

LEADERSHIP PLAN FOR ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER INSTRUCTION THROUGH DATA-DRIVEN STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The increasing linguistic diversity in K-12 classrooms across the United States underscores the need for effective strategies to support English Language Learners (ELLs). This paper presents a two-year leadership plan designed to enhance ELL instruction through faculty professional development in assessment, evaluation, scaffolding, and differentiation practices. The proposed plan integrates a Knowledge Management System (KMS) to track teacher progress, document English Language Learner (ELL) student achievement, and facilitate data-driven decision-making. Year 1 focuses on ELL assessment and evaluation, ensuring fair grading practices and effective progress monitoring. Year 2 emphasizes scaffolding and differentiation, equipping educators with the tools needed to provide equitable learning experiences. A Gantt chart serves as a living document, mapping out incremental training objectives, collaborative discussions, and instructional interventions aligned with academic milestones. This structured approach benefits teachers by providing meaningful, sustainable professional growth opportunities, increases administrative oversight through measurable progress tracking, and reassures parents that the school is committed to supporting ELL student success. By aligning professional development with targeted instructional strategies, this plan fosters improved student outcomes, greater teacher efficacy, and a cohesive, school-wide commitment to equitable education for ELLs.

Keywords: English Language Learners (ELLs), Teacher Professional Development, Knowledge Management System (KMS), Assessment and Evaluation, Scaffolding and Differentiation, Data-Driven Instruction

Introduction

The increasing diversity of student populations in the United States K-12 classrooms highlights the need for effective strategies to support English Language Learners (ELLs). A structured approach to professional development can help educators implement targeted instructional practices that improve student outcomes. This paper proposes a two-year leadership plan for K-12 administrators that implements a Knowledge Management System (KMS) in tracking teacher training and student progress. The leadership plan focuses on enhancing professional development in two key areas: ELL assessment, evaluation, and grading practices in Year 1 and scaffolding and differentiation strategies in Year 2. By using a Gantt chart as a visual representation for fulfilling yearly objectives, this ensures all stakeholders are aware of expectations and can plan accordingly for professional development opportunities. Data-informed decision-making ensures instructional strategies align with the specific needs of educators and learners within the homogeneous educational community. This approach establishes a structured framework for continuous instructional improvement, open dialogue between stakeholders and leaders, and equitable learning opportunities for ELL students.

ELL Student Populations in US Educational Systems

Change is happening in our local, state, and national student population. ELL student populations within California and across America are rapidly growing (Villavicencio et al., 2021). Therefore, the exigent need for leaders to facilitate growth opportunities in the specific area of ELL assessment practices begins and ends with ensuring teacher professional development is a primary determinant when short- and long-term goals for teachers, staff, and

administrators. The necessity for educational leaders to implement ongoing professional development in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) teaching practices is undeniable. Over the past two decades, U.S. K-12 classrooms have seen a significant rise in linguistic and cultural diversity, with English Language Learners (ELLs) now comprising over 10% of the total student population (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Novicoff (2024) reports that nearly 40% of California students speak a language other than English at home, with the majority classified as English Language Learners (ELLs). Despite this growth, many schools struggle to provide adequate instructional support tailored to ELLs' linguistic and academic needs. Research highlights that without targeted intervention, ELL students often face persistent achievement gaps, particularly in standardized testing and graduation rates (Gándara & Escamilla, 2020). Research indicates that ongoing professional development is crucial for teachers to effectively serve their student populations. While traditional one-time workshops provide basic training, sustained professional development offers teachers' continuous opportunities to develop their motivation, knowledge, skills, and cultural competencies. The literature emphasizes that teachers require consistent support to address the complex challenges of language instruction and multicultural classrooms. Studies also show that sustained professional development helps teachers adapt to evolving student needs, implement new teaching strategies, and stay current with best practices in language acquisition. Additionally, long-term professional development creates collaborative learning communities where teachers can share experiences and resources. This ongoing support is particularly vital given the increasing linguistic diversity in today's classrooms and the complex nature of second language instruction.

The Role of Teacher Professional Development in ELL Instruction

Teacher preparedness is a critical factor in ensuring equitable educational opportunities for ELLs. The catalyst for presenting ideas and determining how to participate and achieve suggested or anticipated academic goals is professional development. Many educators report insufficient training in ELL-specific instructional strategies, highlighting a systemic gap in professional development programs (de Jong & Harper, 2018). Teachers who are not knowledgeable in ELL subject matter are then dependent on their subjective opinions or biased interpretations that might not be supported by evidence. It is imperative for leaders to support their ELL students by providing educational staff with sound principles if they are to provide the best education possible for our expanding ELL population. Studies suggest that professional development programs focused on ELL pedagogy—such as scaffolding techniques, differentiation strategies, and culturally responsive teaching—significantly improve student outcomes (Hinojosa, 2023; Islam & Park, 2015).

The findings of researchers and educators who contributed to a California Department of Education book on professional development strategies for teaching diverse student populations reported: “Unfortunately, new teachers often are given those demanding assignments without adequate training and support. After several years of struggle, some of these teachers leave minority schools or the profession, while others learn to cope rather than to teach effectively” (Dolson & Burnham-Massey, 2009, p. 11). The negative effects of teacher turnover impacts the educational community because student achievement declines, school-community relations are disrupted, the number of untrained instructors rises, and school expenses rise. (Atteberry et al., 2017, Hanushek et al., 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020; Watlington et al., 2010). Those educational leaders who are prepared to enact a professional development plan of action not only support their ELL students but also retain good teachers.

Data-Driven Decision Making for ELL Instruction

Effective ELL instruction requires continuous assessment and adjustment based on real-time student data. Data-driven decision-making models, such as formative assessment cycles and teacher reflection logs, have been shown to enhance both instructional effectiveness and student language acquisition (Heritage, 2021). Implementing a KMS for ELL professional development allows administrators to align teacher training efforts with measurable student progress, ensuring that professional learning is both targeted and impactful (Datnow & Hubbard, 2016).

Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) in Educational Settings

A Knowledge Management System (KMS) provides a structured framework for tracking teacher learning and student progress, offering a data-driven approach to professional development. Research in higher education and corporate training environments has demonstrated that KMS improves knowledge retention and the application of best practices in instructional settings (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1996). Although KMS has been widely implemented in business and healthcare, its application in K-12 education—particularly for monitoring ELL instruction—remains an underexplored area (Massingham, 2014).

While existing research underscores the importance of ELL-focused professional development and data-driven instruction, there is a lack of studies exploring how KMS can systematically support teacher growth in ELL pedagogy. Schools need structured leadership plans that integrate KMS to ensure ongoing, measurable improvements in ELL instruction. This study aims to address this gap by proposing a two-year leadership plan that leverages KMS to enhance teacher training in fair assessment and grading practices and differentiated instruction, ultimately improving ELL student outcomes. In an ongoing effort by this researcher to understand, synthesize, and apply results from this study towards organizational leadership principles in an innovative action-oriented manner, a proposed two-year leadership plan of action was developed.

Year 1 Objective: Enhancing Professional Development in ELL Assessment, Evaluation, and Grading Practices

Assessment and evaluation practices significantly impact the academic success of ELL students. Traditional grading methods often fail to account for linguistic barriers, necessitating an approach that emphasizes progress over proficiency. Research supports the adoption of formative assessments and equitable grading policies to more accurately reflect ELL students' learning trajectories (Brookhart, 2013).

To achieve this objective, the leadership team will implement a KMS to:

- Collect and analyze student assessment data to track individual language development and content mastery.
- Share best practices on fair grading through collaborative online forums and professional development workshops.
- Develop and disseminate rubrics that assess content knowledge separately from language proficiency.
- Monitor the effectiveness of alternative grading strategies through teacher feedback and student performance metrics.

Over the course of two years, professional development initiatives will focus on training educators to apply research-backed assessment strategies and interpret KMS data. These initiatives will be supplemented with regular peer collaboration and coaching sessions to ensure consistency in application across General Education classrooms.

Year 2 Objective: Strengthening ELL Scaffolding and Differentiation Practices

Effective scaffolding strategies are crucial for integrating language instruction into content-area teaching. Research has identified various scaffolding types, including linguistic, conceptual, social, and cultural scaffolding, which are part of teachers' practical knowledge. However, cultural scaffolding knowledge is often limited, indicating a need for targeted professional development in this area (Pawan, 2008). Scaffolding and differentiation for supporting ELL students provides temporary support, such as visual aids and structured peer interactions, while differentiation tailors instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017; Tomlinson, 2014). A conceptual framework for scaffolding emphasizes the interactive and collaborative nature of learning. It integrates macro-level curriculum planning with micro-level moment-to-moment support, highlighting the importance of responsive and adaptive teaching strategies (Walqui, 2006).

To achieve this objective, the leadership team will implement a KMS to:

- Create a centralized repository of differentiated ELL instructional materials, including lesson plans, graphic organizers, and multimedia content.
- Facilitate teacher collaboration through digital learning communities focused on best practices in scaffolding techniques.
- Track student engagement and comprehension levels to inform instructional adjustments.
- Provide ongoing professional development sessions on effective differentiation methods and culturally responsive teaching.

By leveraging KMS data, educators will be able to identify student learning patterns and adjust instructional approaches accordingly. The system will also support the documentation of successful differentiation strategies, enabling educators to refine and replicate effective practices over time.

Year 1 and Year 2 Implementation Timeline and Evaluation Metrics

The two-year implementation plan will follow these key phases:

Year 1:

- Establish KMS infrastructure and provide initial training for educators.
- Develop professional learning communities focused on ELL assessment, evaluation, and grading practices.
- Pilot fair grading rubrics and evaluation strategies in select classrooms.

- Collect baseline data on student performance and teacher adoption of strategies.

Year 2:

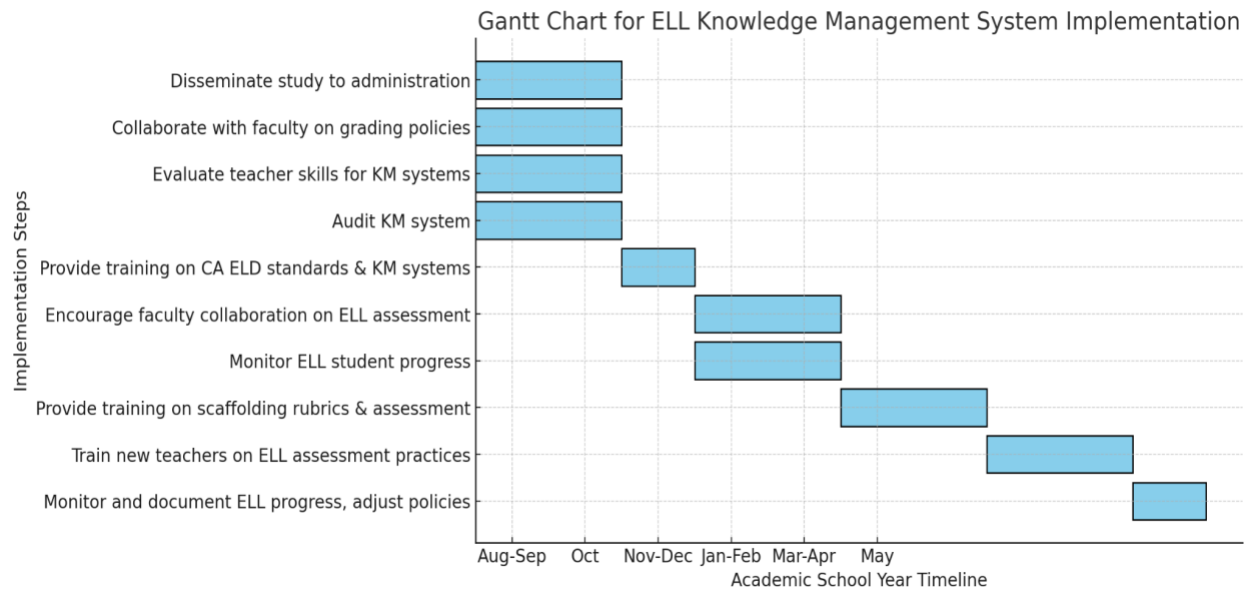
- Expand KMS usage to all educators and refine system functionalities.
- Conduct in-depth workshops on scaffolding and differentiation for ELL instruction.
- Analyze scaffolding effectiveness through student achievement metrics.
- Adjust professional development content based on teacher feedback and performance data.
- Evaluate program success through longitudinal student progress tracking and teacher surveys.

Further Discussion

The implementation of a Knowledge Management System provides a structured approach to enhancing professional development in assessment and scaffolding for ELL students. By leveraging data to inform instructional decisions, this leadership plan ensures that educators are equipped with the necessary tools to foster equitable learning environments. The two-year action plan emphasizes continuous improvement, collaboration, and evidence-based practices, ultimately aiming to enhance student achievement and instructional effectiveness.

Table 1

Year 1--Proposed Leadership Plan of Action Gantt Chart for Implementation of Innovative English Language Development (ELD) Faculty Training on ELL Assessment and Evaluation Practices



The Year 1-Gantt chart was designed to follow a traditional high school academic school year (August to May) with June being omitted due to priority considerations for final preparation, finals test administration, graduation preparation, end of the year activities, and cumulative grades.

The Year 1 Leadership Plan Guide (refer to Table 2) offers a methodical framework for putting into practice a cutting-edge faculty training program for English Language Development (ELD) that focuses on ELL assessment and evaluation procedures. School administrators can use this guidance, which corresponds with the Year 1 Gantt Chart, as a step-by-step guide to make sure that professional development initiatives are carried out successfully throughout the academic year.

This guide's main goal is to improve teachers' readiness to assess, evaluate, and grade their ELL students fairly. It assists teachers and administrators in finding weaknesses in assessment procedures, offering focused training, and monitoring student progress via a KM system by laying out clear actions every month, attainable objectives, and expectations for implementation. By encouraging inter-departmental collaboration and increasing teacher's skills

and knowledge within the ELL subject area, the guide guarantees that ELL students receive fair and uniform assessments.

Additionally, the strategy integrates peer mentorship, data-driven decision-making, and scaffolding techniques, which allow teachers to modify assessment methods and grading rubrics according to ELL student skill levels. This program seeks to close achievement gaps, enhance the quality of instruction, and assist ELL students, reclassified fluent English proficient (RFEP) and long-term English learners (LTELs) by using research-based best practices that align with accepted ELD standards.

In the end, this plan gives school administrators clear action steps for improving ELL instruction, guaranteeing long-lasting enhancements to grading guidelines while cultivating a welcoming and encouraging learning atmosphere. Teachers, students, staff, parents, and administrators will benefit from the school's data-informed, cooperative approach to ELL evaluation by the end of the first year.

Table 2

Year 1—Leadership Plan Guide for ELL Assessment, Evaluation, and Grading Practices

Timeline	Action Steps	Objective	Expected Outcome
August - September	(a) Disseminate study to school district administration for review, clarify questions, and discuss areas of interest.	Ensure leadership alignment and buy-in for implementation.	District leaders understand the scope and purpose of the study and provide support.
	(b) Collaborate with faculty to identify, review, and discuss grading policies for ELL students (action research).	Establish baseline understanding of current grading policies and practices.	Faculty identifies challenges and gaps in current grading practices for ELL students.
	(c) Evaluate general education teachers' skills and knowledge of ELL knowledge management (KM) systems.	Assess professional development needs related to KM system usage.	Identify teachers needing additional training on ELL-specific tools and strategies.
	(d) Audit KM system for functionality, data archival, content, and assessment gaps for each ELL student.	Ensure the KM system is optimized for ELL tracking and instruction.	Accurate classification of ELL students and identification of instructional needs.
October	(a) Provide training for faculty in California ELD standards and KM systems for ELL students.	Equip teachers with foundational knowledge on ELL policies and data systems.	Teachers gain access to and familiarity with KM systems to track student progress.

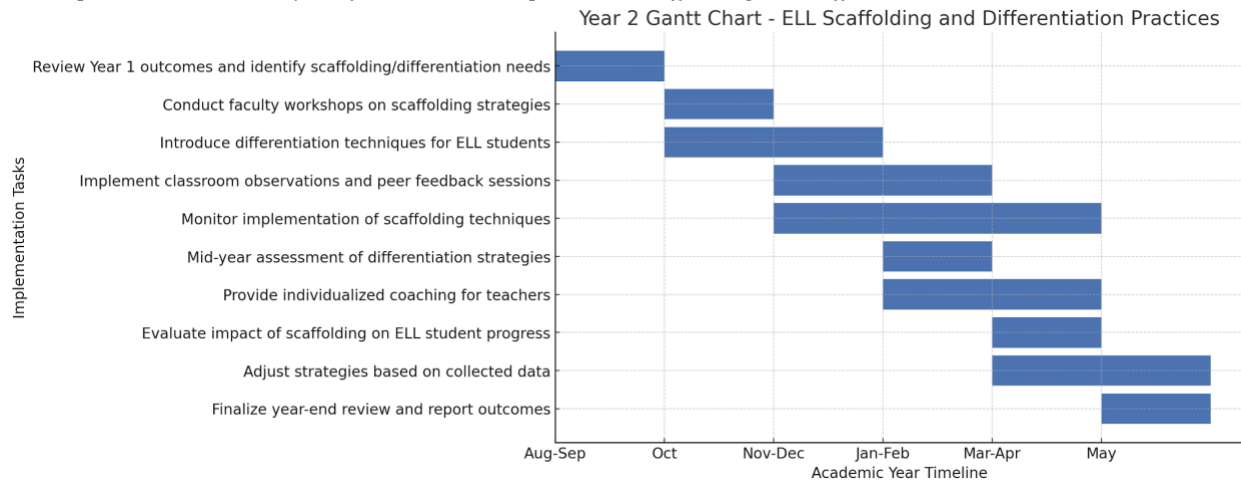
	(b) Encourage teachers to engage in daily English-based conversations with ELL students (modeling).	Foster meaningful language interactions in the classroom.	Increased student engagement and confidence in using English.
November - December	(a) Encourage ELD teachers and ELL support staff to meet with department representatives to discuss ELL assessment strategies.	Facilitate cross-departmental collaboration and consistency in assessment practices.	Documentation of discussions, challenges, and innovative grading solutions in the KM system.
	(b) Monitor ELL student progress by updating the KM system.	Ensure continuous data collection and reflection on student growth.	Regular progress tracking allows for early interventions and targeted support.
January - February	(a) Provide training on scaffolding rubrics and assessment strategies for ELL students.	Strengthen teachers' ability to differentiate and assess ELL students equitably.	Teachers develop and apply rubrics for fair assessment of ELL students.
	(b) Include a review of RFEP (Reclassified Fluent English Proficient) and LTELs (Long-Term English Learners).	Ensure proper tracking and support for reclassified and long-term ELLs.	Teachers understand different ELL classifications and adjust instruction accordingly.
	(c) Provide practice time for teachers to assess ELL written work, with constructive feedback sessions.	Build teacher confidence in evaluating ELL students' academic performance.	Calibration of grading practices to improve fairness and reliability.
March - April	(a) Conduct small-group or one-on-one training for new teachers on ELL assessment practices.	Support new faculty in adopting best practices for ELL instruction.	New teachers integrate ELL principles into classroom instruction.

	(b) Integrate research-based ELL principles to support language acquisition.	Ensure best practices are incorporated into teaching strategies.	More effective instructional approaches leading to improved ELL outcomes.
	(c) Address any lingering questions or concerns from teachers.	Provide ongoing support and coaching.	Increased teacher confidence and effectiveness.
May	(a) Monitor and document ELL progress in the KM system.	Finalize student data for year-end analysis and reflection.	School leaders can evaluate the effectiveness of ELL strategies.
	(b) Adjust interventions related to assessment strategies based on collected data.	Ensure continuous improvement in ELL instructional practices.	Informed decision-making for future professional development and policy adjustments.
	(c) Evaluate and modify school-site ELL assessment policies where applicable.	Align policies with best practices and observed outcomes.	Improved grading and assessment structures for ELL students.
	(d) collaborate with veteran teachers to integrate their experiences for accelerated adoption of ELL assessment practices.	Leverage teacher expertise to strengthen faculty collaboration and mentorship.	Stronger institutional knowledge-sharing and sustainability of practices.

This guide provides clear monthly reference points for administrators, ensuring that each action step aligns with the Year 1-Gantt chart while facilitating a structured, data-driven approach to professional development for ELL instruction.

Table 3

Year 2--Proposed Leadership Plan of Action Gantt Chart for Implementation of Innovative English Language Development (ELD) Faculty Professional Development on Scaffolding and Differentiation Practices



The Year 2-Gantt chart was designed to follow a traditional high school academic school year (August to May) with June being omitted due to priority considerations for final preparation, finals test administration, graduation preparation, end of the year activities, and cumulative grades

The Year 2 Leadership Plan of Action Gantt Chart (Table 3) and Leadership Plan Guide (Table 4) serves as a structured incremental plan to systematically implement faculty professional development in scaffolding and differentiation techniques for English Language Learner (ELL) instruction. Building upon the Year 1 focus on ELL assessment and evaluation, this plan prioritizes instructional strategies that enhance equitable learning opportunities for ELL students by providing structured academic support tailored to their language proficiency levels.

The purpose of this chart is to provide school leaders with a timeline-driven, action-oriented framework to guide faculty training, collaboration, and instructional improvement. By organizing professional development into distinct phases, the plan ensures progressive skill-building among educators, leading to improved ELL student engagement, content mastery, and language proficiency.

Table 4*Year 2—Proposed Leadership Plan Guide for ELL Scaffolding and Differentiation*

Timeline	Action Steps	Goals	Expected Outcomes
August – September	(a) Disseminate the Year 2 plan to school district administration for review. (b) Collaborate with faculty to identify current differentiation and scaffolding strategies used in classrooms. (c) Conduct a baseline survey of teacher knowledge and confidence in scaffolding and differentiation for ELLs.	Establish a clear understanding of faculty needs and current practices.	Leadership and faculty have a shared understanding of scaffolding and differentiation needs. Baseline data collected for measuring progress.
October	(a) Provide training on research-based scaffolding and differentiation techniques aligned with California ELD standards. (b) Introduce Knowledge Management (KM) system strategies to document and track scaffolding implementation.	Equip teachers with foundational knowledge and strategies to implement scaffolding effectively.	Teachers gain confidence in using scaffolding strategies and have access to resources in the KM system.
Nov. – Dec.	(a) Encourage collaboration between general education and ELD teachers to share best practices. (b) Document observations and implementation challenges in the KM system. (c) Monitor ELL student progress and assess the impact of scaffolding strategies.	Strengthen interdepartmental collaboration and create a repository of best practices.	Teachers regularly document scaffolding practices and adjustments in the KM system, leading to improved differentiation techniques.

January – February	(a) Provide training on differentiated instruction models and their application in diverse classrooms. (b) Conduct practice sessions for teachers to develop and evaluate differentiated lesson plans. (c) Use case studies to explore effective differentiation strategies.	Expand teacher capacity to differentiate instruction based on individual student needs.	Teachers implement differentiation techniques, and student engagement and academic performance improve.
March – April	(a) Schedule follow-up training for new teachers on scaffolding and differentiation. (b) Conduct peer observations and collaborative feedback sessions on differentiation strategies.	Reinforce best practices and provide targeted support to new and struggling teachers.	Increased teacher self-efficacy in scaffolding and differentiation, with ongoing support structures in place.
May	(a) Monitor and document the impact of scaffolding and differentiation on ELL progress in the KM system. (b) Adjust professional development plans based on faculty feedback. (c) Evaluate and refine school policies on differentiation for ELLs.	Assess the effectiveness of Year 2 implementation and plan for continuous improvement.	Data-driven decision-making informs future training initiatives, ensuring sustainable improvements in ELL instruction.

Both Year 2 Gantt chart and Leadership Guide begins in August and September with a review and dissemination of objectives to school leadership, followed by an assessment of faculty knowledge and current practices related to scaffolding and differentiation. This baseline data collection allows administrators to tailor training sessions to address specific instructional gaps.

In October, faculty training focuses on research-based scaffolding techniques and the integration of a Knowledge Management (KM) system to document instructional strategies. By November and December, the emphasis shifts to collaboration, encouraging ELD and general education teachers to share best practices while monitoring student progress.

The January and February phase introduces targeted training on differentiated instruction models, emphasizing hands-on practice through lesson planning and case studies. March and April reinforce best practices with peer observations and small-group training for new teachers, ensuring continuity and refinement of differentiation strategies. By May, school leaders assess the effectiveness of scaffolding and differentiation through faculty feedback, student progress data, and adjustments to instructional policies. The KM system serves as a living document for continuous reflection and improvement. Ultimately, this chart provides school administrators and instructional leaders with a roadmap for implementing sustainable, data-driven professional development that enhances teacher self-efficacy and optimizes ELL student success. By structuring the plan across the academic year, this approach ensures gradual, meaningful improvements in instructional practices, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment for ELL students.

Conclusion

The implementation of this two-year leadership plan provides all staff members an opportunity to enhance ELL instruction practices through targeted faculty training in assessment, evaluation, grading practices, scaffolding, and differentiation. By phasing professional development over two academic years, teachers are given the time and support necessary to build expertise, engage in collaborative learning, and implement best practices in a sustainable manner. This gradual and incremental approach increases teacher buy-in, as educators can see measurable progress in both their own instructional effectiveness and student outcomes.

For administrators, this plan offers a clear framework to track professional development efforts, monitor faculty engagement, and align teacher training with measurable student progress through the Knowledge Management System (KMS). The structured timeline ensures that professional learning is purposeful and ongoing, rather than a one-time initiative.

Furthermore, parents benefit from the transparency of this plan, as it demonstrates the school's commitment to supporting ELL students through equitable grading, differentiated instruction, and continuous assessment. By actively communicating progress and improvements, schools foster trust and collaboration with families, reinforcing their role as partners in their children's education.

Ultimately, this two-year plan bridges the gap between policy and practice, ensuring that ELL students receive the targeted support needed for academic success, while teachers and administrators engage in meaningful, measurable, and effective instructional growth.

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