

Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners (ELLs)

Students learning English as a new language are from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program provides language support services to assist limited English proficient students with transition into the language and culture of American schools. General educators are also charged with modifying and accommodating instruction to enable English language learners to succeed in all classroom settings and with respect to all subject areas.



Cultural differences as seen through classroom behavior

- ❑ May not understand common idioms, e.g. “Get a life” or “step up to the plate.”
- ❑ Displays confusion or inconsistency in the use of tense of words or of pronouns.
- ❑ May be shy in class.
- ❑ May not make eye contact due to cultural difference.



Sequencing Language Learning

Learning a second language is a complex process in which ELLs move from receptive to expressive language. The following chart illustrates how an ELL student may progress. Please bear in mind each child will progress through different stages at an individual pace and learning another language to the point of academic proficiency may take up to ten years.

Top 10 List

Strategies classroom teachers can implement to help their ELLs succeed

1. Present information that is critical to understanding the concept before instruction- i.e. pre-teach vocabulary before exploring a text.
2. Implement peer tutoring and cross age tutoring. Pair “newer” ELLs with someone who speaks their language but is more proficient if possible.
3. Allow children to respond using the language skills they may already have in their first language- i.e. have ELLs write about themselves in a journal in their native language (find someone to help you translate the entries).



Respond regularly to their entries without grading or making corrections.

4. Provide instruction on organizational skills.

5. Allow wait time for a response to questions- as much as 10 seconds.
6. Reduce the number of questions for child to complete – if the rest of the class has 10 questions to answer, give the ELL only 5; better yet let them choose the 5 they would like to respond to.
7. Visuals, Visuals, Visuals – use pictures instead of words whenever possible. Use graphic organizers, mnemonic devices, and who, what, where, how and why forms.
8. Provide samples or models of finished paper, projects, etc.
9. Ask students to bring in items or materials from home to spark discussions about various cultures and cultural diversity.
10. Label classroom items to develop literacy skills in English.



Instruction

- ❑ Pre-teach and present important information prior to a lesson.
- ❑ Face students while speaking slowly and clearly enunciate words.
- ❑ Avoid idiomatic expressions e.g. “eat your words”, “cut it out”.
- ❑ Develop a routine for teaching events in order to allow students to understand the language associated with the action.
- ❑ Give instructions one-step at a time with each step made clear to students.
- ❑ Provide instruction on organizational skills.
- ❑ Show examples of incorporating an object into a daily schedule.
- ❑ Allow wait time for a response to questions- as much as 10 seconds.



- ❑ Use taped materials when appropriate with headphones, such as stories, recorded messages, a letter to a friend, etc.
 - ❑ Use multi-modal approaches whenever possible.
 - ❑ Implement peer tutoring and cross age tutoring. Pair “newer” ELLs with someone who speaks their language but is more proficient if possible.

- ❑ Role-play whenever possible.
- ❑ Use cooperative learning activities.
- ❑ Teach students to listen while another peer is speaking or reading aloud
- ❑ Provide materials and experiences that will allow students to work and play together.
- ❑ Provide materials that students may use independently on their language proficiency level.
- ❑ Allow children to respond using the language skills they may already have in



their

first language- i.e. have ELLs write about themselves in a journal in their native language (find someone to help you translate the entries). Respond regularly to their entries without grading or making corrections.

- ❑ Allow students to practice language skills while reaching language fluency level.
- ❑ Provide an area for students to read or work independently with ESOL specific materials.
- ❑ Reduce the number of questions for the child to complete-if the class has 10 questions to answer, give the ELL 5, and let them choose the 5 they would like to respond to.

Materials

- ❑ Visuals, Visuals, Visuals – use pictures instead of words whenever possible.
- ❑ Use extrinsic reinforcements, such as stickers, games, etc.
 - ❑ Show pictures that represent the main idea of material.
 - ❑ Use concrete materials such as blocks, chips, or an abacus.
 - ❑ Use audiotapes, videos, charts, books, field trips, movies, pictures, overhead projector, oral presentation, guest speakers, etc.
- ❑ Use graphic organizers, mnemonic devices, and who, what, where, how and why forms.
- ❑ Use puppets, clay figures, or dolls.
- ❑ Provide samples or models of finished paper, projects, etc.
- ❑ Ask students to bring in items or materials from home to spark discussions about various cultures and cultural diversity.



- ❑ Label classroom items to develop literacy skills in English.
 - ❑ Have seats arranged in full view of teacher.
 - ❑ Arrange desks for grouping.
 - ❑ Post safety pictures and charts around the room.
 - ❑ Tape information cards on desks to help students remember new skills.
- ❑ Provide students with a quiet place to work.

