

teachers and educational professionals to earn their ESOL certification, with the priority on STEM content teachers. In addition to providing this professional development to teachers and schools, UNH also will work closely with researchers at Kansas State University to examine how the professional development is affecting teacher practices and student learning.

UNH has a strong track record of providing ESOL training, which includes both professional development and community involvement. The university just completed the five-year project “ELL Co-op: The English Language Learning and Teaching Professional Development Cooperative of New Hampshire,” which Sharkey also directed, produced more than 40 ESOL-certified teachers plus provided on-site professional development to hundreds of teachers and education professionals in the state. The program was funded with a five-year, \$1.3 million National Professional Development grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition that UNH received in 2007.

“Our graduates and the schools that hire our students identify the community-based nature of our ESOL program as a key strength. All of UNH’s English language learner courses have strong community field experiences because we believe that teachers need to understand and appreciate the communities in which schools are located. Building healthy relationships is the heart of teaching and learning, and to do that, teachers need to go outside of the school buildings and spend quality time in the communities they are going to serve,” Sharkey said.

“So in addition to developing curriculum, designing lesson plans, and exploring multiple ways to engage and assess learners, our students also conduct community investigations, home visits, and interviews with community organizers and leaders, and work with community agencies such as Child Health Services and the International Institute to design and implement out-of-school programs for immigrant and refugee youth and families,” she said.

Cioppa said having more mainstream teachers certified to teach English language learners means more teachers will have the ability to effectively instruct more students from diverse backgrounds. District officials also believe that strategies used to instruct English language learners will also help with instructing students who traditionally struggle in academics.

“As teachers learn more instructional strategies, they will be better able to reach more students in their classes and become highly effective teachers. As research has shown, highly effective teachers impact student performance more than any other predictor,” Cioppa said.

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