
BUILDING BRIDGES TO LITERACY

A Proposal To Improve Adolescent ELL Literacy In Booneville Middle School



PRESENTED TO
THE CENTER FOR APPLIED
LINGUISTICS (CAL)

PRESENTED BY
THE TRI-COUNTY COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIP (TCCP)

12/14/2009

December 14, 2009

Georgia Marcos

Center for Learning

1234556 Fifth Avenue

New York, New York 00293

Dear Georgia:

Thank you for considering Tri-County Community Partnership (TCCP) of Central Iowa, our objective is to help struggling adolescent ELL literacy learners at Booneville Middle School in Booneville, Iowa, become proficient readers. As a result of implementing our program, Booneville Middle School can expect 80% of its ELL students to move from non-proficiency to proficiency on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS).

Our research has shown that targeted literacy strategies can make a difference to the struggling ELL student. TCCP of Central Iowa has been actively involved in Adolescent ELL Literacy programs and was awarded the 2008 Best Educational Literacy Partnership Award by the State of Iowa. Our ten years of expertise and experience in designing literacy programs is known statewide.

In our proposal you will find the following:

- A current analysis of the situation at Booneville Middle School in Booneville, Iowa
- A complete methodology based upon research and good pedagogy that ensures a successful project outcome
- The academic and experiential qualifications that make TCCP of Central Iowa the optimal choice for conducting this project
- The accrued benefits to Booneville Middle School and its adolescent ELL population, and other schools statewide who will replicate and gain insight from our project.

Urbandale, Iowa 50326 ♦ (123) 456-7890 ♦ info@tccp.org

Our Building Bridges to Literacy program can dramatically change the lives of adolescent ELL students by giving them the strategies to improve their literacy and perform well academically. Please join us and our in-kind partners to help these struggling adolescent ELL students at Booneville Middle School in Booneville, Iowa. Together we can make a difference.

Sincerely,

**Jon Cooper, Jim Masters, Lisa Miller, and Wanda Walters
Tri-County Community Partnership of Central Iowa
(TCCP of Central Iowa)**

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine sitting in class and only understanding a little of what is being said. Or, imagine a reading assignment that takes most students 15 minutes to read but takes you three hours to translate and read. These are the frustrations that an English language learner (ELL) student faces everyday.

Adolescent ELLs are second language learners who are still developing their proficiency in academic English. Moreover, they are *learning* English at the same time they are studying core content areas *in* English. Dale Carnegie writes that ELL students in middle school and high school must perform “**double** the work of native English speakers . . . while being held to the *same accountability standards* as their native English-speaking peers” (Carnegie 1).

RURAL IOWA SCHOOLS MUST CHANGE THEIR INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR ELL STUDENTS

Even though ELL students are at a particular disadvantage in the classroom, teachers currently lack the tools to help them. Carnegie writes:

Despite the growing societal awareness of the need for interventions and programs to increase literacy levels of adolescents, education policymakers and school reformers have mostly overlooked the needs of the large and growing English language learner (ELL) population. Though recent reports have helped to focus attention on the adolescent literacy crisis, they offer very little guidance on how best to meet the varied and challenging literacy needs of adolescent ELLs (Carnegie 1).

In order to further understand how this problem affects Central Iowa, the Tri-County Community Partnership (TCCP) convened a panel of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners (see list Appendix A). This panel studied ten different Iowa schools with growing ELL populations. During this study, the panel agreed to focus strictly on *academic literacy*, which they defined as the ability to read, write, speak, and listen well enough to function in school.

The panel identified six major challenges for improving literacy of ELLs in Iowa. Schools in Iowa do not have:

- A common criteria for identifying ELLs and tracking their academic performance
- Appropriate assessments for ELL literacy
- Educator capacity for educating ELLs in literacy

- Research-based instructional practices
- Flexible program options

The panel concluded that Iowa schools, particularly rural schools, which often lack adequate resources, are struggling to meet the needs of their ELL student population and desperately need help. We hope to launch a pilot program at one Central Iowa middle school to help solve this problem.

RURAL IOWA SCHOOLS STRUGGLE TO EDUCATE ELLs

Schools in rural Iowa do not know how to help the burgeoning ELL population in their middle and high school classrooms, and since small towns employ a lot of farm labor, their ELL populations are higher there than anywhere else in the state. Booneville, Iowa (which sits at the crossroads of Polk, Dallas and Madison counties) is a one such county. Booneville's agricultural industry relies on an immigrant labor force. As is demonstrated by Figure 1, during the last ten years, Booneville Middle School has increased its ELL population by 55%.

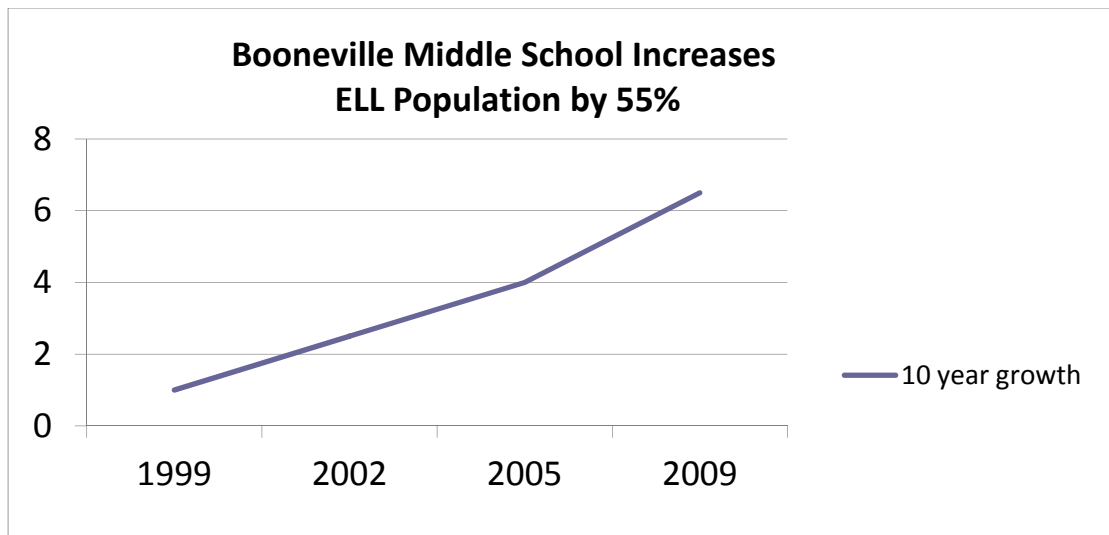


Figure 1: During the past ten years Booneville Middle School has increased their ELL population by 55%.

BOONEVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL IS IN CRISIS

Few resources have been allocated to help the burgeoning group of ELLs at the middle and high school level. Booneville Middle School is currently unable to address the academic needs of their ELL population. Therefore, Booneville Middle School has a growing illiteracy problem which cannot be fixed with traditional methods.

Currently, 94% of ELL students at this school are non-proficient. Figure 2 demonstrates the great disparity between native speakers and ELL students' literacy at Booneville Middle School.

Percentile Ranking of Proficiency Scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills

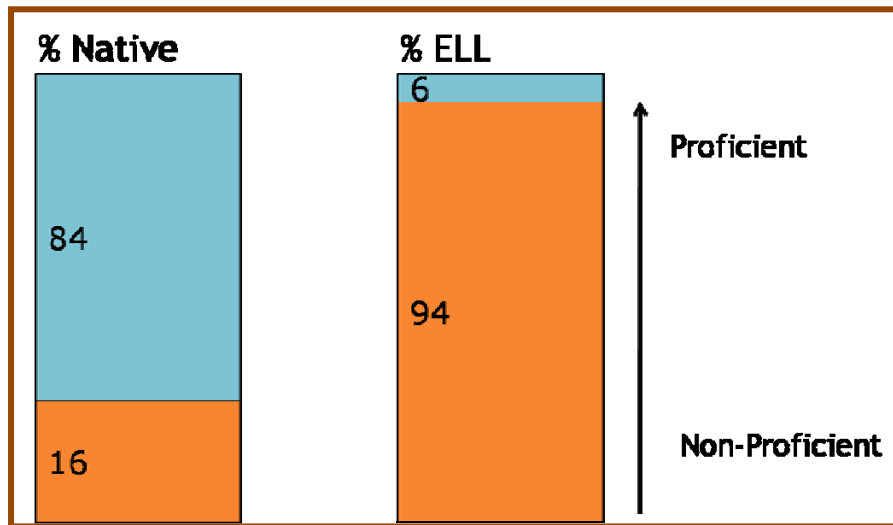


Figure 2: Eighth grade ELL students at Booneville Middle School scored poorly on the 2008 ITBS Reading Test

Our research suggests that the growing illiteracy problem is creating six serious effects:

- Disengaged ELL students are disrupting classroom dynamics
- Teachers retention in Booneville Middle is only 30%
- Booneville district is non-compliant and on academic probation by the State of Iowa.
- ELL Parents at Boonville Middle are angry and alienated from the school

- The Booneville community is socio-economically impacted by low literacy rates

DISENGAGED ELL STUDENTS ARE DISRUPTING CLASSROOM DYNAMICS

ELL students are disenfranchised by instruction which is targeted strictly to native speakers. Students who are not actively engaged in the learning process tend to act out or cause distractions in the classroom. Our research shows that last year, 20% of eighth grade students were put on behavioral probation. This is due in part to poor student involvement because of low literacy levels. Non-engaged students disrupt classroom dynamics.

TEACHER RETENTION AT BOONVILLE MIDDLE IS ONLY 30%

The lack of professional development and ancillary resources in addition to the loss of classroom control are all factors which contribute to a 70% turnover rate among new teachers. The lack of necessary support for helping students to be successful in the classroom, along with the growing discipline problem at the school, is creating low teacher morale. Because teachers view their own success in terms of the success of their students, poor student performance and low literacy rates degrade teacher morale. In some cases, Middle School has been unable to retain good teachers for more than one year. This is not enough time to build continuity or stability into Booneville's educational program.

BOONEVILLE DISTRICT IS NON-COMPLIANT AND ON ACADEMIC PROBATION BY THE STATE OF IOWA

Booneville Middle School is at risk to lose funding from the State because they are non-compliant with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) standards. The reading scores from last year's ITBS tests were so far below the comprehensive school improvement plan (CSIP) goals that the State of Iowa has placed Booneville on probation. If Booneville does not raise test scores and meet their CSIP goals by the end of this academic year, they will lose state and federal funding.

ELL PARENTS AT BOONVILLE MIDDLE ARE ANGRY AND ALIENATED FROM THE SCHOOL

The ELL parents we contacted were deeply troubled by and angry about their children's lack of academic success, but were unable to remedy the problem. Because literacy is such an integral part of daily life, most ELL students and families are alienated from the school and the community. One dramatic piece of evidence for this is the high dropout for ELL students at Booneville Middle School. 15% of Booneville's ELL population is leaving school after the eighth grade. This far exceeds the national average of 3.9%.

ELL parents want their students to stay in school, but their inability to communicate well with school officials keep them alienated from the school and community events. ELL parents have little contact with teachers, no help with their own literacy issues, and no support network to receive help. They subsequently do not understand the new culture in which they live and work. ELL parents feel angry and helpless to know how to keep their students in school.

THE BOONEVILLE COMMUNITY IS SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY IMPACTED BY LOW LITERACY RATES

According to a 2008 study by the National Literacy Trust, "families with lower literacy rates are less likely to help their children with reading and writing, and feel less confident in seeking higher paid jobs." As the chart on the next page demonstrates (Figure 3), literacy is linked to socio-economic success. The parents and community leaders we spoke to were deeply concerned about the lack of opportunity that ELL students will have if the situation at the school does not improve.

Literacy and Socioeconomic Success are Closely Related

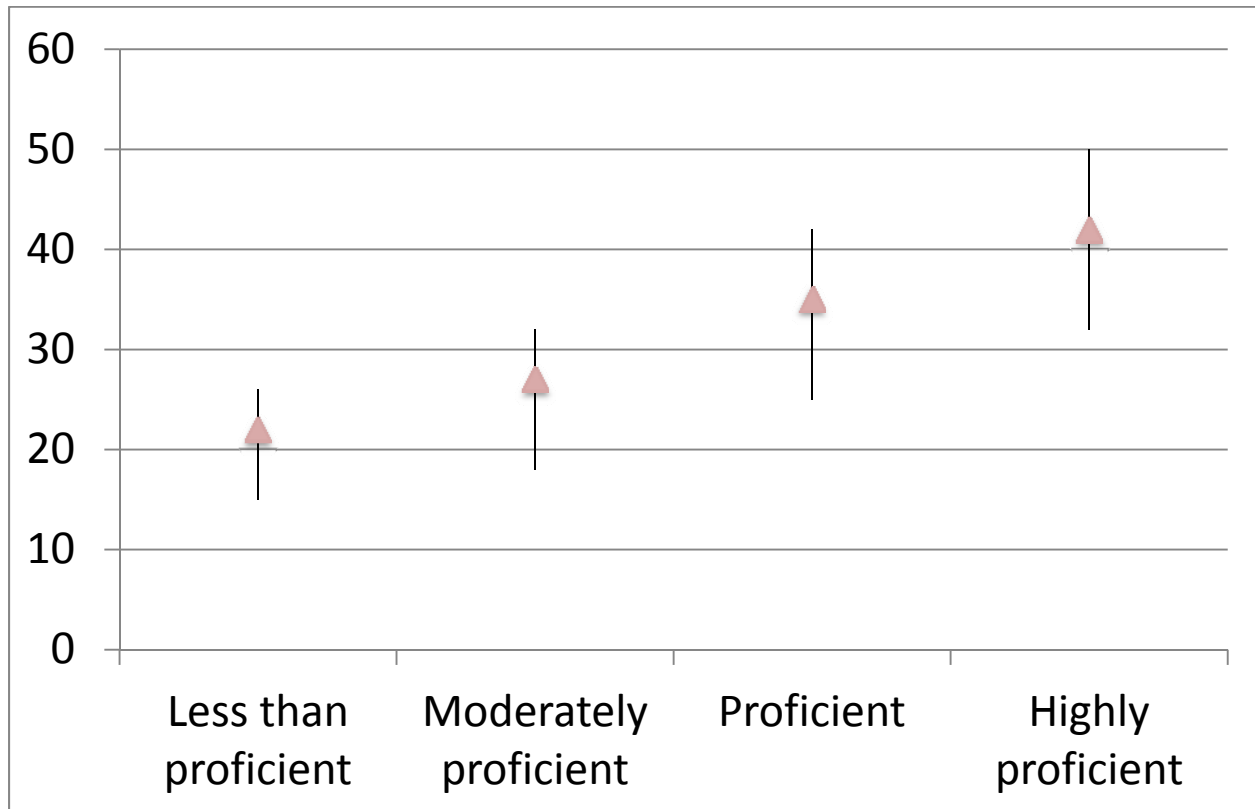


Figure 3: Reading proficiency is closely correlated to income (National Literacy Trust 2008).

WE MUST ACT NOW

The State of Iowa is in economic distress, and schools across the state are reducing their budgets. State funding for school districts is drying up just as the need for education is becoming increasingly important. Booneville Middle School does not have the money to hire any more staff or to conduct new training. While TCCP cannot remedy all of Booneville's ailments, we can offer a sustainable, cost effective way to deal with this one potentially explosive problem.

Our objective is to move 80% of Booneville Middle School ELL students from non-proficient status to proficient status on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills by the end of the 2009-2010 school year, as shown on the next page in figure 4.

TCCP's Objective for Booneville Middle School's ELL Literacy Problem

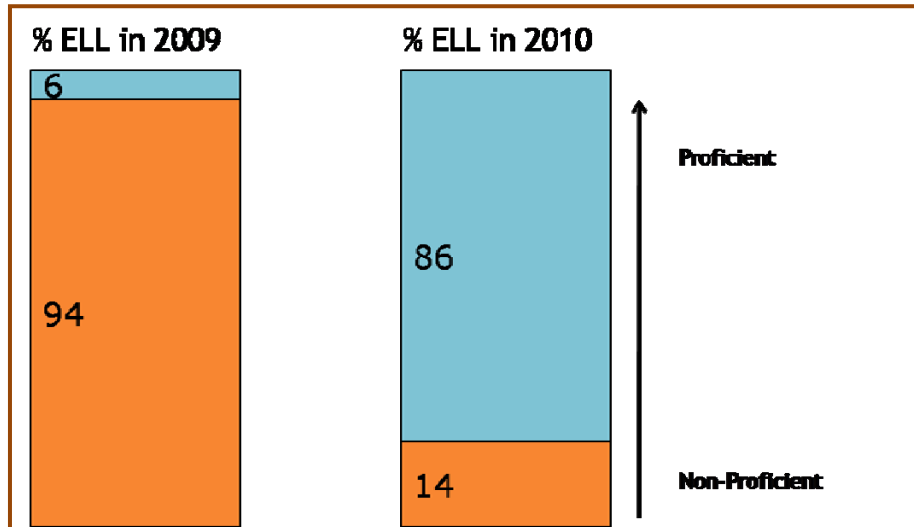


Figure 4. TCCP proposes a literacy program that will advance 80% of Booneville Middle School's non-proficient ELL students to proficient status on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills by the end of the 2009-2010 school year.

In order to meet our objective of increasing Booneville Middle School's ELL students' literacy proficiency by 80%, we must address the needs students, teachers, and parents. Several important questions must be considered:

- What kind of instruction do ELL students need?
- What resources do teachers need to better educate ELL students?
- How can we better incorporate ELL parents into the community?
- How do we help teachers, students and parents to better coordinate their efforts?

Using these questions as our guide, we have designed a plan for Booneville Middle School's ELL population.

METHODOLOGY

TCCP OF CENTRAL IOWA HAS DEVELOPED A METHODOLOGY TO HELP ADOLESCENT ELL STUDENTS SUCCEED

Successful literacy intervention for ELL students should be designed and implemented differently than intervention for native speakers. From our research and from previous literacy projects, we have learned that any program that aims to improve literacy among ELLs must consider the student's relationship to the family and community, and we know that any literacy program that aims to improve a student's cultural environment must include training and resources for teachers. (See Appendix B.)

The methodology we have designed for Booneville Middle School is research-based, proven and trustworthy. Although our primary unit of measuring success will be ITBS proficiency rates, this project is about much more than improving test scores. We plan to build a community of learners and to help families overcome a cultural gap that threatens to keep future generations in poverty.

In order to accomplish these goals, we must do the following:

1. Conduct after school instruction for targeted students.
2. Provide training for teachers
3. Locate appropriate resources for teachers and students
4. Conduct ongoing evaluation of student progress
5. Collect periodic feedback from stakeholders
6. Build connections between non-native parents and the Booneville Community

A complete explanation of our timeline and list of tasks to be accomplished are shown in Figure 5.

TCCP's Methodology for Booneville Middle School's Literacy Program

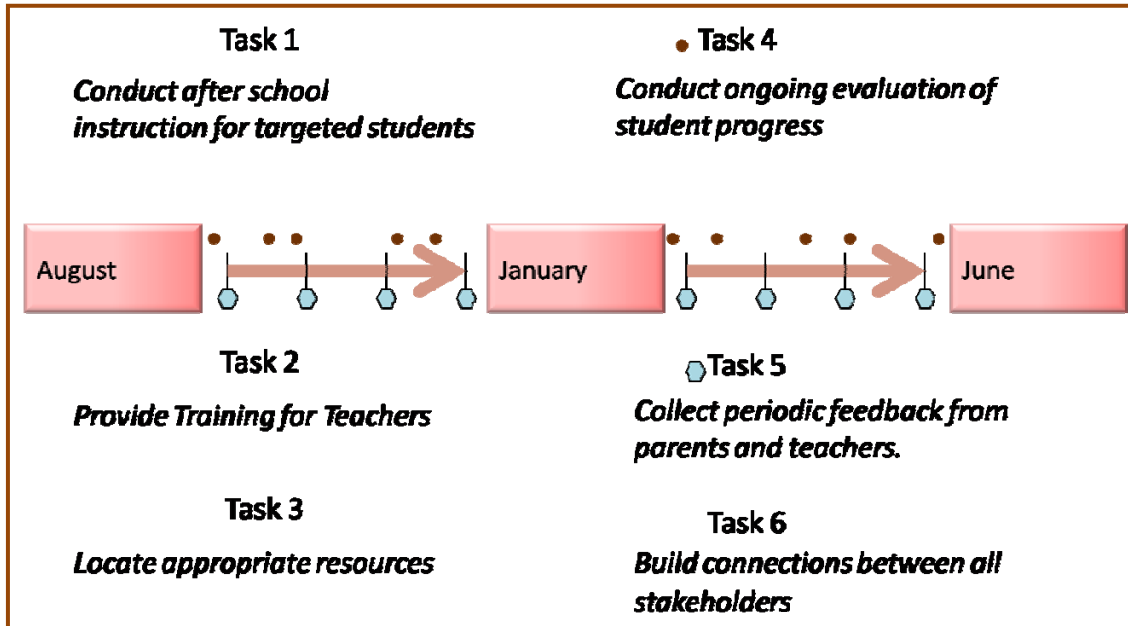


Figure 5. TCCP's methodology involves all stakeholders. Our program will be conducted over the course of one school year.

Task 1. WE WILL CONDUCT AN AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM FOR TARGETED STUDENTS

With the help of the school, students and parents, we have identified 50 students by using test scores, teacher feedback, and parent surveys that will benefit most from our intended plan. Students will be part of an after school program. During this instructional time, we will use sheltered instruction to improve each student's competence in English. We will conduct the appropriate tutoring needed to bolster student literacy in the content areas of literature, social studies, and science.

Task 2. WE WILL PROVIDE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

Because every teacher is a teacher of reading, we will provide in-service training for all teachers at Booneville Middle School. Since both CAL's and our research indicate sheltered instruction is the most effective strategy, TCCP will train teachers to use sheltered instruction to develop literacy in Booneville Middle School's ELL students.

Task 3. WE WILL LOCATE THE APPROPRIATE RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

TCCP will work with teachers from Booneville Middle to determine the appropriate reading materials, supplementary audio and video training modules, and student texts for this project and for future instruction of ELL students.

Task 4. WE WILL CONDUCT ONGOING EVALUATION OF STUDENT PROGRESS

Students will be evaluated at strategic intervals (see figure 5) so that everyone involved in our program knows how they are progressing. As students progress, we will adjust our expectations and requirements for them. We will share information about our progress with teachers and parents.

Task 5. WE WILL COLLECT PERIODIC FEEDBACK FROM EDUCATORS AND PARENTS

In continuing our adolescent ELL literacy initiative, we will collect feedback from educators and parents. Since they work and live the closest with the students, they will be able to provide the most useful feedback. We will gather information from parents and teachers through informal interviews, surveys and email exchanges. We will deliver a consistent stream of information back to them through regular emails and through face to face interaction. Again, we aim to *include* so that we can integrate these various stakeholders into a supportive community.

Task 6. WE WILL BUILD CONNECTIONS BETWEEN ALL STAKEHOLDERS

TCCP works hard to involve all members of the community in solving Booneville Middle School's literacy problem. Families will attend meetings where they will work in small groups with our instructors in order to help them foster English literacy skills. During these workshops, we will help parents learn to foster cultural awareness for their

children. Language arts teachers from the school will participate in many of these workshops, and some events will be specifically geared to help teachers and families to build personal connections.

While we hope to help ELL parents learn more English, we are more concerned that they learn to advocate for their children. Parents need to learn how to communicate with teachers in Iowa, and they need to become a part of a community with other ELL parents who face the same challenges they do. Similarly, teachers need to learn more about the experiences and expectation of ELL parents.

OUR PROGRAM WILL BE SUSTAINABLE AND REPEATABLE

After a year in our program, students will show that they have progressed by an absolute measure. 80% of ELL students will move from non-proficient to proficient on the ITBS test. Those scores will serve as the ultimate measure of our success, but we will collect many other kinds of data throughout the program. We will conduct multiple surveys and interviews with teachers, students and parents.

Our first priority is to improve ELL students' test scores, but if their success is to be sustainable we must foster a better relationship between their families and the school district. These additional forms of assessment are designed to help us evaluate the long term effectiveness of our program. We will use four units of measure:

1. To what extent do students, teachers, parents, and administrators involved in the program perceive it to have been effective?
2. To what extent to teachers continue to use TCCP as a source of information for designing curricula?
3. To what extent do ELLs involved in our program graduate at a higher rate than other ELL students in the area?
4. To what extent do students, parents, and teachers continue to look back on the program and perceive it as a success?

The feedback and data we collect during the program will be delivered to you in a full report at the conclusion of our program. Our report will be designed for other school districts can use the same methods we use in the Tri-County community. The data than

accrues in the more distant future will be made available to CAL on a yearly basis until the students from the program graduate from high school.

TCCP has already assembled many of the stakeholders necessary to initiate this program. We have discussed our proposal with Robert Walters, principal of Boonville Middle School, with Darcy Penell, the language Arts Director at Boonville Middle, with a group of ELL parents from ELL Middle, and with Rob Jones, Chairman of Booneville Chamber of Commerce.

Booneville is willing to pay language arts teachers for their service in our program, and it is willing to give teachers in-service credit for participation in our program. The parents we have spoken to are enthusiastic about the prospect of participating in a program like the one we propose. Principle Walters has also promised the use of Booneville Middle School's multi-purpose room for teacher training, and Jones has donated the Booneville Community Center's eight conference rooms for use in our after school program. He also is providing the main meeting room for our Saturday meet and greet functions for educators, students and parents.

The enthusiasm of these stakeholders in the community is a testament to Tri-County Community Partnership's long history of providing quality, comprehensive literacy education and family development programs. We believe that "Building Bridges to Literacy" can be our most important contribution to the community yet.

QUALIFICATIONS

TCCP OF CENTRAL IOWA IS UNIQUELY QUALIFIED TO CONDUCT A LITERACY PROGRAM FOR AT RISK ELL STUDENTS IN THE TRI-COUNTY AREA

TCCP's programs are based on the sheltered instruction model and are family focused. In the programs we conduct, students receive individualized, hands-on instruction from experienced tutors, and parents are actively engaged in the learning process. "Building Bridges to Literacy" is exactly the kind of program that TCCP specializes in implementing.

TCCP and CAL share the same mission of preparing adolescent ELL students for academic success by building literacy skills. TCCP has studied the effects of particular instructional models on ELL student literacy performance. Likewise, CAL has led or participated in projects aimed at developing new knowledge relevant to the critical factors that influence the development of English language literacy in adolescents. CAL

publishes the findings, professional opinions, and best practices developed as a result of literacy research. “Building Bridges to Literacy” fits into both TCCP’s and CAL’s missions exactly.

OUR TEAM HAS THE QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE NEEDED TO RUN THIS KIND OF PROGRAM

Jon Cooper, M.S., Human Development and Family Studies, Iowa State University.

Jon Cooper is the project director of *Building Bridges to Literacy*. His expertise includes personal development and family studies. He has a decade of experience working in Booneville, first with KUMON Tutoring Services, and later with TCCP. In 2003, Mr. Crowe wrote the book on advancing learning initiatives through secondary avenues of education, *Growing Knowledge in our Nation’s Youth: Teaching Kids to Learn in School* (Prentice-Hall).

Jim Masters, Ph. D., Education and Socio-Cultural Studies, University of California

Jim Masters is TCCP’s program coordinator. His expertise is in bilingual (Spanish) education. Before coming to Iowa State University, Jim worked as a Research Scientist at the American Institutes for Hispanic Studies and was involved in the research and development at California’s Professional Development Institutes for Teachers of English Learners. A former United States Department of Education Bilingual Education Fellow, he is deeply interested in issues related to the education of Latino children in the U.S.

Wanda Walters, M.S., Social Work, University of Oklahoma

Wanda Walters is our community relations director and a licensed social worker. Wanda has worked as an adolescent counselor at Tri-County Community Partnership for over 10 years. Her expertise includes family improvement and adolescent counseling. Before joining TCCP five years ago, Wanda worked for Pikes Peak Mental Health Center as a therapist on the Teenager and Family Team Directive.

Lisa Miller, Ph. D., Literacy Education, Iowa State University

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Lisa Miller brings her expertise in K-12 literacy improvement and instructional technology and has been with TCCP for ten years. Before that, Lisa taught in the public schools for 9 years. During her tenure, she chaired the school literacy improvement team and conducted workshops on how to integrate technology into literacy classes.

See Appendix C for the complete resumes of our team and for a detailed description TCCP's accomplishments..

BENEFITS

BOONEVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND BOONEVILLE COMMUNITY WILL EXPERIENCE REAL BENEFITS FROM THIS PROGRAM

The educational and cultural problems that our program seeks to remedy are currently being neglected completely. Teachers and parents are well aware of the nature of the problem, but at present, no one is in a position to bring all of the parties together to solve them.

8th grade students at Booneville Middle School will be the first and primary beneficiaries of TCCP's program, but we seek to improve the lives of teachers and parents as well. Also, because a goal of the program is to produce a detailed replication plan, the benefits of TCCP's project will reach well beyond the community.

Students of Booneville Middle School will be the first and primary beneficiaries of *Building Bridges to Literacy*. 80% of non-proficient ELL students will become proficient in literacy according to the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. However, because of our holistic approach to Booneville's literacy problem our program will also include the following benefits:

- Classroom dynamics will improve because students will be engaged in their learning.
- Teachers' morale will improve due to increased training, better resources and improved student performance.
- Booneville Middle School and Community will gain the resources needed to forge an ongoing learning community.

- Booneville Middle School's status will change from non-compliant to compliant and will be removed from probationary status with the State of Iowa.
- Parents who participate in the program will become a part of the community of the school.
- ELL students will have a chance to achieve better socio-economic status.
- Other communities may learn from our research and documentation so they can help the ELL population in their schools.

CLASSROOM DYNAMICS WILL IMPROVE BECAUSE STUDENTS WILL BE ENGAGED IN THEIR LEARNING

Using ITBS as our standard of measurement, we project that students will be able to improve literacy and move from the less than proficient-to-proficient categories on the test. Because so many of these students find themselves in trouble for misbehaving, we believe the shift from non-proficient to proficient categories in reading will lessen the behavior issues as students become more engaged in their own learning.

TEACHERS' MORALE WILL IMPROVE DUE TO INCREASED TRAINING, BETTER RESOURCES AND IMPROVED STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Increased training, better resources and improved student performance will contribute to better teacher morale and longer teacher retention. This in turn will provide continuity and longevity to the ELL literacy program at Booneville Middle School.

BOONEVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY WILL GAIN THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO FORGE AN ONGOING LEARNING COMMUNITY

Unlike many schools across the state of Iowa, Booneville Middle School will have the necessary resources of books, materials, training and facilities to continue its ELL literacy program. This program will be a vital part of the Booneville learning community as it builds bridges and brings people together.

BOONEVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL'S STATUS WILL CHANGE FROM NON-COMPLIANT TO COMPLIANT AND WILL BE REMOVED FROM PROBATIONARY STATUS WITH THE STATE OF IOWA

By improving test scores, we will help Booneville Middle School meet its Comprehensive School Improvement Goals (CSIP) required by State of Iowa. Our program will help remove the school from the probation list. By improving literacy scores, the school will receive more state and federal funds which can be used to sustain this literacy initiative at Booneville Middle School.

PARENTS WHO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM WILL BECOME A PART OF THE COMMUNITY OF THE SCHOOL

One of the most serious obstacles these families face is their isolation from the mainstream community of central Iowa. If we can help them to build connections to the teachers in the school, we will be performing a service with long term implications for their success in the community. Our program is designed to help immigrant parents understand more about the culture of the American school and about the community in which they live.

ELL STUDENTS WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO ACHIEVE BETTER SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Because of developing better literacy skills, students will be able to keep up with the instruction at school. This improvement will lead to a decreased the dropout rate and an increased graduation rate. With a proper diploma from high school, students will have opportunities in the United States that their parents do not. The entire Booneville community will benefit from having a more educated workforce.

OTHER COMMUNITIES MAY LEARN FROM OUR RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION SO THEY CAN HELP THE ELL POPULATION IN THEIR SCHOOLS

At every step of the program we will be collecting data. With our two highly qualified researchers, Wanda Walters and Lisa Miller, our success story will be well documented and easily replicable for any community facing the same challenges that Booneville Middle School does.

CONCLUSION

Schools in the Booneville area are currently experiencing a host of problems associated with the influx of students who simply do not speak English well enough to meaningfully participate in the classroom. At the present time, Booneville Middle School does not know how to deal with this situation. Our plan for helping is to assist adolescent ELL students and parents and to provide training for Booneville Middle School teachers so that our work can serve as a model for the future.

We believe that a holistic, community-building focused learning is the only way to solve problems such as Booneville Middle School experiences. Your partnership with us in this endeavor can make an important difference in the lives of students, educators, parents and the entire Booneville community. Thank you for taking the time to evaluate our proposal.

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Appendix A: This is an enclosed packet containing letters from the committee who helped TCCP research the issue. This packet contains letters, research reports, and final summaries from Previous TCCP projects. The purpose of this packet is to demonstrate lessons learned about educating ELL students, and to establish ethos for TCCP. This packet demonstrates that we understand the problem.

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Appendix B: This is a collection of letters from the stakeholders in the community who have agreed to participate in our project. This packet demonstrates that we have already secured substantial in-kind contributions, and that we have the enthusiastic support of the community.

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Appendix C: This is an enclosed packet containing resumes of the team members and a detailed chronology of TCCP's history. The purpose of this packet is to demonstrate our qualifications and to demonstrate our track record.