English Language Learners at School: A Guide for Administrators


*English Language Learners at School: A Guide for Administrators* is a unique book because it was actually developed with the help of school leaders from around the country. Editors Else Hamayan and Rebecca Freeman began creating this guide by asking school leaders to submit questions about educating ELL students. The result is a text that discusses some of their most pressing concerns in this area. Another plus is that some of the most well-known experts in the field—including Jim Cummins and Jana Echevarria—provided the answers to the questions.

This book is a valuable reference tool for the busy principal as each chapter is divided into short, two- to three-page sections—each beginning with a specific question. This allows the reader to get a quick introduction to a topic of interest.

With more than 50 contributing authors, there is an immense amount of information in this book. Some chapters address general material about language development and instruction, while others focus on topics of special interest to school leaders that might have implications broader than the education of ELL students. For example, in a chapter on classroom-based assessment, Hamayan discusses why its use can be especially valuable in the current climate of high-stakes testing. “First, it provides essential information that is sorely lacking from standardized testing to students, their parents, teachers, and administrators. Second, classroom assessment can happen without taking precious learning time away from students because it is integrated with instruction.”

An especially helpful aspect of the book is the inclusion of a “survey for reflection and action” in each chapter. Each survey asks the reader to respond to a number of statements that cover the topics discussed in the chapter from the perspective of his or her own school. Together, these mini-surveys could provide a useful framework for reviewing the elements of a school’s program and identifying areas needing attention and improvement.