that you will consider partnering with us on this exciting new project. Enclosed you will find further information about our organization and our community’s immigrant population. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [phone] or [e-mail].

Sincerely,

Executive Director or Board Chair
Creating a Workplace ELL Program
X. Workplace English Language Learner (ELL) Survey for Teachers

*This survey could be given to the course instructors, the sponsoring agency, or anyone involved in working on the project. The information could be shared with the employer when developing the next session of classes.

1) Please summarize the results of your post-class assessment.

- What percentage of your students demonstrated an increased ability to communicate effectively in English?
- What percentage of your students reported a positive impact of the classes on their job performance?
- What percentage of your students reported a positive impact of the classes on their job promotions and advances?
- What percentage of your students reported an interest in continuing to attend workplace ELL classes?
- What percentage of your students reported they intended to become U.S. citizens after the class?

2) What were the biggest changes or advances that you saw in your students at the conclusion of the ELL classes?

3) What did you find most helpful about meeting with the employer to plan the curriculum?

4) What do you think would encourage more employers to offer workplace ELL classes?

5) What were the greatest challenges that you found in working on this project?

6) If you could change anything about this project, what would that be?

Any other comments/feedback: ____________________________________________________________

THANK YOU!
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XI. Workplace English Language Learner (ELL) Survey for Employers

1) What percentage of your workforce is Limited English Proficient?

☐ 0-20%  ☐ 21-40%  ☐ 41-60%

☐ 61-80%  ☐ 81-100%

2) How does Limited English Proficiency affect your employees? (Check all that apply.)

☐ It limits employees’ growth potential in the workplace

☐ It increases employee turn-over rates

☐ It limits my company’s growth potential and/or competitiveness

☐ It negatively impacts production rates

☐ It negatively impacts worker safety

☐ It causes communication difficulties amongst staff

☐ It negatively impacts customer service

☐ It has no impact on my business

☐ Other: ____________________

3) Did the workplace ELL class curriculum meet your specific needs?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

4) What was the impact of the ELL classes in your workplace? (Check all that apply.)

☐ Increased ability to communicate effectively with workers who took the classes

☐ Increased employee growth potential

☐ Improved worker safety

☐ Increased company growth potential and/or competitiveness

☐ Improved worker retention

☐ Other: ____________________

☐ No impact

5) Do you intend to continue offering ELL classes to your employees at your workplace?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

6) Are you willing to financially support future ELL classes at your workplace?

☐ Yes  ☐ No
7) If you answered yes to question 6, in what way would you be willing to finance the ELL classes? (Check all that apply.)

- Teacher pay
- Paid class time for employees
- Class materials
- Other: ____________________

8) If you answered no to question 6, what would convince you to finance the ELL classes? (Check all that apply.)

- Proven need within your company for increased English language skills
- Proven results for workplace ELL classes in your location or other locations
- Matching funding from an outside source
- Employee contribution to attend the class
- Other: ____________________
- Nothing would convince me.

9) Would you recommend workplace ELL classes to other employers?

- Yes
- No

Any other comments/feedback: __________________________________________________________
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XII. Workplace ELL Resources

*Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Workplace ESL Programs*
Allene Guss Grognet  
Center for Applied Linguistics  
Project in Adult Immigrant Education (PAIE)  
June 1996  
http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/PLANNINGQA.html

*English That Works: Preparing Adult English Language Learners for Success in the Workforce and Community*
Brigitte Marshall  
Oakland (California) Adult Education  
July 2002  
http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/Englishwks.html

*Issues with Outcomes in Workplace ESL Programs*
Miriam Burt  
National Center for ESL Literacy Education  
January 6, 2004  

*Getting to Work: A Report on How Workers with Limited English Skills Can Prepare for Good Jobs*
Working for America  
2004  

*Charting A Course: Responding to the Industry-Related Instructional Needs of the Limited English Proficient:*
Prepared for Texas LEARNS  
By Barbara Tondre-El Zorkani  
August 2005 / Revised February 2006  
http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/docs/charting06/cover.html

*What are factors to consider when planning for, setting up, and evaluating a workplace program for immigrant workers?*
Center for Adult English Language Acquisition  
2007  
http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/faqs.html#twenty

*Contextualized Curriculum for Workplace Education: An Introductory Guide*
Jenny Lee Utech  
Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable  
June 2008  
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XIII. Workplace ELL Sample Materials

Programmatic Guidelines

A More Perfect Union: A National Citizenship Plan
Catholic Legal Immigration Program (CLINIC)
January 2007
http://cliniclegal.org/resources/more-perfect-union-national-citizenship-plan

Sample Curricula

Workplace Health and Safety ESOL Curriculum
Jenny Lee Utech
Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable
2005
http://www.umass.edu/roundtable/projects/Health-Safety-ESOL.pdf

Introduction to Workers' Basic Legal Protections on the Job: ESOL Curriculum
Diana Satin
Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable
2009
http://www.umass.edu/roundtable/projects/Worker%20Rights%20Curriculum%20final%204.24.09.pdf

Organizations Involved in this Work

English at Work
http://englishatwork.org/

Professional Development Opportunities

National Adult English Language Learning Professional Development Network
http://www.ell-u.org/