

*English Language Learners in the  
Elementary Classroom:*

*A Handbook for Beginning Teachers*

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# *Table of Contents*

<i>Introduction</i>		<i>3</i>
<i>Who are English Language Learners?</i>		<i>4</i>
<i>What does legislation say about educating and assessing ELLs?</i>	<i>5</i>	
<i>The Politics of Language</i>		<i>6</i>
<i>What patterns does English language development typically follow?</i>		<i>7</i>
<i>What are common program models for ESL education?</i>	<i>8</i>	
<i>What does the ESL specialist need from me?</i>		<i>9</i>
<i>How can I support ELLs in my classroom?</i>	<i>10</i>	
<i>Classroom environment</i>	<i>10</i>	
<i>Knowing and including each student</i>	<i>10</i>	
<i>Using appropriate speech</i>	<i>11</i>	
<i>Opportunities for interaction</i>	<i>11</i>	
<i>Developing literacy skills</i>	<i>12</i>	
<i>Language in the content areas</i>	<i>14</i>	
<i>Learning strategies</i>	<i>16</i>	
<i>Assessment</i>	<i>17</i>	
<i>Conclusion</i>		<i>20</i>
<i>Resources</i>		<i>20</i>
<i>Appendices</i>		<i>21</i>

## *Introduction*

Some might question the need to create an entire handbook specifically to guide general elementary teachers through issues relevant to English language learners (ELLs), thinking that perhaps the school ESL specialist can take care of any special needs these students have. However, I believe this is an area of significant importance for all elementary teachers and will increasingly become so over time as the United States population continues to grow in diversity. According to the year 2000 U.S. census, approximately 18% of Americans age 5 and over now speak a language other than English at home. Some would argue that most of those Americans live in states like California, Texas, or New Mexico and ask why this census data would matter to the predominantly mono-cultural northeast. However, the 2000 census indicates that ELLs are definitely not confined to southwestern states. The following figures identify the percentage of people over age 5 who speak languages other than English at home in several surrounding states here in the northeast:

- Delaware – 9.48%
- Maryland – 12.58%
- New Jersey – 25.48%
- New York – 27.95%
- Pennsylvania – 8.42%
- Virginia – 11.11%

Clearly there are large numbers of speakers of languages other than English, many of which lie in the school-age population. Based on these demographics, the purpose of this handbook is twofold:

1. To more clearly establish the need for general elementary teachers to take an active role in the education of ELLs;
2. To equip elementary teachers with some initial strategies for modifying instruction and assessment for ELLs.

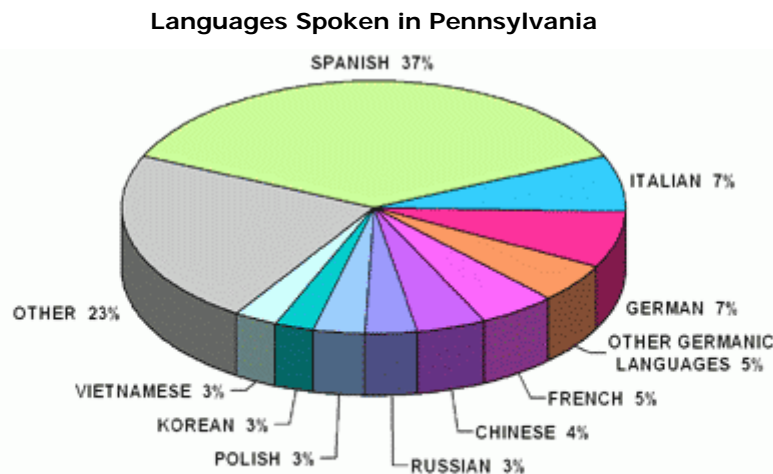
This handbook should in no way be interpreted as all-inclusive, but rather as an introduction to the policies, instructional models, strategies, and political issues related to elementary ELLs.

### *Who are English Language Learners?*

English language learners (**ELLs**) are a diverse population of students who are learning English in school. They come from numerous cultural and economic backgrounds, and they live in all 50 states. They may be:

- Immigrants from countries all over the world seeking educational or economic opportunity
- Refugees from war-torn countries
- Native Americans or other native born Americans
- Children with well developed literacy skills in a first language
- Teenagers with little prior formal schooling
- Migrants
- Children of university students

ELLs come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds. After English, the most common languages in the United States are Spanish, Chinese, French, German, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Italian, Korean, Russian, Polish, and Arabic, followed by numerous other languages. The state of Pennsylvania itself is linguistically diverse. The following chart details the representation of speakers of other languages in this state.



To find out more about speakers of other languages in a specific school district in Pennsylvania, visit <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/esl/lib/esl/LEP800-2002-2003.pdf>. You can also locate information about speakers of other languages by state, county, city, or zip code based on the 2000 census by visiting the Modern Language Association's website at [http://www.mla.org/census\\_data](http://www.mla.org/census_data).

### *What does legislation say about educating and assessing ELLs?*

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the first piece of federal legislation to address the needs and rights of speakers of other languages in public education, asserting that school districts are responsible for providing equal educational opportunities to national origin minority students with limited English proficiency (**LEP**). Since then there has been additional legislation to further clarify the distribution of funding and the responsibilities of educators in addressing the education of LEP students, the most recent being the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 (**NCLB**). The overall stated purpose of NCLB is “To close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind.”

### **Challenging Standards for English and Content Area Instruction**

NCLB requires states to establish challenging academic content standards for all students, and Title III of this act indicates that ELLs are not exempt from meeting these high expectations. It asserts that ***English learners must develop English proficiency and skills for high academic achievement in English WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY MEETING the same challenging State standards that all students are required to meet.*** There are numerous resources on the web for learning more about these standards.

- Each state creates its own standards documents for all content areas, including English language instruction. Pennsylvania’s standards can be downloaded by clicking on Academic Standards on the PDE website: <http://www.pde.state.pa.us>.
- TESOL, the professional organization for English language teachers, has outlined standards for ESL instruction that are also available online at <http://www.gisd.k12.nm.us/standards/esl/index.html>.
- In accordance with the requirements of Title III, Pennsylvania is currently creating a document, the *English Language Proficiency Standards for English Language Learners*, to complement the existing PA Academic Standards. This document does not replace the Academic Standards, but will help all ESL specialists and general classroom teachers ***ensure that ELLs have full access to the content curricula during all stages of English language development.*** It will be available in January 2005 on the PDE website: <http://www.pde.state.pa.us>.

### **Accountability through Assessment**

NCLB also calls for accountability in meeting State standards through high quality assessments. Schools must not only demonstrate improvements in students’ English proficiency each school year, but also demonstrate that English learners are making the same “adequate yearly progress” as other students. As a result, ELLs must participate in annual State assessments:

- ELLs must take annual standardized tests assessing English language proficiency.
- ELLs are required to take the same State tests as all other students. See <http://www.pde.state.pa.us/esl/site/default.asp?g=0> to find out about accommodations for assisting ELLs on Pennsylvania’s PSSA.

See Appendix 1 for further details on what parents of ELLs should expect from schools under No Child Left Behind.

*The Politics of Language: What are some issues for educators and policymakers?*

### **What kind of Bilingual Education:**

The discussion of bilingual education can come from two different perspectives. *Additive bilingualism* focuses on learning English while preserving use of the mother tongue while *subtractive bilingualism* focuses on teaching English to replace the mother tongue. Research has shown significant benefits in supporting additive bilingualism.

- Social advantages: Bilingual children mature earlier, are more comfortable with diversity, exhibit social adaptability, and identify more with their ethnic group.
- Cognitive advantages: Bilingual individuals show higher divergent thinking and increased social sensitivity in situations requiring verbal communication. They also demonstrate clearer thinking and analytical functioning.

Research also indicates that language development in the first language lays an important foundation for second language learning. Students with a high level of proficiency in both languages are likely to have an intellectual advantage in all subject areas when compared with monolingual classmates. For this reason children benefit from instruction in their first language during the early years, and additive bilingual programs are most effective if they provide long term support in both languages. In spite of these research findings, current educational policy tends towards transitioning ELLs to the use of English in school as quickly as possible.

Though elsewhere in the world bilingualism is expected of everyone, current thought in the U.S. often associates bilingualism with poor minority populations. Subtractive bilingualism or immersing students in English only environments is often educational practice. Some states have even passed English only legislation for schools or symbolically declared English as the official language of the state. Legislative attempts in support of both sides of this issue are frequently brought before the United States Congress. See Appendix 2 for samples of recently proposed bills. Turn to Appendix 3 for a look at the continuum of language policies worldwide.

### **Attitudes Towards English Language Learners:**

Mirroring the two sides of public policy, educators may view ELLs through two contrasting lenses. First they may perceive ELLs as language deprived and in need of compensatory education. They see English as the linguistic capital needed to survive and thrive in American society. In a sense this is true; words are central to the activity of schools and a gateway to higher education. Vocabulary is a part of every content area and a major component of standardized tests such as the SAT or GRE. However, this language deficiency view was historically more discriminatory. Prior to the 1960s many researchers set out to prove that bilingualism had negative impacts, actually handicapping students' language growth and intelligence. Though research has since disproved these notions, examination of current educational practice often uncovers an over-referral of ELLs to special education classes, revealing that they are often still viewed as deficient.

A contrasting lens looks more positively. ELLs enter school already having a rich linguistic background. ESL programs provide enrichment in that they help students gain another language. From an even more positive angle, ELLs can provide enrichment for the whole school with the diverse cultures and knowledge they bring to the classroom.

It is beneficial for all educators to examine their own attitudes towards ELLs and work towards a school policy that celebrates the benefits ELLs bring to the classroom.

### *What patterns does English language development typically follow?*

English language development is a process that occurs over a long period of time. Think about it. Even those who were born into English speaking families continue to acquire new language skills throughout the course of life. English language development occurs at a different rate for every student, and it is easy to misjudge a child's language capabilities because of the seeming variance from week to week or even day to day. There are numerous factors contributing to this variance: the context for language use, the classroom environment, stages of culture shock, age, level of proficiency in the home language, motivation, parent attitudes towards English, and many others. However, English language development does follow a few predictable patterns.

#### **Beginning ELLs:**

- Many beginning ELLs go through a period of silence as they adjust to a new environment and experience an initial exposure to the English language. Though the silent period varies in length, most students will naturally begin to speak short functional phrases within a week to a few months of entering school.
- Very young ELLs with little literacy in their home language are likely to develop oral language skills before reading and writing skills.
- Older ELLs with well-developed literacy skills in their first language may develop skills in reading and writing prior to oral language skills.
- Support for beginning ELLs includes both teacher and students creating a welcoming environment, using gestures and pictures to aid communication, and patiently waiting for students to feel comfortable to experiment with English.

#### **Intermediate ELLs:**

- Intermediate ELLs can understand and speak in face to face interactions with minimal hesitation and few misunderstandings. They are developing skills in reading and writing.
- To support intermediate ELLs focus on encouraging communication rather than grammar, spelling, and pronunciation, provide support for academic vocabulary, and teach strategies for processing information.

Another important distinction to make in English language development is between **BICS** (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and **CALP** (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). Research shows that it takes students about *two years* to develop BICS, the oral skills needed to communicate effectively at a social level with teachers and peers. On the other hand, it can take *five to seven years* or longer for students to develop more advanced academic language skills at a level comparable to the ESL student's native English speaking peers. For this reason, it is important that general elementary classroom teachers provide support to ELLs even after they have formally exited ESL programs.

Although there are numerous ways to describe English language development, often a system of five levels is used. In many cases numbers are used, 1 to indicate the most basic English proficiency and 5 indicating the most advanced. The state of Pennsylvania uses the following terms to designate the same five levels: Entering, Beginning, Developing, Expanding, and Bridging.

*What are common program models for ESL education?*

### **Pull Out Model**

As with other special services, such as Title I, Speech, or Special Education, ESL programs are often designed as a pull out program where the students leave the classroom to meet with the ESL specialist. Although it is difficult to coordinate schedules around specials and lunch times, this type of model may allow the ESL specialist to group students across classrooms or grade levels who are at a similar level of English proficiency for ESL support. This program model is especially effective for beginning ELLs who need to develop “survival” English skills. As students advance in their English language proficiency the ESL specialist may take responsibility for teaching a specific subject area, providing background information for upcoming lessons, or reviewing difficult content. However, grouping intermediate ELLs across grade levels or even across several classrooms from the same grade level for instruction bring challenges in effectively supporting students in content area learning.

### **Inclusion or “Pull IN” Model**

Rather than pulling students out of their grade level classroom, this program model brings the ESL specialist into classrooms. The specialist may work with students individually at their seats or as a group someplace in the classroom. The specialist may assist ELLs with the same lesson that the rest of the class is doing or modify the lesson or assignment in some way. The ESL specialist could also assist while the classroom teacher instructs the whole class by displaying pictures, keywords, or providing other aids to comprehension. In this type of model the ESL specialist can sometimes even provide an extra set of hands in a way that is useful for the entire class.

### **Team Teaching Model**

The ESL specialist may spend several hours a day in an elementary classroom when this model is implemented. As the name implies, when team teaching approaches are used the ESL specialist and grade level teacher work as a team both to plan and deliver instruction to all students in the class, the classroom teacher as the content expert, and the ESL specialist as the expert on effective strategies for ELLs. Though they could work together to teach the entire class at once or break up the class into two flexible groups, in this model all students receive the same high quality instruction. It is important that the team teaching occur in the curriculum areas in which ELLs would need the most language support. Because this model involves so much time in one classroom, it is most often used in schools with large populations of ELLs.

### **Other Program Models for Language Instruction**

- *Transitional bilingual education:* ELLs may receive instruction in both English and their home language for one to three years, but the goal is to develop English language proficiency as soon as possible.
- *Maintenance bilingual education:* ELLs receive instruction in both English and their home language throughout elementary school and into the upper grades. The goal is to develop full bilingualism and biliteracy for English learners.
- *Structured English immersion:* ELLs learn English through content area instruction in English. The goal is full English language proficiency.



- *Two-way immersion programs:* The goal of this program model is full bilingualism and biliteracy for both ELLs and native English speakers. The non-English language is used for content instruction during the early grades and instruction in English increases over time.

As ESL specialists or schools consider which program model to employ, there are four essential factors for them to consider.

- **Curriculum Coordination:** How can the ESL specialist best support ELLs in learning the academic content for their grade level?
- **Social Integration/Stigmatization:** How can ELLs most feel a sense of “belonging” in school?
- **Scheduling Issues:** How can time be negotiated to fit students in multiple grade levels?
- **Teaching Facilities:** Is there space for a separate ESL classroom?

*What does the ESL specialist need from me?*

Regardless of the program model chosen, the ESL specialist is not the only individual in the school responsible for the language development and academic achievement of ELLs. The sections that follow will provide some beginning strategies that general elementary teachers can use to modify their instruction and assessment to support ELLs in their classrooms. But, in addition to modifying their own instructional practices, elementary content teachers can work collaboratively with the ESL specialist to optimize student learning both in the grade level classroom and in the ESL program.

**Communication** is one of the most important elements of this collaboration. Communication is most easily facilitated in a team teaching model and most difficult with a pull out model, but it is always important. The ESL specialist cannot align instruction to support content areas without knowledge of what content the grade level classroom is addressing. Providing support in the content areas does not mean that ESL specialists should take responsibility for explaining all assignments and correcting all misconceptions for ELLs, but they can help students make connections to prior experience, work to build background knowledge for students, support language development in the content areas, and review difficult concepts. General elementary teachers can facilitate this process by providing unit overviews, content-specific vocabulary, or any other information that the ESL specialists request so students receive the best support in both English language development and academic content learning.

**Flexibility** is another way to support the ESL specialist. Often there are many ELLs in a school at many different grade levels, and the ESL specialist wants to provide the fullest support for each one. The time ELLs are scheduled to leave your classroom may not be the best time for your schedule. Alternately, in an inclusion model the ESL specialist may not be able to schedule time in your classroom that matches your first preference. Ultimately flexibility in your schedule can ensure that the ESL specialist is not underutilized.

### *How can I support ELLs in my classroom?*

#### **Provide a welcoming classroom environment**

Creating a positive learning environment is important for supporting the growth of all students. Most elementary teachers try to establish a sense of community in their classrooms and provide structures such as predictable routines, procedures, and expectations. Because beginning ELLs may not initially understand verbal cues, predictable structures are even more significant in order to reduce anxiety, foster feelings of safety and comfort, and orient them to classroom expectations. Classroom patterns and predictable structures also aid language development. Here are a few examples:

- Post the daily schedule and keep it as constant as possible.
- Use specific morning routines, such as lunch count, turning in homework, putting things away, morning greetings, ect.
- Use predictable signals for getting student attention, transitions, lining up, ect.
- Use predictable procedures for passing out materials.

In addition to helping a new student feel comfortable through pattern and predictability, it is important to help other students to welcome the ELL into the classroom. Talk to students about the challenges of learning a new language. Help them see that mistakes in English will not mean that the new student is unintelligent. After all, the new student already speaks another language very well. Help the class to look for ways to include the new student in classroom and playground activities.

#### **Know and include the student**

It is beneficial for elementary teachers to get to know *all* the students in their classes as much as possible, but there may be extra factors to explore for an ELL or student from other cultural backgrounds. Get to know as much of the students' cultures as possible through reading about their culture, speaking with the ESL specialist or parents, and from observation of the students themselves. Though definitely not an exhaustive list, here are a few initial questions to consider:

- What kind of prior schooling has the child had? Is the student literate in the home language?
- What is the cultural orientation towards personal space? Eye contact when an authority figure is speaking to a student? Touch? Timeliness?
- What is the cultural orientation towards work and leisure?
- Is the culture more oriented towards competition or cooperation?

Though it would be inappropriate to draw unnecessary attention a beginning ELL in front of the entire class, it is equally inappropriate to ignore the child just assuming he or she will naturally catch on to classroom expectations. Seating the student near the front of the classroom or near the teacher's desk can help incorporate the child into the classroom community. Additionally, frequent eye contact with the student can communicate care and inclusiveness. Encourage the student to participate in any way that child feels comfortable, but do not force verbal participation. Assigning the student a buddy, especially a buddy from the same home language, can help an ELL adjust to a new school environment. Though learning and practicing English is beneficial, allowing the child to communicate with others in the home language can help clarify classroom expectations and content knowledge.

## Modify your speech

Though it will not guarantee perfect communication, using appropriate speech will help ELLs to comprehend both directions and content.

- Speak more slowly, enunciating carefully while still using a natural tone and rhythm.
- Use gestures with your speech. Hold up one, two, and three fingers as you list three attributes or give three steps to follow. Use facial expressions to indicate emotion and other kinds of body language or miming.
- Provide visual aids in the form of pictures or realia (concrete objects or models) or point to sections of text or materials to be used as you mention them.
- Model directions or processes.
- Adjust questioning techniques so that students can respond in a way that is appropriate for their stage of English proficiency. The following chart provides some sample question starters appropriate to various stages of English proficiency:

Stage	Appropriate Expectation	Question Starter
Preproduction	Nodding, pointing, demonstrating	“Show me...” “Which of these...?”
Early production	One or two word responses; make a choice between given options	“Is if the ___one or the ___one?” Questions with answers of one or two words.
Emergent speech	Phrase or short sentence with likely grammatical errors	“What happened next?” “Where did you find the answer?”
Intermediate fluency	Longer sentences with fewer grammatical errors	“How did you...?” “What was this character trying to do?”

## Provide opportunities for interaction

Children cannot learn to speak English without opportunities to practice speaking English. Providing students with opportunities to interact with other students will naturally enhance English language development while also providing the scaffolding needed to help ELLs achieve in the content areas. Here are a few suggestions:

- Use adequate wait time to help an ELL formulate a response in a large group context.
- Use a think, pair, share strategy where students first think about a question for themselves, then talk about the question with a partner, and finally share their thoughts with the larger group.
- Try conversational role plays in pairs or small groups. Topics could include using polite language (please, thank you, excuse me...), interviewing someone, how to use I-messages, resolving conflict, and others.
- Provide time for buddy reading of texts that are a little beyond the ELLs independent comprehension level.
- Use learning centers for literacy, math, science, or social studies investigations.

- Use cooperative learning projects. Have teams work together to create an artistic display of their names, create an “assembly-line” style craft project where each team member contributes to the final product, have groups work together to complete a puzzle or word search, or do a jigsaw reading activity where each member reads a different text and reports back important information to the group.

### **Support literacy development**

Literacy instruction is one area in which knowledge of the individual student is especially helpful. Depending on culture and life history, an ELL may have solid literacy skills in a language similar to English, in a language that is completely different from English, or very little prior literacy skills at all. The more fully a child’s literacy skills in the home language have developed, the better foundation there is for literacy skills in English; and the more similar the two languages, the easier it is to transfer literacy from one to another.

Good instruction in reading and writing looks the same whether you are teaching native-English speakers or ELLs. This section highlights a few areas of best practice that are especially important to keep in mind when working with ELLs.

### **Reading Instruction**

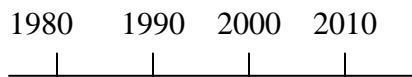
Helping students learn to decode words is important, but helping them make meaning of text is essential. Instruction in phonics and high frequency words is best done in the context of meaningful text. Reading texts multiple times can build fluency in word recognition while concurrently providing an opportunity to focus on comprehension strategies, such as the following examples:

- *Previewing:* Paging through a text ahead of time to look at pictures or headings can begin to activate prior knowledge that helps a reader to both decode words and make meaning of text. ELLs may not bring the same kinds of background knowledge to a text as other students. For example, they may not be familiar with the “once upon a time... and they lived happily ever after” story structure for a fairy tale. They may know a lot about tortillas, but nothing about crackers. Taking time to help students build background knowledge is essential.
- *Predicting:* Making predictions during reading about what will come next is both an effective comprehension strategy and a motivator. It builds anticipation, motivating students to keep reading to check and see if predictions are correct.
- *Monitoring and Questioning:* Help students learn to think about what they are reading to monitor their own comprehension. When a “red flag” pops up during reading, help students ask questions like, “What does this word mean?” “How could that have happened?” or “What are they talking about now?” It is helpful if the teacher models this strategy and then helps direct students to where to find answers: reread, keep reading to see if there is clarification provided in the text, or asking someone for help.
- *Making connections:* Connecting text to personal experience, other texts, or prior knowledge aids comprehension and helps students to internalize a text. Phrases like, “this reminds me of...” are useful for helping students to make connections.
- *Summarizing and retelling:* Putting text into more general words is a great strategy for monitoring comprehension. Summarizing can occur during reading

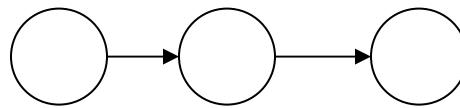
with a technique like *GIST* (Generating Interaction between Schemata and Text). In this technique, students work in cooperative groups and read sections of text silently. After each section the members of the group work collaboratively to generate one sentence that summarizes the “gist” of the passage. Each member writes the sentence down so that by the end each member of the group has a summary of the text. Summarizing can also occur after reading an entire text. Students can retell a story in a beginning, middle, and end chart or dramatize it.

- *Text Structures:* ELLs do not always bring the same prior knowledge of story or informational structures to reading since different cultures may commonly use different structures for texts. Using graphic organizers before or after reading to cue students in on these structures can be especially helpful. Here are a few to get you started.

*Timeline*



*Causal Chain of Events*



*Comparison Chart*

	Tarantulas	Crab Spiders	Jumping Spiders
How they look			
Where they live			
How they move			

*Story Mapping*

Somebody	Wanted	But	So

Or... Characters, Setting, Problem, Solution

## Development of Writing Skills

There are three factors that help determine the ease with which beginning ELLs learn to write in English: (1) whether or not they already know how to read in their first language, (2) the extent to which the home language alphabet is similar to the English alphabet, and (3) the number of opportunities they are given to practice reading and writing in English from the beginning.

Supporting students in developing and communicating ideas first and worrying about correct grammar and spelling later is becoming more common as the writing process guides writing instruction in an increasing number of classrooms (*Prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, publishing*). Process writing is commonly used in ESL classrooms as well. The interactive process of conferencing provides opportunity for authentic conversation practice in addition to helping to develop a piece of written work. However, full participation in the process may not be possible until an intermediate or advanced level of English proficiency is acquired.

*Beginning writers* may simply draw pictures and *label* things. Over time they may begin to write one or two short sentences, though there may be problems with word order and they are likely to write only in *present tense*. There are a few strategies that can help support beginning ELLs in writing:

- Allow the student to talk with someone about an idea before writing to activate needed ideas and vocabulary.
- Provide writing scaffolds: Have students write the story for a wordless book; create pattern books modeled after a classroom book in groups; create concept books for a color, shape, or adjective like tall or short; write pattern poems.
- Use personal journals, buddy journals (between two students), or dialogue journals (between teacher and student or parent and student) to help promote fluency.
- Encourage the use of inventive spelling, but also provide personal dictionaries to record correct spellings for frequently used words.

*Intermediate writers* will be able to write a number of sentences in a fairly organized sequence. They may be able to express all their ideas comfortably, but still *lack the diverse vocabulary* needed for fine shades of meaning. They can usually use several tenses in their writing, but may often make *minor grammatical errors*, such as leaving off the –s for third person singular verbs. Here are a few strategies that may help support intermediate ELLs in writing:

- Help students learn to combine two short sentences into one longer sentence to add sentence variety.
- Do mini-lessons focused on using precise vocabulary. Have students create class books on color words, strong verbs, emotions, or other lists of synonyms that can be used as resources during writer’s workshop.
- Allow students to use computers for their writing. The spelling and grammar functions of word processing programs can help students identify and correct their own errors more autonomously.

### **Support ELLS in the content areas: Math, Social Studies, Science**

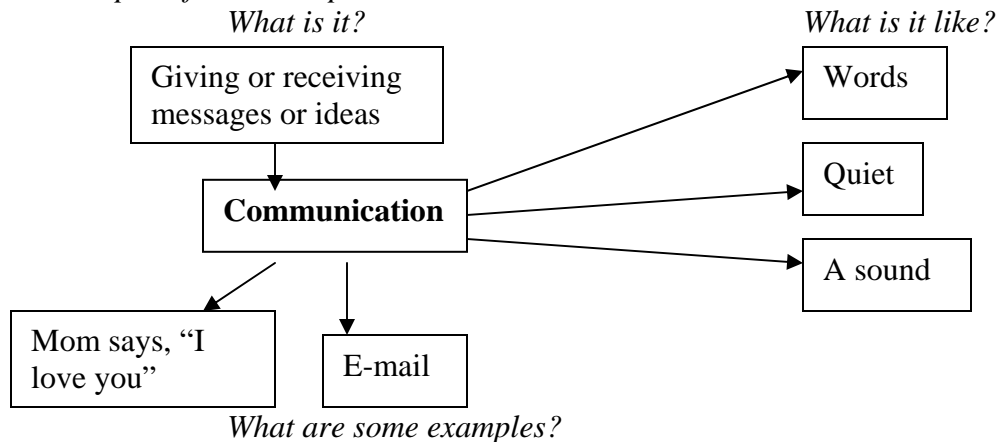
According to current educational policy, ELLs must be given full access to all academic content and must prove they can achieve at high levels on state testing. This means that teachers must adapt their instruction to support the language development of ELLs without watering down the content in any way. To make sure that language needs are addressed, all lessons in the content areas should have both *content and language objectives*. To determine the language objective, teachers should think about what kind of language support ELLs need to successfully meet the content objective. Lessons can be adapted to develop vocabulary, build background knowledge, modify texts, or provide a framework for understanding so that ELLs can access content objectives.

### **Vocabulary Development**

There are four major categories of language support that might be necessary in content areas. (1) All content areas have specialized technical vocabulary that is not a part of everyday spoken English that all students must learn, such as isosceles triangle. (2) There is also language in each content area that English proficient students have mastered, but beginning ELLs have not yet learned, for example, microscope, thermometer, or ruler. (3) Often common English words may be used in a different specialized way in a content area, for example, *table* as a way to represent data. (4) Students may need a scaffold for everyday language structures or frameworks for reporting their learning, for example “The \_\_\_\_ is \_\_ inches long.”

Vocabulary activities can build background knowledge by introducing new terms, review terms that have been introduced previously, or help to organize or classify terms in a conceptual framework.

- **Word Walls:** Content vocabulary of the greatest importance is hung in relevant groupings on a wall of the classroom. Students can each add an illustration to one word for the class wall. This way the wall provides connections to meanings.
- **Word Sorts:** Content vocabulary words are written on index cards and students are asked to sort the words by category. For example, **Length:** inches, feet, yards, centimeters, meters; **Weight:** ounces, pounds, grams, kilograms
- **Concept Definition Map:**



- **Dramatization:** Have students act out content words, either the word itself or a situation in which the word would be used.

Since the focus of content area instruction is learning the *content*, it is important to provide opportunities for the students to *talk about the content* in both English and *their home language* if there are other students who speak the same home language in the class. This will allow students to engage more deeply with the content, clarify any questions they have, and correct any misconceptions that might arise as a result of misunderstandings of English.

### Build or Connect to Background Knowledge

- Use visuals, realia, and manipulatives whenever possible so that abstract ideas can be made as concrete as possible.
- Go on field trips to build background knowledge for a new topic.
- Some videos, computer software, and websites are resources that can be used to build background knowledge through their visual or interactive nature.

### Modify Texts

- **Supplemental resources:** Find books that cover the same concepts at a lower reading level.
- **Highlighted text:** Reserve a few copies of texts specifically for ELLs. Highlight the overriding ideas, key concepts, important vocabulary, and summary

statements in these texts and encourage students to first read only the highlighted sections. This reduces the reading demands of the text while helping students pick out the most important ideas.

- *Taped text:* Record entire texts or highlighted sections so that students can listen as they follow along in the book. Tapes can be available for both school and home use so that students can listen multiple times.
- *Adapted text:* If there are no other resources or adaptations that can be made to give access to ELLs, then adapting a text is appropriate. The teacher rewrites important sections of text in short simple sentences in a step by step manner, defining relevant vocabulary to create an easier read. (“Electrons have negative electric charges and orbit around the core, nucleus, of an atom.” Can be rewritten as, “Electrons have negative charges. They orbit around the center. The center of the atom is called the nucleus.”) Rewritten paragraphs should include a topic sentence and a few details to provide ease in identifying important information.

### Provide a Framework for Understanding

Many graphic organizers can serve as advance organizers to build background knowledge or provide a review of a key concept from a lesson. Creating this type of framework *during* a lesson can also be useful for helping students to develop connections and understandings in their heads.

- *Timeline:* A timeline helps students to sequence events and see visually how events are related over time.
- *Venn Diagram:* Two things or concepts are compared. Information about each one is written in the designated circle. Any similarities are written in the area of the two circles that overlaps.
- *Attribute Chart:* This type of chart helps students to make comparisons across multiple examples. The students should be actively involved in creating the chart, using resources or prior experience to fill the needed information.

Animal	Farm	Zoo	4 legs	2 legs	wings	hair	Babies	
							Live	Eggs
Duck	x			X	x			x
Horse	x		x			x	x	
Giraffe		x	x			x	x	

### Build autonomy by teaching learning strategies

Students can learn in the content areas more effectively and independently if they know the kinds of learning strategies that can help. Some students may naturally use these strategies, while others will need to be explicitly taught to employ them. There are *metacognitive* strategies which help students to monitor themselves and their own thinking and understanding; *cognitive* strategies which help students to organize information; and *social-affective* strategies which help students interact with others or control emotions to enhance their own learning. Many of these strategies are similar to the types of reading comprehension strategies that good readers learn. A few examples of such strategies are:



### **Metacognitive Strategies**

- Advanced organization: Previewing section headings and bold words of a text, planning how to organize and use materials.
- Selective attention: Focus on key words in spoken or written language
- Self-monitoring: Checking one's comprehension; checking oral and written production as it is taking place.
- Self-assessment: Judging how well one did a task.

### **Cognitive Strategies**

- Use available resources: Dictionaries, word walls, encyclopedias, ect.
- Connecting: Take new information and relate it to prior knowledge or personal experience.
- Summarizing: Review main ideas in spoken or written language.
- Rehearsal: Reviewing an idea or concept multiple times or practicing a new skill repeatedly.

### **Social-affective Strategies**

- Questioning: Ask others for clarification, rephrasing, or more information.
- Self-talk: Use mental techniques to boost one's confidence or reduce anxiety about a learning task.
- Cooperation: Working with peers to solve problems or pool information.

### **Modify assessments**

Creating quality assessments for ELLs can be challenging. Most traditional assessments are very language dependent, requiring students to read and understand both directions and test questions and sometimes to write lengthy responses. Though such tests may provide information about an ELL's reading comprehension and writing composition skills, they may not give an accurate picture of student progress towards attaining instructional objectives or provide feedback to the teacher about the level of success of instructional strategies. For this reason, it is necessary to adapt tests, use alternate forms of assessment, and use as many different forms of assessments as possible so that language will not be an obstacle to obtaining a clear sense of each student's progress in the content areas.

### **Adapting Tests**

There are a number of different modifications that can be used to create a more approachable testing situation for ELLs, depending on the level of English proficiency:

- Have the test translated into the student's home language or allow them to use bilingual dictionaries.
- Provide the student with extra time for taking the test because thinking and processing takes longer in a new language.
- Read directions and test questions aloud to the student.
- Allow oral or pictorial responses.
- Simplify the language on the test: use short sentences and easy vocabulary.
- Allow students to make lists instead of writing essays or complete sentences.
- Provide students with word banks containing relevant vocabulary.
- Ask students to fill in graphic organizers similar to those used during instruction.

### Using Alternate Forms of Assessment

Alternate assessments may provide more useful information about student progress than traditional tests. Often these assessments are less language dependent, more skill based, or more relevant to real life contexts.

- *Observations:* Keep anecdotal records or skills checklists about what you notice as students are working or participating in class.
- *Formal Performance Assessments:* Have a child demonstrate the mastery of a particular skill. For example, how to solve a math problem or how to read a map.
- *Sorting activities:* Ask students to sort objects or word cards to demonstrate ability to understand a concept. For example, sort objects by initial sound, sort number sentences by sum or difference, sort pictures of animal by classification, sequence pictures of the water cycle.
- *Models and visual displays:* Students create a model to demonstrate understanding of the characteristics of something or an understanding of how something works. For example, use clay to create an insect and a spider to show their differences; create a shoe box model of a habitat with both plants and animals, create a diagram that shows how the digestive system works.
- *Graphic organizers:* Completing a web, comparison chart, or some other type of graphic organizer can uncover student conceptual understanding, especially if the student is already familiar with the uses for the particular graphic organizer.
- *Self-assessments:* Ask students to complete a learning log, circle a number on a continuum to show how well they worked with group members, use a rubric to give themselves a score based on specific criteria, complete a K-W-L chart, tell what strategy they used to solve a problem, or write what was easy or hard about a concept.
- *Rubrics:* Create rubrics along with students highlighting the different components that will be graded and the criteria for attaining each score. A written rubric along with a visual sample or demonstration helps students to understand and meet expectations. This is especially effective for grading writing, oral presentations, or projects. For example, a rubric for a writing sample might look at correct use of past tense verbs, story idea, the amount of detail included, and sequencing.
- *Differentiated Scoring:* When a teacher uses this type of grading, an assignment receives two scores: one that is based on demonstration of content area knowledge and skills and another that is based on demonstration of English language proficiency. In this way progress in both content and English language can be monitored.

### Using Multiple Forms of Assessment

To collect the most accurate information about each student's progress, a variety of assessments are best. Different kinds of assessment give different information about student learning, and some types of assessment might match the purpose or objective better than others. Portfolios are one way to collect and organize multiple forms of data. Portfolios can be collections of work that a student chooses to demonstrate best work or areas that need improvement. They can also be a holding place for all pertinent classwork, tests, checklists, self-assessments, rubrics, and projects. Regardless of how portfolios are put together, their ultimate purpose is the same as that of any assessment: to highlight student achievement and to create goals for continued learning.

### Sample Assessments for an Insect Unit:

#### Original Unit Test

1. Describe the life cycle of the following:  
Mantis  
  
Honeybee
2. How do you know an animal is an insect?
3. What foods do insects eat?
4. Why are insects important?

#### Unit Test Modified for ELLs: A partially completed graphic organizer

Insect Name	Life Cycle	What it eats	How it looks	Why it's important	Interesting facts
Monarch Butterfly	Egg Larva Pupa (chrysalis) Adult	Milkweed leaves (larva) Nectar from flowers (adult)	Head – eyes, antenna Thorax – legs and 4 wings Abdomen	Help to pollinate flowers	They do not fly at night.
Mantis					
Honeybees					

#### Alternate Assessments for a Unit Portfolio

- Keep an observation log of the life cycle of real monarch butterflies in the classroom. Given a diagram of the life cycle of another insect, create one drawing to show the four stages of the butterfly's life cycle.
- Create a drawing or clay model of two adult insects including three body parts, legs, wings, eyes, and antenna. Verbally tell how the insects are the same or different.
- Work with a strong English speaker in a cooperative learning jigsaw reading to learn and share interesting facts about insects and why they are important. Complete a self-assessment on learning, participation, and contribution to the group.

## *Conclusion*

The information presented in this handbook gives evidence to support the need for all elementary teachers to gain awareness of the needs of ELLs and take an active role in supporting their learning. Though it can take five to seven years or longer for students to acquire a level of academic English proficiency equivalent to that of their peers, legislation requires that these students maintain the same adequate yearly progress toward the highly challenging academic standards as their peers. Most ESL program models include ELLs in the mainstream classroom for a majority of content instruction, so it is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to implement strategies that can support these high expectations. Through creating a welcoming environment, getting to know each student, attending to communication patterns, planning language objectives for content areas, and modifying assessments, elementary teachers can support, instruct, and monitor the progress of ELLs effectively.

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## Appendix 1

### DECLARATION OF RIGHTS FOR PARENTS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS UNDER NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Under No Child Left Behind, parents of English language learners can expect:

**1. To have your child receive a quality education and be taught by a highly qualified teacher.**

President Bush and Secretary of Education Rod Paige believe that the key to a quality education is a highly qualified teacher. The new education act requires that all teachers of the core academic subjects be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-2006 school year, including teachers of English language learners.

**2. To have your child learn English and other subjects such as reading and other language arts and mathematics at the same academic level as all other students.**

Schools must provide English language learners the same educational opportunities to meet the same high academic standards as their peers. The No Child Left Behind Act does not require schools to use a particular method for teaching English language acquisition nor does it prohibit a child from learning another language.

**3. To know if your child has been identified and recommended for placement in an English language acquisition program, and to accept or refuse such placement.**

A parent or guardian must be notified when his or her child is identified and recommended for placement in a program for English language instruction. Notification must include the reason for placement, the method of instruction and what is required for the child to exit the program, and it must be in a language or manner that the parents understand.

**4. To choose a different English language acquisition program for your child, if one is available.**

Parents may choose from among the various English language acquisition instructional programs in the school, if more than one is available. If the child is placed in a program that is not meeting his or her educational needs, the parent may have the child transferred to another available program in the district.

**5. To transfer your child to another school if his or her school is identified as “in need of improvement.”**

Once a school has been identified as “in need of improvement,” the public school choice provisions of the law provide parents with children in these schools the option of transferring them to another public school in the district, including a nearby charter school, if one is available, and the district will pay for or provide transportation.

**6. To apply for supplemental services, such as tutoring, for your child if his or her school is identified as “in need of improvement” for two years.**

A supplemental service is extra educational help provided to students, such as tutoring and other after-school services. Students from low-income families who are enrolled in schools that are “in need of improvement” for two years are eligible to receive these services.

**7. To have your child tested annually to assess his or her progress in English language acquisition.**

Testing is used to assess how students are performing and what they have learned. The No Child Left Behind Act requires yearly assessment for English language proficiency (K-12). Schools must provide student assessment reports to parents that will, among other things, let them know how well their child is learning English.

**8. To receive information regarding your child’s performance on academic tests.**

Under No Child Left Behind all children in grades 3-8 will be tested yearly, and those in grades 9-12 will be tested at least once in math and reading-language arts. No Child Left Behind requires that parents be notified of their child's academic progress in these subjects in a language or manner that they understand.

**9. To have your child taught with programs that are scientifically proven to work.**

English language learners can become fully proficient in English and master challenging content when enrolled in high-quality programs with a highly qualified teacher. No Child Left Behind requires that programs for English language learners funded under the act use curriculum and instructional methods that reflect scientifically based research.

**10. To have the opportunity for your child to reach his or her greatest academic potential.**

For the first time in the history of public education, there is a federal law that specifically addresses the educational achievement gap between minority children and their peers by implementing strong accountability measures. A quality K-12 education will assist every child who aspires to a college education so that he or she can be academically prepared to enter an institution of higher learning upon graduation.

*No Child Left Behind--a new era in public education.*

*www.ed.gov--1-800-USA-LEARN*

*Office of English Language Acquisition—January 2004*

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela)

(January 2004)

## Appendix 2

### Legislation of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress Concerning Foreign Languages and International Education Proposed 2003-2004

Retrieved from <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

#### **H.Con.Res. 5 – English Plus Resolution**

*Introduced:* January 1, 2003

*Sponsor:* Representative Jose E. Serrano (D-NY)

*Co-Sponsors:* None

*Latest Action:* February 21, 2003 Referred to the Subcommittee on Education Reform

*Purpose:* (CRS [Congressional Research Service] Summary)

Expresses the sense of the Congress that the U.S. Government should pursue policies that: (1) encourage all residents of this country to become fully proficient in English by expanding educational opportunities and access to information technologies; (2) conserve and develop the Nation's linguistic resources by encouraging all residents to learn or maintain skills in a language other than English; (3) assist Native Americans, Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians, and other peoples indigenous to the United States in their efforts to prevent the extinction of their languages and cultures; (4) continue to provide services in languages other than English as needed to facilitate access to essential functions of government, promote public health and safety, ensure due process, promote equal educational opportunity, and protect fundamental rights; and (5) recognize the importance of multilingualism to vital national interests and individual rights, and oppose "English-only" measures and similar language restrictionist measures.

#### **H.R. 931 – National Language Act of 2003**

*Introduced:* February 26, 2003

*Sponsor:* Representative Peter King (R-NY)

*Co-Sponsors:* 51

*Latest Action:* March 17, 2003 Referred to House Subcommittee on Educational Reform

*Purpose:* (CRS Summary)

Makes English the official language of the U.S. Government. Requires the Governments to: (1) conduct its official business in English, including publications, income tax forms, and informational materials; and (2) preserve and enhance the role of English as the official language of the United States of America. Provides that no person has a right, entitlement, or claim to have the Government act, communicate, perform, or provide services or materials in any other language, unless specifically stated in applicable law.

Provides that this Act shall not apply to the use of a language other than English for religious purposes, for training in foreign languages for international communication, in school programs designed to encourage students to learn foreign languages, or by persons over age 62.

Repeals the Bilingual Education Act. Terminates the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs in the Department of Education.

Repeals provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 regarding bilingual election requirements and regarding congressional findings of voting discrimination against language minorities, prohibition of English-only elections, and other remedial measures.

Amends the Immigration and Nationality Act to require that all public ceremonies in which the oath of allegiance is administered pursuant to such Act be conducted solely in English.

Specifies that this Act shall no preempt the law of any State.

## Appendix 3

### Six levels of Minority Language Policy

In his book, *Language Policy in Schools: A Resource for Teachers and Administrators*, Corson identifies six different approaches or orientations that are exhibit in national or school language policies and notes that in the United States typical policy focuses on levels 1 or 2.

1. New language group lacks English and needs to rapidly transition into English usage.
2. The minority groups' need for English is linked to family status, so aids, tutors, social workers, and other helps are provided.
3. The need for English is linked to disparities in esteem between group culture and majority culture: multicultural curricula, eliminating racial stereotypes, and sensitizing teachers are added to English instruction.
4. There is a belief that the premature loss of the first language inhibits develop of majority language, so the first language is at least occasionally or in early years a medium of instruction.
5. The minority language is seen as threatened with extinction so the policy is to provide the minority language exclusively as the language of instruction in early years.
6. Minority and majority languages are seen as having equal rights or status in society, so the minority language may be recognized as an official language; separate school systems may be provided; all children may be given the opportunity to learn both languages; and language support exists beyond the school system.