

Math for English Language Learners (MELL) Initiative Texas State University System & Texas Education Agency

What is TSUS MELL?

The Texas State University System Mathematics for English Language Learners (TSUS MELL) project is a multiyear effort to develop instructional resources designed to increase the effectiveness of mathematics instruction for ELL students in K-12 schools. The project is a partnership between the Texas State University System, its component universities and the Texas Education Agency.

Project Focus Areas

The TSUS MELL project focuses its activities in five areas:

1. Identifying and developing instructional tools
2. Creating professional development for teachers
3. Conducting applied classroom-based research
4. Extending best practices to university-based preservice (teacher training) programs
5. Serving as a resource to policymakers

Why TSUS MELL?

English language learning (ELL) students—those whose native language is not English and who are in the process of developing English speaking and writing skills—experience significant challenges learning mathematics. As a group, ELL students consistently score among the lowest of any student group on the Texas K-12 state-wide standardized assessment (TAKS).

Growing evidence suggests that low performance on standardized skills assessments by ELL students has little to do with innate mathematical ability and much to do with cultural differences in the way math concepts are taught in other countries and with linguistic (vocabulary) barriers commonly found among non native English speakers.

The direct policy rationale for the MELL project, therefore, is simple: improved understanding of how to teach math to ELL students will result in improved student achievement.

Goal of TSUS MELL

The TSUS MELL project is focused on one simple goal: improving mathematics achievement among ELL students. The project is keyed to identifying the underlying cultural and linguistic causes of poor mathematics performance among Texas K-12 ELL students and to developing practical teaching tools that address those root issues.

Practical Project Products

The TSUS MELL project exists primarily to translate research into practical products designed to improve teaching. The MELL project is producing a number of exciting products including:

- * MELL Resource Guide
- * MELL Teacher's Guides
- * Analysis of Math Professional Development Programs
- * Research Syntheses
- * MELL Video

As additional products are developed, strong partnerships will be built with other universities, K-12 schools, intermediate education service agencies and state agencies to ensure effective and wide scale distribution.

Project Governance

The TSUS MELL project is guided by the MELL Project Steering Committee and is comprised of researchers from institutions across the TSUS system. The steering committee also draws from a number of state and national research advisors.

MELL Website

To learn more about MELL, visit the MELL website at www.tsusmell.org,