

THE POWER OF TWO



LESSON STUDY AND SIOP HELP TEACHERS INSTRUCT ELLS

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Through the combination of two professional development strategies — lesson study and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) — we were able to help teachers in Freeport Public Schools, a district on Long Island, N.Y., provide effective instruction for ELLs in mainstream classrooms. The unique combination of the two models

underscored the strengths of both in terms of teacher development and impact on student learning.

As a result of this fusion, participating teachers collaboratively planned content-based lessons, observed each other teaching these lessons, discussed their observations, reflected on SIOP techniques and their impact on student learning, and prepared lesson study reports.

THE LESSON STUDY AND SIOP MODELS

The origins of Japanese lesson study can be traced back to the early 1900s (Fernandez, 2002). In recent years, more U.S. schools are using lesson study (Boss, 2001; Chokshi & Fernandez, 2004; Kelly, 2002; Staples, 2005; Stewart & Brendefur, 2005; Watanabe, 2002) and several lesson study centers have been established

around the country (LSRG at Columbia University, Mills College, NWREL, Metropolitan Nashville School District, as cited in Boss, 2001). The lesson study approach invites experienced teachers to examine their teaching practices and to improve their effectiveness (Lewis, 2002). In this method, teachers form teams, collaboratively plan lessons, observe each other teaching the lesson, and discuss their observations.

The SIOP model was a result of a seven-year research project (1996-2003) conducted for the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). The purpose of the original SIOP project was to establish specific guidelines for professional development to support the implementation of Sheltered Instruction. In Sheltered Instruction, teachers adapt and modify mainstream, grade-appropriate curriculum to make learning achievable for English language learners (ELLs). The SIOP model is organized around eight components essential for making grade-level content accessible for ELLs and for helping them develop academic and language skills (see box at right). SIOP is also used for observation, self-assessment, and lesson planning purposes.

OUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

We worked with a group of practicing teachers who were members of an Intensive Teacher Institute (ITI) cohort in a high-need school district on Long Island. ITI was originally developed in response to the shortage of certified bilingual and ESL teachers in New York. Provisionally certified

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The 8 components of SIOP

- 1. Preparation:** Language and content objectives, adaptation of content, use of materials.
- 2. Building background:** Links to prior learning and background experience.
- 3. Comprehensible input:** Making content accessible through clear speech and explanations.
- 4. Strategies:** Scaffolding and questioning techniques.
- 5. Interaction:** Grouping configurations to enhance discussion.
- 6. Practice/application:** Activities to integrate content and language objectives.
- 7. Lesson delivery:** Student engagement and lesson pacing.
- 8. Review/assessment:** Focus on content and language objectives, progress, and feedback.

Source: Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008

teachers working as ESL teachers or teaching a large percentage of ELLs without adequate training are eligible. We introduced 22 participants to Japanese lesson study and the SIOP model within the context of a graduate education course. After an extensive overview of the two models, the teachers participated in the following learning processes and group structures.

Phase one: Teachers formed teams and decided on one or several SIOP focus questions, the grade level, and content of their lessons. Teams selected an overarching theme that they planned to explore. These focus themes were based on (a) the eight

major components or 30 subcomponents of the SIOP model, (b) their own unique teacher development needs, and (c) the identified needs of their students. Most teachers focused on building ELLs' background knowledge, particularly in science and social studies lessons. Teachers often commented that their students lacked prior knowledge as well as sufficient vocabulary to understand content being introduced. The instructors supported teams through ongoing in-class and e-mail communication about the project. Since the teachers didn't have additional released time beyond the course, as instructors we intended to build communities of learners who would continue with the SIOP and lesson study projects beyond the ITI program and sustain it as a self-directed professional development practice.

Phase two: Participants collaboratively developed SIOP lesson plans in which language and content development activities were related to mathematics, science, social studies, technology, and/or art curricula. Every member taught and observed at least one SIOP lesson. Teachers implemented their lessons with ELLs in their regular classroom settings, while being observed by other

members of the team — a basic element of the lesson study approach as well as the SIOP model when used for observation. One lesson addressed the essential question of how communities meet the needs and wants of the people who live there. Students identified and illustrated familiar places in their own community and classified their personal needs and wants. The overlap between the two categories was highlighted and the students

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experienced a real-life connection to this social studies lesson. The teacher encouraged expressive language by using scaffolded sentence starters such as “I want _____ so I go to _____” or “I need _____ so I go to _____.” In addition, the teacher created a rich visual environment through the use of a mini-word wall, definitions on chart paper, and a class-size Venn diagram.

Phase three: At the completion of the lesson presentations and observations, each team created and presented a joint lesson study report to the rest of the cohort. The purpose of the lesson study report was to document the process of implementing the SIOP model in their diverse classrooms, to describe the successes and difficulties they encountered, and to summarize the discussions that their team members engaged in throughout the lesson study process as they co-constructed knowledge about their ELLs’ needs and the effectiveness of the SIOP model to respond to that need.

DID THE PROJECT WORK?

The purpose of this project was to merge two distinct professional development models for practicing teachers who work with ELLs without any prior training or certification. To assess the effectiveness of this professional development experience, we explored the following two project assessment themes:

Theme 1. In what ways did the SIOP lesson study reports demonstrate participants’ knowledge, skills, dispositions, and impact on student learners?

Theme 2. What are the outcomes of combining the lesson study approach and the SIOP model for professional development?

Freeport Public Schools Freeport, N.Y.

Number of schools: Eight (five elementary, two middle, and one high)

Grades: Pre-K-12

Enrollment: 6,515

Staff: 815

Racial/ethnic mix:

White: 10%

Black: 39%

Hispanic: 49%

Asian/Pacific Islander: 1%

Native American: <1%

Limited English proficiency: 17%

Languages spoken: 12

Free/reduced lunch: 38%

Special education: 9%

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We used a combination of quantitative methodologies (descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation) and qualitative approaches (triangulation including in-depth interviews with ITI participants) to explore whether the lesson study approach merged with the SIOP model would warrant systematic implementation in professional development.

In response to Theme 1, we found:

- Teachers experienced change in their knowledge base about teaching ELLs and second-language acquisition, especially regarding theories of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1982) and common underlying proficiency (Cummins, 2000);
- Teachers demonstrated effective sheltered instructional teaching skills, with special emphasis on scaffolding, building background knowledge, enhancing vocabulary development, and providing opportunities for frequent, meaningful interactions among ELLs.
- Teachers showed commitment to working with diverse, high-need, limited English proficient students through self-assessment, teacher dialogue, group processing, and

reflective practice. One participant said: “As educators of students whose second language is English, it is our responsibility to familiarize ourselves with the cultural and familial backgrounds that students bring to the class, provide a safe environment for learning, make the content information accessible to all students, and advocate for educational equity and excellence for language minority students.”

- Student artifacts demonstrated the model’s effectiveness. Students used graphic organizers and scaffolded tasks and showed examples of growth through writing samples. From a collection of student artifacts, we knew that the implementation of the SIOP model was not only effective, but also that the work sparked the creativity of the students. Also, teachers submitted personal reflections describing the immediate and long-term impact on the student learner, including the following from one participant: “The students were interested and engaged throughout the various parts of the unit. The setting of the Awesome Autumn Learning Environment was ideal for building comprehensible input. Through the use of hands-on materials, students were able to derive meaning from the environment around them.”
- In response to Theme 2, we found:
- Teachers are acutely aware of the level of involvement, time, and human capacity commitment required for participating in a SIOP lesson study project.
 - As a collaborative inquiry activity, five out of the six SIOP lesson study teams were able to create a learning community, whereas one team continued to struggle with establishing common goals for their study throughout the project.

- Despite the time required and the challenges we identified, most cohort members agreed that the SIOP lesson study project was among the most effective professional development activities that they have ever participated in since both their knowledge base and skills increased.
- Berger, Boles, and Troen (2005) stated that teacher research, “while a robust and interesting professional development activity for individual teachers, is strongly reliant on external supports and leadership as it battles against the culture of schools” (p. 103). Similarly, cohort participants identified a paradox when participating in lesson study projects: Though the projects proved most worthwhile for the majority of participants, mandated staff development hours spent in workshops often do not allow for collaborative engagement.

A YEAR LATER

A year after the completion of the ITI program, we conducted interviews with the participants and learned that the SIOP model was used to a greater extent than the lesson study approach. We learned that time constraints were the key reason that participants didn't formally use the lesson study approach after the completion of the ITI program in the schools. In looking at professional development approaches in other countries, Darling-Hammond (2005) also concluded that time and administrative support were necessary for professional development to be effective. As we communicated formally and informally with participating teachers, we realized that the SIOP model has taken

precedence over the Japanese lesson study model. District administrators have shown their commitment to the SIOP model by requesting additional training for a new teacher cohort in the 2007-08 academic year.

LESSONS LEARNED

We learned several valuable lessons from this implementation of two professional development models linked by the common feature of engaging practicing teachers in collaborative inquiry to respond to the needs of ELLs. We have found that a combination of the lesson study and SIOP models will greatly enhance teaching and learning focused on ELLs; collaboration among teachers is a key factor in teacher development; collaboration by professional development providers also needs to be modeled for in-service teachers; practicing teachers can benefit from the sharing of research and learning about successful research-based models; and reflection as a process undergirds both the lesson study model and the SIOP model. We recognize that by fusing the two models, we both enhanced them and put parameters on them. We have concluded that this project's merits outweigh the concerns and significantly contributed to offering a research-based professional development model to help mainstream teachers improve instruction for ELLs.

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