

EL MATTERS



Meeting the Needs of ELs - Delves deeper into what general education teachers should know to teach ELs effectively.

This information is found in the EL Tool Kit published in 2015 and distributed by the U.S. Department of Education. Tool number three is outlined here and is adapted with permission from the Center for American Progress.

You can access Tools and Resources for Staffing and Supporting an English Learner Program at

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html>

Support Oral Language Development

- Oral language proficiency allows students to participate in academic discussions, understand instruction, and build literacy skills.
- Students with more developed first language skills are better able to develop their second language skills.
- Vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in oral language proficiency. ELs require direct teaching of new words along with opportunities to learn new words in context through hearing, seeing, and saying them as well as during indirect encounters with authentic and motivating texts.
- Building oral proficiency in a second language can be supported by the use of nonverbal cues, visual aids, gestures, and multisensory hands on methods. Other strategies include establishing routines, extended talk on a single topic, providing students with immediate feedback, opportunities to converse with teachers, speaking slowly, using clear repetition, and paraphrasing supports oral communication.
- Students should receive explicit instruction and preparation techniques to aid in speaking with others by teaching words and grammatical features that are used in academic settings.



Explicitly Teach Academic English

- Academic language is decontextualized, abstract, technical, and literary. It is difficult for native speakers and even more difficult for ELs.
- Academic language is not limited to one area of language and requires skills in multiple domains, including vocabulary, syntax/grammar, and phonology.
- Understanding the differences of informal language and academic language is important. Opportunities to learn and practice academic language are essential. Students must be exposed to sophisticated and varied vocabulary and grammatical structures and must avoid slang and idioms.
- Opportunities and instruction on using academic language accurately in multiple contexts and texts is of critical importance for all ELs.
- School-wide efforts and coordination of curriculum across content areas help teachers build on a foundation of prior knowledge.

Value Cultural Diversity

- ELs typically face multiple challenges in the transition from home to school because most are from culturally diverse backgrounds. Schooling experiences should reaffirm the social, cultural, and historical experiences of all students.
- Teachers and students should be expected to accept, explore, and understand different perspectives and to be prepared as citizens of a multicultural and global society.
- Opportunities for teachers and students to interact with diverse cultures can be created in multiple ways through inclusive teaching practices, reading and multimedia materials, school traditions and rituals, assembly programs, and cafeteria food that represent all backgrounds.
- Involving parents and community in a meaningful way with outreach and letters to homes, bulletin boards, and staff helps build appreciation of diversity.



Supporting Classroom Teaching

- The teacher provides bilingual dictionaries and glossaries, English dictionaries, and glossaries with comprehensible definitions, non-linguistic representations of text, graphic organizers tailored to specific content, and manipulatives.
- As students study a topic, the teacher selects leveled readers on the same topic at different reading levels appropriate to the student's current reading level of English proficiency.
- Teachers seek additional resources (e.g., counselors and social workers) to support individual student needs.
- Because ELs are processing language and content at the same time, they may need additional wait time to answer questions and additional time to complete activities.

Providing ELs Equal Access to Curricular and Extracurricular Programs

- Marengo County must design and implement services and programs that enable ELs to attain both English proficiency and parity of participation in the standard instructional program, within a reasonable length of time.
- Marengo County must provide equal opportunities for EL students to meaningfully participate in curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs and activities.
- Marengo County must ensure that all schools use appropriate, reliable, and valid evaluations and testing methods to measure EL's acquisition of English and core-content knowledge.

What is EL Differentiation

Car, J., Sexton, U., & Lagunoff, R. (2007) Making science accessible to English learners: A guidebook for teachers. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

Differentiating instruction means using a variety of instructional strategies that target the diversity of the students in the classroom (students with different learning styles, interests, special needs, and those who are also English Learners). For English learners, differentiation means tailoring a specific strategy to fit their language levels. It does not mean creating an individualized lesson for each student. It means planning a variety of ways for students to learn new concepts and read new material. It also means controlling speech and using word walls, visuals, and small group instruction activities to make input more comprehensible for English learners.

