

Patterns in the Implementation of Instructional Strategies To Support English Learners in the Mainstream Classroom

The case of Project GLAD®

Theresa Deussen, Kari Nelsestuen, Elizabeth Autio

Project GLAD® is a K–12 instructional model designed to be used in the mainstream classroom that may serve English learners (ELs) and proficient English speakers at the same time. Its purpose is to help students access and master grade-level content while they are building academic English. The model provides teachers with over 35 specific, multistep instructional strategies that can be layered onto existing curriculum in any content area. Although more than 50,000 teachers have received Project GLAD professional development, before our study the approach had not undergone a rigorous evaluation (Goldenberg, 2013).

We conducted a cluster randomized trial of Project GLAD in 30 Idaho elementary schools. In Year 1 (2011–2012), fifth-grade teachers in 15 treatment schools received seven days of intensive Project GLAD professional development and three days of follow-up coaching. Teachers in 15 control schools conducted “business as usual.” Year 1 findings suggest that Project GLAD may benefit ELs’ reading, vocabulary, and writing, although we did not find an impact on students’ science achievement (Deussen, Roccograndi, Autio, & Hanita, 2014).

Under what implementation conditions did these outcomes occur? For our implementation study, we explored the degree to which teachers implemented Project GLAD, the variation among teachers, and teachers’ views of implementation supports and challenges. We focused on implementation in science and social studies, using multiple measures: monthly teacher surveys, classroom observations, and teacher interviews.

We found that:

- All teachers in treatment schools used Project GLAD in the year following their professional development. In contrast, very few teachers in control schools used Project GLAD strategies or used strategies that resembled the program.
- There was substantial variation among teachers in both the frequency and fidelity of implementation. The average level of implementation did not

Average and Variance in Teacher Implementation

	Average	Range
Number of strategies used per week*	12.5	7 - 22
Percentage of 35 strategies ever tried*	71%	40% – 91%
Number of strategies used during a lesson**	4.6	1 – 9

reach high frequency or high fidelity.

- The reading and writing strategies to which Project GLAD gradually builds were used less frequently than expected.
- Teachers reported that the training, coaching, and collaboration with colleagues supported helped them implement Project GLAD. Teachers were also overwhelmingly positive about the Project GLAD model.
- The most frequently cited challenge to implementation was preparation time. On average, teachers said they spent 2.8 hours per week preparing for Project GLAD. Creating the teacher-made materials was the most time-consuming task.
- Other implementation challenges included lack of time to implement the strategies; lack of confidence in how to teach some strategies; insufficient materials; and teachers' perceptions of the "fit" between specific strategies and students in their classrooms.

These findings leave several questions for both researchers and practitioners: What does it take to reach higher levels of implementation? Were key implementation supports missing? Is there a link between implementation and outcomes? We are currently in the midst of additional analyses that will help us address these important questions.

For more information about the study: <http://projectgladstudy.educationnorthwest.org>

Reference

Goldenberg, C. (2013). Unlocking the research on English learners: What we know—and don't yet know—about effective instruction. *American Educator*, 37(2), 4–11, 38. Retrieved from <http://www.aft.org/pdfs/americaneducator/summer2013/Goldenberg.pdf>

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