

# Telecommunications Staff Development for California's English-Language Arts Framework

The Los Angeles County Office of Education developed the Educational Telecommunications Network to help implement English curriculum reform; today, ETN programs provide videoclips from classrooms and a complete inservice package.

In 1987, the California State Board of Education adopted the *English-Language Arts Framework* as a broad philosophical basis for the reform of K-12 English-language arts instruction in the state. The *Framework* called for a meaning-centered literature-based integrated language arts program for *all* students, with skills taught in context.

While this *Framework* affirmed the innovative instruction already being provided by many K-12 teachers and the curricular thrust desired by many school districts, questions regarding the implementation of its basic tenets remained. For example, many principals and teachers asked for clarification of the concept of "integration" in the language arts: how does integration differ in the primary grades from what occurs in the upper grades or even in high school? A few were confused by the implications of "literature-based instruction." They asked questions like "How does one teach skills in context?" and "What are meaning-making strategies?" The most controversial issue was how to pro-

vide a literature-based program for *all* students. Teachers wanted to know how to teach a piece of literature to a class varying in educational, experiential, and linguistic backgrounds and how to provide access to equivalent content for all students.

Further, some educators wanted to know if the *Framework* tenets applied to bilingual and remedial classrooms. If so, they wanted to know what this

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instruction looked like. In all cases, teachers wanted to see examples of teachers teaching real students in real classrooms in ways recommended by the *Framework*.

At the Los Angeles County Office of Education, we wanted teachers to get answers to these questions and concerns. Our problem was how to disseminate the *Framework's* visions of curriculum reform quickly and equitably to the more than 80 school districts and 50,000 teachers in the Los Angeles County Office of Education region.

## A New Partnership

To solve our problem, the Los Angeles County Office of Education developed the Educational Telecommunications Network (ETN). Soon this program was eagerly requested by other educational agencies throughout California. Today ETN is a partnership between the Los Angeles County Office of Education, its client school districts, the State Department of Education, and 30 county offices of education throughout California.

ETN has become an electronic staff development distribution system using both satellite-transmitted live and interactive inservice programming. Its programs now center around diverse curriculum reform topics in language arts, history-social studies, and mathematics for teachers and administrators. The English-Language Arts series, now in its second year, was developed to promote awareness of the *Framework* and to provide models for its implementation. Each program centers around a central language arts question or concept (see box).

### The Inservice Plan

ETN provides one-hour transmitted teleconferences to client school districts in Los Angeles County and 30 county offices of education throughout California. These include videotaped classroom scenes of teachers and students working to derive meaning from quality literature and responding to each other's insights. The teachers whose classrooms were videotaped and a panel of teacher experts answer questions during a live call-in segment of the program.

Each program, however, is presented as a complete staff development package, not just a one-hour teleconference. Fifteen minutes of warm-up and schema-building activities precede each teleconference, planned breaks during each segment of the program allow for viewers to react to and synthesize the segment's content, and approximately 30 minutes of extension and application activities follow the conclusion of each transmission. At the end of the program, a trained California Literature Project teacher at each receiving site acts as a content facilitator.

Within 30 days of each live telecast, the county offices receive a master videotape of the broadcast and a staff development package. These can be duplicated and shared with school districts within the counties.

### Facilitation Support

The California Literature Project teachers who facilitate each on-site session are crucial to the success of the implementation of the *English-Language*

### ETN's Language Arts Series

In its first two years, the topics treated in the language arts programs included:

- Overview of the *English-Language Arts Framework*;
- Literature for ALL;
- Selection of Core Literature;
- Adoption of English-Language Arts Instruction Materials;
- Oral Language—The Negotiation of Meaning;
- Emergent Literacy;
- Use of Collaborative Learning in Literature-Based Classrooms;
- Teaching English-Language Arts Skills in Context;
- Meaning-Seeking Language Arts Strategies.

*Arts Framework*. The CLP, initiated in 1985, trained teachers in the basic tenets of the *Framework*; CLP teachers then learned to conduct staff development sessions on *Framework*-related English-language arts content. In 1989, approximately 1,500 CLP teachers became available statewide to assist with the ETN effort. The CLP teachers draw upon their own classroom experience and CLP training to assist teachers in realizing the vision of the *Framework*. They are also available to provide follow-up inservice sessions on related topics.

### Planning

Each year, the ETN State and County Advisory Committees, the ETN staff, and curriculum consultants work with user input to determine the year's

programming. In designing the programs, producers and writers collaborate with teachers—two or more—trained by the California Literature Project. They give the highest priority to programming that focuses on *Framework*-driven subject matter and appropriate instructional strategies.

### Impact

During the first two years of operation, client school districts have viewed ETN as a successful vehicle for disseminating a consistent message about English-language arts instruction. They especially appreciate the videoclips of actual classroom scenes showing teachers teaching in the manner suggested by the *Framework*, as well as the availability of CLP teachers for facilitating ETN inservices and for providing follow-up staff development. With the help of ETN, California educators are improving the English-language arts instruction provided at their schools and within their classrooms.

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