

Teaching Strategies for English Language Learners

English Language Learners (ELLs) need strategies similar to those in which children acquire their first language (Clancy, M. & Hruska, B., 2005). These characteristics include:

- Physical involvement with language
- The use of multiple mediums to present information
- Opportunities to demonstrate language comprehension through physical expression
- A low-stress environment for language performance
- Success can be independent of language performance
- A large amount of interactions with other students

Specially Designed Academic Instruction for English

- **Metacognitive Development:** Providing students with skills and vocabulary to talk about their learning. **Examples:** Self assessments, note taking and studying techniques, and vocabulary assignments.
- **Bridging:** Establishing a link between the students prior knowledge and the material. **Examples:** Think-pair-share, quick-writes, and anticipatory charts.
- **Schema-Building:** Helping students see the relationships between various concepts. **Examples:** Compare and contrast, jigsaw learning, peer teaching, and projects.
- **Contextualization:** Familiarizes unknown concepts through direct experience. **Examples:** Demonstrations, media, manipulatives, repetition, and local opportunities.
- **Text Representation:** Inviting students to extend understandings of text and apply them in a new way. **Examples:** Student created drawings, videos, and games.
- **Modeling:** Speaking slowly and clearly, modeling the language you want students to use, and providing samples of student work.
- A review of literature shows that supporting ELL students' use of their native language helps them comprehend and learn English. It develops greater brain density in areas related to language, memory, and attention (Moughamian et al, 2009; Protheroe, N., 2011).

General Strategies:

- Know who your ELL students are and their proficiency in English. This can be obtained from the ESOL/bilingual teacher, guidance counselor, social worker, or administration. You can also informally identify ELLs by watching for students who wait on others to move first and then copy what they are doing. It is

important to note that their proficiency in listening, reading, speaking, and writing will vary within each student.

- As with all your students, set high expectations.
- Embed multicultural education throughout the curriculum, as opposed to a "Heroes and Holidays" approach where other cultures are only mentioned on special days.
- Assess and utilize the background knowledge of your students; use bilingual students as helpers.
- Learn to pronounce student names correctly to help develop rapport. If you are not sure, ask (in private if needed).
- Use technology such as class websites, blogs, and videos.
- Avoid testing exclusively in English, as students may not be able to demonstrate their learning in a second language.
- Use structured note-taking formats such as graphic organizers and teach [viewing comprehension strategies](#).
- Utilize classroom routines and play music whenever possible

Instructional Strategies

- Slow down your speech and use shorter sentences, present tense of words, synonyms, examples, gestures, and demonstrations.
- Avoid expressions or sayings that are only common in the United States.
- Use as many mediums as possible to convey information: oral, written, videos, teacher demonstration, student demonstration, etc.
- Use think-alouds and think-pair-shares when asking questions, and don't forget to give students enough time to process the question.
- Use bilingual handouts and cue lists.
- Use metaphors and imagery for cues

Assignments and Activities

- Quick writes, word sorts, and journal writing.
- Learning stations that reinforce previously taught concepts and skills.
- Introduce vocabulary in a fun way such as a Word Search or Cross Word.
- Have students create new games.
- Use cooperative learning such as jigsaw learning and peer observations.
- Use task cards to give students opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Use newspapers, magazines, and web sites in assignments. Also involve librarians.
- Use [Google Translate](#) or have ELL students work with teachers to create [handouts in multiple languages](#)