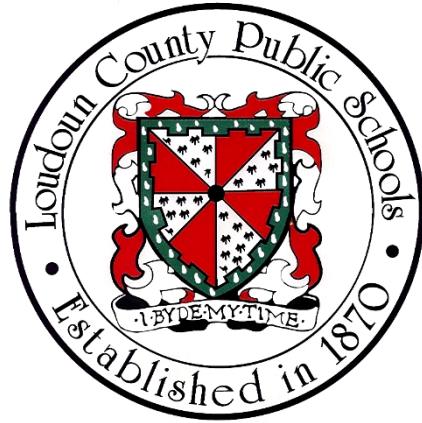


Program Evaluation Results

Expediting Comprehension for English Language Learners (2016-2017)



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Background Information

Expediting Comprehension for English Language Learners (ExC-ELL) is a three-day training series developed by Margarita Calderón and Associates (MCA) for middle and high school teachers of English, science, mathematics, and social studies who work with English-language learners (ELLs). The ExC-ELL model integrates a number of instructional strategies found to be effective for adolescent ELLs including (a) the pre-teaching of vocabulary, (b) teacher read-alouds, (c) partner reading with oral summaries, (d) cooperative learning (e.g., numbered heads together, roundtable reviews), and (e) writing mechanics and composition for all subjects. To support teachers after they have completed an ExC-ELL vocabulary, reading or writing workshop, MCA provides follow-up expert coaching, refresher training and professional learning opportunities for teams. In addition, an observation protocol is provided to literacy coaches, principals and central office staff to ensure continued implementation of the ExC-ELL strategies in the classroom.

In Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS), the goals of the ExC-ELL program are to:

- Ensure that all students have the tools and strategies for academic success by providing whole-school professional development in the areas of academic vocabulary, language, reading, and writing across the curriculum;
- Establish collaborative learning teams (CLTs), or reinvent existing ones, in which classroom teachers and specialists work together to identify their English learners' strengths and plan lessons; and
- Deepen reading comprehension skills by providing opportunities for students to (a) learn new vocabulary continuously; (b) associate new readings with prior knowledge; and (c) add new knowledge through discussion of ideas, interpretation of information, and application of critical thinking skills to text.

Since the summer of 2016, secondary school teachers and administrators from the Leesburg cohort of Loudoun County HS and its feeder school, J. L. Simpson MS, have completed six days of ExC-ELL workshops provided by MCA consultants (see Table 1). These participants have also received a one-day refresher session and the equivalent of 20 days of onsite technical support from both MCA consultants and ELL Office staff. A Sterling cohort was added in the 2016-17 school year comprising Park View HS and Sterling MS, its feeder school. Staff from this cohort completed the three-day training series between January and June 2017, as well as received three days of onsite technical support. Funding for the Leesburg cohort was provided by an LCPS Title III grant whereas the Sterling cohort was funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education National Professional Development Program.

Table 1: How many hours of professional development on the ExC-ELL strategies were provided to each cohort?

Cohort	School Year	ExC-ELL Workshops	Follow-up Support
Leesburg	2015-16	Vocabulary Workshop: June 2016 (6 hrs)	N/A
	2016-17	Three-Day Institute: July 2016 (18 hrs) Administrator Coaching PD: July 2016 (12 hrs)	Onsite Coaching: March 2017 (120 hrs) Refresher Training: March 2017 (6 hrs)
Sterling	2016-17	Three-Day Institute: January 2017 (6 hrs) and June 2017 (12 hrs) Administrator Coaching PD: June 2017 (12 hrs)	Onsite Coaching: March 2017 (18 hrs)

Evaluation Focus

This study documented the implementation and outcomes of the ExC-ELL training program during the 2016-17 school year. Using Guskey's (2000) levels of professional development evaluation, the evaluation team developed the following research questions:

1. Were the teachers and principals satisfied with the quality of the workshop training? Did they acquire the intended knowledge and skills?
2. Did the principals, coaches, and central office administrators provide sufficient support to teachers?
3. Did the ESL and core teachers work collaboratively toward an effective implementation by co-planning lessons, sharing successful problem-solving strategies, and coaching each other?
4. Did the teachers demonstrate fidelity in the use of ExC-ELL vocabulary, reading, and/or writing instructional strategies?
5. Did the ELL students demonstrate growth on district outcome measures?

Methodology

To facilitate the collection of evidence, evaluators from the Research Office followed a collaborative approach (Patton, 2008) in which key stakeholders from the ExC-ELL program participated directly in the planning and implementation of the evaluation. After constructing the program's logic model, the evaluation team selected the following data collection methods: (a) surveys of middle and high school teachers and principals on the quality of the MCA training sessions, (b) an administrator self-evaluation checklist comprised of critical factors for effective school-wide implementation of the ExC-ELL model, (c) an observation checklist to determine the extent to which the teachers were implementing the ExC-ELL instructional strategies in the classroom, and (d) summative student outcomes from the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 and Virginia SOL tests.

Data on the quality of the MCA trainings were collected via three online surveys: two pre/post surveys administered by researchers at George Washington University (GWU) for workshops conducted on January 27 and June 19-20, 2017, for the Sterling cohort; and one survey designed by the ELL Office for the training series on June 14-16, 2017, for the Leesburg cohort. The 61 respondents to GWU's January

survey were comprised of 30 general education teachers, 24 specialists (e.g., 9 ELL and 7 special education teachers), and 7 school administrators. GWU's June survey received a total of 52 responses from 31 general education teachers, 18 specialists, and 3 school administrators. Staff from the ELL Office collected 49 responses from their June survey, consisting of 37 general education teachers and 12 specialists (e.g., 7 special education teachers and 3 reading specialists).

To determine the level of implementation of the ExC-ELL strategies in the classrooms, two administrators from the ELL Office conducted 71 walkthroughs between September 19, 2016, and April 21, 2017, using MCA's ExC-ELL Observation Protocol WISEcard checklist. The hardcopy WISEcard form lists the sequences of ExC-ELL strategies covered during each day of the training series: vocabulary and oracy (7 steps), reading comprehension (13 steps), writing (10 steps), and classroom management (3 steps). The number of observations by school were: J. L. Simpson MS (24), Loudoun County HS (21), Park View HS (17), and Sterling MS (9). By content area, the number of classrooms were English/ELL (34), Math (10), Science (15), Social Science (7), and Electives (6). On average, each of the 55 teachers was observed 1.3 times (range=1-4). In July 2017 the hardcopy observation data were inputted into a Google Form for subsequent analysis.

At the end of the school year, leadership teams from the four participating schools submitted MCA's self-evaluation checklist to the Research Office. This hardcopy form tracks the school's progress on 14 essential components of the ExC-ELL model, such as the frequency of strategies observed on the WISEcard checklist and the school's provision of follow-up professional learning opportunities for teachers beyond the MCA trainings. In addition, the Reading and Writing assessment results from the Spring Virginia SOL and ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 tests were analyzed for each school. ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 is aligned with the WIDA English Language Development Standards and assesses each of the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The Literacy scale scores (Reading and Writing combined) were analyzed only for ELL students who had two consecutive years of data. It is important to note that [changes to the assessment](#) in the 2016-17 school year significantly confounded the results.

Results

1. Were the teachers and principals satisfied with the quality of the workshop training? Did they acquire the intended knowledge and skills?

Data provided from the GWU surveys of staff in the Sterling cohort (Park View HS and Sterling MS) revealed strong agreement on the quality and effectiveness of the ExC-ELL training series conducted in January and June 2017 (see Tables 2-4). With respect to the vocabulary workshop in January, most of the participating teachers learned new content (92%-100%) and planned to apply their knowledge and skills after the session (100%). The specialists (95%-100%) and administrators (100%) were almost unanimous in their agreement with the statements in this survey, suggesting that these participants had acquired sufficient knowledge and skills to fulfill a supportive role in this initiative.

Analysis of the open-ended responses to the survey revealed additional insights into the benefits of the ExC-ELL vocabulary training. Two illustrative quotes represent the majority view of the respondents:

"The distinction between tiers of words was something I did innately, but not with deliberation. Now, I can be more masterful in how I determine what needs to be front-loaded and what should be more exploratory for students. This puts the onus bask on the students and becomes a more student-centered, less teacher-led environment." – General Education Teacher

“The steps to pre-teaching vocabulary will assist me the most while instructing English learners because they help to expose students to words they may not know and give them a chance to understand without losing much time in class.” – General Education Teacher

Table 2: What were the reactions of the Sterling cohort participants to the ExC-ELL vocabulary workshop in January? (% Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree)

Statement	Teachers	Specialists	Administrators
I learned about the importance of vocabulary in teaching English learners.	96%	100%	100%
I learned how to select new words to use in teaching English learners.	100%	100%	100%
I learned how to use the 7 steps to pre-teaching vocabulary to English learners.	100%	100%	100%
I learned how to incorporate academic language in my classroom instruction with English learners.	92%	100%	100%
I will likely apply what I learned about academic language in my job responsibilities as they relate to English learners.	100%	95%	100%

The reflections of the Sterling cohort participants on the ExC-ELL writing workshop in June 2017 resulted in similar near-unanimous ratings (90%-100%). It is noteworthy that the GWU researchers did not survey the participants on the specific content of the reading workshop conducted in June 2017. The representative comments below provide some insight into the quality of this training.

*“Summarizing with partners was a great way to support Ells and engage all learners.”
– General Education Teacher*

“Partner reading that goes sentence by sentence in ping pong is useful for newcomers. Also pairing one newcomer with two higher level readers is beneficial for the newcomer as he/she gets to practice what they read or say. It’s an inclusive strategy to help everyone at different levels improve.” – ELL Teacher

Table 3: What were the reactions of the Sterling cohort participants to the ExC-ELL writing workshop in June? (% Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree)

Statement	Teachers	Specialists	Administrators
I learned how to use writing to learn through write around for instructing English learners.	97%	100%	100%
I learned how to integrate grammar and vocabulary (Connectors, Tier 2 & 3) for instructing English learners.	90%	100%	100%
I learned how to use “revising and editing” (Ratiocination, Cut & Grow) with my job responsibilities as they relate to English learners.	100%	100%	100%
I will likely apply what I learned about writing in my job responsibilities as they relate to English learners.	97%	94%	100%

Concerning the overall reactions to the three-day ExC-ELL training series, pre/post survey results remained strong across all statements (94%-100%), suggesting that most participants in the Sterling cohort found the institute satisfactory, relevant, and useful with respect to their job responsibilities.

Table 4: What were the overall reactions of the Sterling cohort participants to the ExC-ELL training? (% Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree)

Statement	Teachers		Specialists		Administrators	
	Jan.	June	Jan.	June	Jan.	June
I found the institute to be favorable as it relates to my job responsibilities.	100%	94%	100%	94%	100%	100%
I found the institute to be relevant as it relates to my job responsibilities.	100%	94%	100%	94%	100%	100%
I found the institute to be useful as it relates to my job responsibilities.	100%	94%	95%	94%	100%	100%

Data provided from the ELL Office’s survey of staff in the Leesburg cohort (Loudoun County HS and J. L. Simpson MS) revealed high levels of satisfaction with the three-day ExC-ELL training series conducted in June 2017 (see Table 5). Agreement among the specialists (92%-100%) was almost unanimous concerning the relevance and usefulness of the vocabulary, reading, and writing strategies provided from the training. Participating teachers (83%) expressed slightly lower levels of agreement on these two statements. For the five statements concerning the content of the vocabulary training, satisfaction levels were similarly very high among both specialists (100%) and teachers (92%-97%). Specific questions related to the effectiveness of the reading and writing content of the training were not included in the survey, however.

Analysis of the open-ended responses to the survey revealed additional insights into the benefits of the ExC-ELL training:

*“Although I do not teach ELs, the strategies are beneficial for all levels of students.”
– General Education Teacher*

*“I intend to use the vocabulary (7 steps) and the reading strategies in my new classes.
Vocabulary will be the first technique used on my very first day.” – High School Teacher*

Nevertheless, a number of respondents also offered suggestions for improvement:

“I feel like including teachers and applying the strategies would be helpful. It was a lot of sitting and it is hard to stay focused.” – Special Education Teacher

“Some of the things seemed to have too much time dedicated to them. It lost my attention because some concepts were covered so many times. Also, instructions for activities sometimes became long and confusing.” – Middle School Teacher

Table 5: What were the reactions of the Leesburg cohort participants to the ExC-ELL training series? (% Agree or Strongly Agree)

Statement*	Teachers	Specialists
Content relates to my job responsibilities.	83%	92%
Content and strategies will be useful in my work.	83%	100%
Importance of vocabulary in teaching English learners.	97%	100%
Selecting new words to use in teaching English learners.	94%	100%
Using the 7 steps to pre-teaching vocabulary to English learners.	92%	100%
Incorporating academic language in classroom instruction with English learners.	97%	100%
Application of academic language in job responsibilities as they relate to English learners.	92%	100%

*The statements were prefaced by the following sentence: “The following topic and related activities were useful in informing my instruction related to English Learners.”

2. Did the principals, coaches, and central office administrators provide sufficient support to teachers?

To understand the level of local capacity for the ExC-ELL initiative, the school leadership teams’ responses to MCA’s self-evaluation checklist were analyzed, revealing evidence of moderate support from central office and mixed support across the schools (see Table 6). Only one of the four essential practices in this category received an average rating of 2.0 (in progress) or higher: central administration assistance to principals (2.3). The practice of ExC-ELL coaches’ coaching teachers and planning next steps received

the second highest average rating (1.8) across the four schools. At the school level, the leadership team from J. L. Simpson MS in the Leesburg cohort reported the highest average level of implementation for all four components (2.5). The other three schools reported equivalent average ratings (1.5) below the level of “in progress.”

Table 6: How did the school leadership teams assess the provision of organizational supports for the initiative?*

Essential Practice	J. L. Simpson MS	Loudoun County HS	Sterling MS	Park View HS	Average
Literacy coaches, supervisors, principals observe and coach each teacher with WISEcard.	2	2	1	1	1.5
ExC-ELL coaches coach each teacher at least once and plan next steps.	3	1	2	1	1.8
Principals meet to share tips on ExC-ELL implementation.	2	1	1	2	1.5
Central administration supports principals in their efforts to implement ExC-ELL for exemplary results.	3	2	2	2	2.3
Average	2.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	-

*1 = Not evident; 2 = In progress; 3 = Fully implemented.

- Did the ESL and core teachers work collaboratively toward an effective implementation by co-planning lessons, sharing successful problem-solving strategies, and coaching each other?

With respect to the schools’ provision of co-teaching opportunities between ESL and core teachers, the average ratings (1.5) on MCA’s self-evaluation checklist suggested mixed evidence across both cohorts (see Table 7). At the school level, the leadership team from Park View HS in the Sterling cohort reported the highest capacity for collaboration between their ESL and core teachers (2.0) whereas J. L. Simpson MS in the Leesburg cohort had yet to initiate this essential practice (1.0).

Table 7: How did the school leadership teams assess their teachers' level of collaboration?*

Essential Practice	J. L. Simpson MS	Loudoun County HS	Sterling MS	Park View HS	Average
ESL and core teachers work together to plan lessons, share EL learning progress.	1	1	2	2	1.5
ESL and core teachers observe and coach each other.	1	2	1	2	1.5
Average	1.0	1.5	1.5	2.0	-

*1 = Not evident; 2 = In progress; 3 = Fully implemented.

4. Did the teachers demonstrate fidelity in the use of ExC-ELL vocabulary, reading, and/or writing instructional strategies?

Review of the 71 classroom observation forms provided by the ELL Office revealed mostly moderate implementation (range=29.6%-69.0%) of all ExC-ELL vocabulary and oracy strategies (7 steps) modeled during the initial three-day training series (see Table 8). For example, the first five steps were observed in least 50% of the classrooms. However, minimal evidence (9.9% or less) was observed for each of the recommended reading (13 steps) and writing (10 steps) strategies. As a group, the ExC-ELL vocabulary and oracy strategies were documented in 54 of the observed classrooms (76.1%). By contrast, only 10 classrooms (14.1%) implemented one or more reading comprehension strategies and nine classrooms (12.7%) made use of the writing strategies.

In addition to the observations of classroom practices, each school leadership team self-assessed their staff's level of implementation of the ExC-ELL strategies with MCA's self-evaluation checklist (see Table 9). Triangulating the two data sources should have confirmed evidence of capacity building in the area of vocabulary and oracy strategies, however, three of the four school teams noted that these practices were not evident by the end of the 2016-17 school year (average of 1.3). Moreover, the practice area with the highest average rating (1.8), step R5 or "ELs conduct partner reading and summarization daily," was observed in only five of the 71 classrooms observed, suggesting that this rating may be influenced by other related literacy initiatives in the county. At the school level, the Leesburg cohort provided slightly higher self-assessment ratings on average than the Sterling cohort even though they had received more than twice the support in terms of hours of professional development. It is noteworthy that one of the teams varied their responses within each performance level, suggesting that the self-evaluation form could benefit from additional criteria to improve scale sensitivity.

Table 8: What were the most frequent ExC-ELL strategies observed in the 71 classrooms?

Instructional Strategy (Step)	Number of Times Observed	%
Teacher provides a student-friendly definition. (V4)	49	69.0%
Teacher asks students to repeat the word. (V1)	47	66.2%
Teacher provides the dictionary/glossary definition. (V3)	47	66.2%
Teacher states the word in context from the text. (V2)	45	63.4%
Teacher highlights features: polysemous, cognate, tense, prefixes, etc. (V5)	37	52.1%
Engages 100% of the students in using the word verbally with their partner. (V6)	30	42.3%
Teacher informs when students will see and use it. (V7)	21	29.6%
Prewriting strategies in pairs or teams. (W3)	7	9.9%
Requires use of content specific terms, phrases, signal words and connectors. (W4)	5	7.0%
Briefly builds content and vocabulary background for students from different cultural and educational experiences. (R1)	5	7.0%
Explains the text type, text features, and standard/objective for close reading. (R2)	5	7.0%
Requires partner reading with summaries as they use key vocabulary (Tiers 2 and 3), and monitors and records individual skills applied. (R5)	5	7.0%

Table 9: How did the school leadership teams assess their staff's implementation of the ExC-ELL strategies?*

Essential Practice (Steps)	J. L. Simpson MS	Loudoun County HS	Sterling MS	Park View HS	Average
ELs learn 5 words per subject per day. (V1-V7)	1	2	1	1	1.3
ELs conduct partner reading and summarization daily. (R5)	2	2	1	2	1.8
ELs formulate questions to delve deeper into the text. (R7)	1	1	1	1	1.0
ELs share their oral discourse, reading skills, and content mastery with Numbered Heads Together. (R8)	1	1	1	1	1.0
ELs use Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary and editing/revising strategies in short and long compositions. (W1-W7)	2	1	1	1	1.3
Average	1.4	1.4	1.0	1.2	-

*1 = Not evident; 2 = In progress; 3 = Fully implemented.

5. Did the ELL students demonstrate growth on district outcome measures?

To review the language proficiency gains of ELL students in the two cohorts, the Literacy scale scores (Reading and Writing combined) from the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 tests were analyzed only for students with two consecutive years of data (see Table 10). Due to the wide variation in gain scores in the 2016-17 school year as a result of the [standard setting process](#), additional yearly data are required in order to make meaningful comparisons from the baseline year.

Table 10: What were the average gains in ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 Literacy scale scores for each grade-level transition from the baseline year?

Grade-Level Transition Period	J. L. Simpson MS		Sterling MS	
	2015-16 (Baseline)	2016-17	2015-16 (Baseline)	2016-17
5 th to 6 th grade	+8	0	+5	-8
6 th to 7 th grade	+3	+18	+12	+11
7 th to 8 th grade	+10	+14	+8	+7

Grade-Level Transition Period	Loudoun County HS		Park View HS	
	2015-16 (Baseline)	2016-17	2015-16 (Baseline)	2016-17
8 th to 9 th grade	+30	+17	+33	+16
9 th to 10 th grade	+6	-9	+16	-5
10 th to 11 th grade	+9	-4	+16	0
11 th to 12 th grade	*	*	+7	-6

*Insufficient number of students for analysis.

For gains related to academic outcomes, analysis of the Spring Virginia SOL pass rates revealed positive growth trends in reading and writing for ELL students in three of the schools with Loudoun County HS presenting the only downward trajectory in both content areas (see Table 11). Compared to the results for each school's total population, however, significant gaps for the ELL students in all schools remained.

Table 11: How did the reading and writing SOL pass rates compare from the baseline year?

SOL Test	Group	J. L. Simpson MS		Sterling MS	
		2015-16 (Baseline)	2016-17	2015-16 (Baseline)	2016-17
Reading	ELLs	33	60	50	60
	All Students	86	89	75	72
Writing	ELLs	15	50	18	31
	All Students	77	85	64	69

SOL Test	Group	Loudoun County HS		Park View HS	
		2015-16 (Baseline)	2016-17	2015-16 (Baseline)	2016-17
Reading	ELLs	73	52	63	65
	All Students	92	94	83	82
Writing	ELLs	*	39	40	66
	All Students	90	90	73	81

*Insufficient number of students for analysis.

Conclusions

Evidence collected from principal and teacher surveys, administrator self-evaluation checklists, classroom observations, and SOL test data yielded insights into the strengths of the ExC-ELL program and potential areas of growth for the 2017-18 school year. More specifically, analyses of the data highlighted the following strengths: (a) high satisfaction, relevance, and usefulness of the three-day training series for participating teachers, specialists, and administrators in the Sterling cohort; (b) high relevance and usefulness of the full training series for participating teachers and specialists in the Leesburg cohort; (c) moderate support for implementation of the ExC-ELL strategies from central office staff; (d) moderate implementation of all vocabulary and oracy strategies (7 steps); and (e) positive growth trends in reading and writing SOL pass rates for ELL students in three of four participating schools.

Potential areas of growth included: (a) lack of data on the effectiveness of the reading workshop for the Sterling cohort, as well as the reading and writing workshops for the Leesburg cohort; (b) mixed school support for the ExC-ELL strategies within each cohort; (c) mixed school support for co-teaching opportunities between ESL and core teachers across both cohorts; (d) minimal implementation of the reading (13 steps) and writing (10 steps) strategies based on the classroom observations; and (e) overall low self-evaluations of each school's implementation of the essential practices.

It is important to note that the evaluation design used to develop this program's goals is subject to change as the ExC-ELL instructional strategies are integrated with other instructional initiatives. Consequently, the implementation and outcome indicators of the program may similarly evolve given the nature of continuous improvement.

Recommendations

After sharing the aforementioned findings with program staff, the evaluation team developed the following recommendations for continued improvement into the 2017-18 school year:

1. **Build school-wide capacity in another component:** Analysis of the walkthrough data revealed a moderate level of implementation of the ExC-ELL vocabulary and oracy strategies (7 steps). To sustain the momentum for change, additional follow-up supports should be planned to ensure a smooth school-wide integration of the reading and writing components. For example, the reading specialists can assist teachers with weaving the 13 reading comprehension strategies into their daily instruction. MCA consultants can offer refresher trainings in targeted areas of need. In addition, principals, coaches, and central office administrators can continue their WISEcard walkthroughs to observe and coach teachers. Given the complexity of the reading and writing components, however, each school may prefer to focus on one component at a time to complement their current capacity in the vocabulary and oracy strategies.
2. **Build school- and division-based coaching supports:** As part of the sustainability plan for this initiative, ongoing supports and resources should continue to be provided to all EL coaches. For example, division-based coaches can build capacity by participating in train the trainer opportunities provided by the VDOE in collaboration with MCA consultants. In addition, school-based coaches can receive training on how to transfer their knowledge to new hires at the beginning of the school year. Resources could be housed on an LCPS VISION website dedicated to the ongoing creation and dissemination of ExC-ELL materials system-wide (e.g., lesson plan templates, coaching schedules, poster of the seven vocabulary steps).
3. **Update MCA's self-evaluation form:** School-level support for the ExC-ELL strategies and co-teaching opportunities was mixed according to the findings in this report. To improve outcomes in the 2017-18 school year, program staff should work with MCA consultants to update the self-evaluation checklist with examples of possible evidence for each category. For example, what

suggested evidence would indicate that teachers are observing and coaching other teachers? How can principals create opportunities to meet and share tips on ExC-ELL implementation? More importantly, how does the evidence for “In progress” implementation differ from the required evidence for “Well implemented in all classrooms”? By providing examples of evidence for each category, school-based administrators will have a clearer vision of program success.

4. **Integrate vocabulary strategies with other division initiatives:** Given the current capacity of the participating schools in the vocabulary component of ExC-ELL, program staff should consider how vocabulary and oracy strategies might be enhanced through the integration of other division initiatives. For example, flexible content and tools comprises one important aspect of the LCPS personalized learning framework. How might digital tools from this initiative be incorporated into the ExC-ELL vocabulary strategies?

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