Promoting Language Learning and Academic Success in the Content Areas for English Learners

Now with Common Core

MIDDLE SCHOOL

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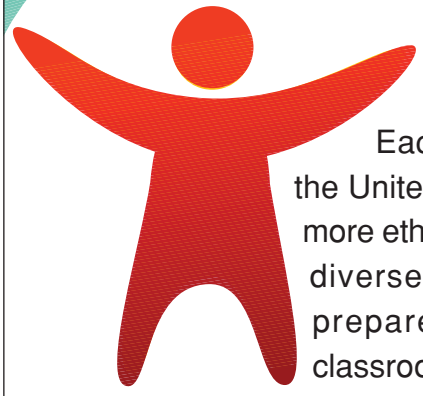

Each year classrooms in the United States are becoming more ethnically and linguistically diverse. Educators need to prepare their lessons and classrooms in differing ways in order to teach content effectively to English Learners (ELs). It is recognized that all educators need support in the area of working with these students in order to ensure that all English Learners succeed in school and become productive citizens. Therefore, these guidelines were designed to offer classroom strategies that are critical components to be utilized when instructing ELs. These guidelines offer educators research-based practices that have been proven effective for increasing academic achievement for ELs in today's classrooms. It is with this model of instruction in mind, that these guidelines have been designed to assist educators in acquiring more knowledge about implementing good practices when working with ELs in their classrooms.

The Cornerstone of WIDA's Standards:
Guiding Principles of Language Development

1. Students's languages and cultures are valuable resources to be tapped and incorporated into schooling.
2. Students' home, school, and community experiences influence their language development.
3. Students draw on their metacognitive, metalinguistic, and metacultural awareness to develop proficiency in additional languages.
4. Students' academic language development in their native language facilitates their academic language development in English. Conversely, students' academic language development in English informs their academic language development in their native language.
5. Students learn language and culture through meaningful use and interaction.
6. Students use language in functional and communicative ways that vary according to context.
7. Students develop language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing interdependently, but at different rates and in different ways.
8. Students' development of academic language and academic content knowledge are inter-related processes.
9. Students' development of social, instructional, and academic language, a complex and long-term process, is the foundation for their success in school.
10. Students' access to instructional tasks requiring complex thinking is enhanced when linguistic complexity and instructional support match their levels of language proficiency.

Adapted from WIDA Guiding Principles/WIDA Draft ELD Standards, available at **www.wida.us.*

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The Defining Features of Academic Language in WIDA's Standards

	Performance Criteria	Features	Examples
Discourse Level	**Discourse Complexity** *(Quantity and variety of oral and written text)*	Amount of speech/written text Structure of speech/written text Density of speech/written text Organization and cohesion of ideas Variety of sentence types	Voice Mood Cohesive forms (referential,repetition) Coherence (e.g., topic and comment and key words for written language: relevance, sequencing, and closing relevant to topic for oral language) Logical connectors Parallelism Organizational types (e.g., narration, exposition, description)
Sentence Level	**Language Forms and Conventions** *(Types, array, and use of language structures)*	Types and variety of grammatical structures Conventions, mechanics, and fluency Match of language forms to purpose/perspective	Tense Aspect (e.g., progressive, perfect tenses) Simple, compound, and complex sentences Word order Parallelism Denotation and connotations Formulaic expressions Interrogatives Prosodic features (e.g., stress, intonation, rhythm of speech) Agreement (e.g., subject/verb)
Word/Phrase Level	**Vocabulary Usage** *(Specificity of word or phrase choice)*	General, specific, and technical language Multiple meanings of words and phrases Formulaic and idiomatic expressions Nuances and shades of meaning Collocations	Sound-symbol-spelling correspondence Word formations (e.g., affixes, compounding) Count/non-count distinctions Denotation and connotation Possession (e.g., possessives)

Adapted from WIDA Defining Features of Academic Language in WIDA's Standards, available at* ***www.wida.us**.*

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Stages of Language Proficiency

Stage: At the given level of English language proficiency, English learners will process, understand, produce, or use:	**Student Ability with Support**
ENTERING:	
Pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas Words or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, yes/no questions, or statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support Oral language with errors that often impede meaning when presented with basic oral commands, direct questions, or simple statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support	Follow one-step oral commands/instructions Answer yes/no and choice questions Repeat words, short phrases, memorized chunks Find single word responses to WH-questions (e.g., “who,” “what,” “when,” “where”) Label pictures and graphs
EMERGING:	
General language related to the content areas Phrases or short sentences Errors in oral or written language that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one- to multiple-step directions, questions, or a series of statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support	Sequence visuals per oral directions Identify information on charts or tables based on oral statements Make requests Use pre-taught vocabulary (e.g., word banks) to complete sentences Complete graphic organizers/forms with personal information

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Stages of Language Proficiency, continued

Stage: At the given level of English language proficiency, English learners will process, understand, produce, or use:	**Student Ability with Support**
DEVELOPING:	
General and some specific language of the content areas Expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs Oral or written language with errors that may impede the communication, but retain much of its meaning when presented with oral, written, narrative, or expository descriptions with sensory, graphic, or interactive support	Give brief oral content-based presentations Identify topic sentences, main ideas, and details in paragraphs Answer questions about explicit information in texts Produce short paragraphs with main ideas and some details Compare/contrast information, events, and characters
EXPANDING:	
Specific and some technical language of the content areas A variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences, or paragraphs Minimal errors in oral or written language that do not impede the overall meaning of communication when presented with oral or written discourse with sensory, graphic, or interactive support	Role play or re-enact scenarios from oral reading Paraphrase and summarize ideas presented orally Use an array of strategies (e.g., skim and scan for information) Create multiple-paragraph essays Produce content-related reports

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Stages of Language Proficiency, continued

Stage: At the given level of English language proficiency, English learners will process, understand, produce, or use:	**Student Ability with Support**
BRIDGING:	
Specialized or technical language of the content areas A variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays, or reports Oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English-proficient peers	Defend a point of view and give reasons Discriminate among multiple genres read orally Discuss and give examples of abstract, content-based ideas (e.g., democracy, justice) Critique material and support judgment Produce research reports using multiple sources/citations

"Adapted from the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards and Resource Guide, 2007 Edition, available at www.wida.us"

Sheltered Instruction

Sheltered instructional strategies can be implemented by all teachers using special techniques and strategies designed to assist EL students in both language-acquisition and subject-matter content.

To understand the purpose of "Sheltered Instruction", the umbrella is a useful metaphor. As EL students enter US schools, they face many unfamiliar elements. As an umbrella shelters pedestrians in a rain storm, sheltered instruction gives students protection from the storm of concepts, contexts, and language, giving them the opportunity to progress academically as they are acquiring English language proficiency.

Sheltered methodology emphasizes the concept of comprehensible input - very simply, making concepts understood by the learner. This is accomplished through the use of:

- realia (real objects and materials)
- manipulatives (drawings, posters, brainstorming-clusters, graphs, tables, maps, props, multimedia presentations, storyboards, story maps)
- visuals (study-prints, textbook-illustrations, overhead-projected prints, reproductions of paintings, and documents)
- graphic organizers (matrices, Venn diagrams, and webs)
- planned opportunities for interaction between all individuals in the classroom (creating a skit and acting it out, collaborative learning, and student-generated stories based on personal experiences)

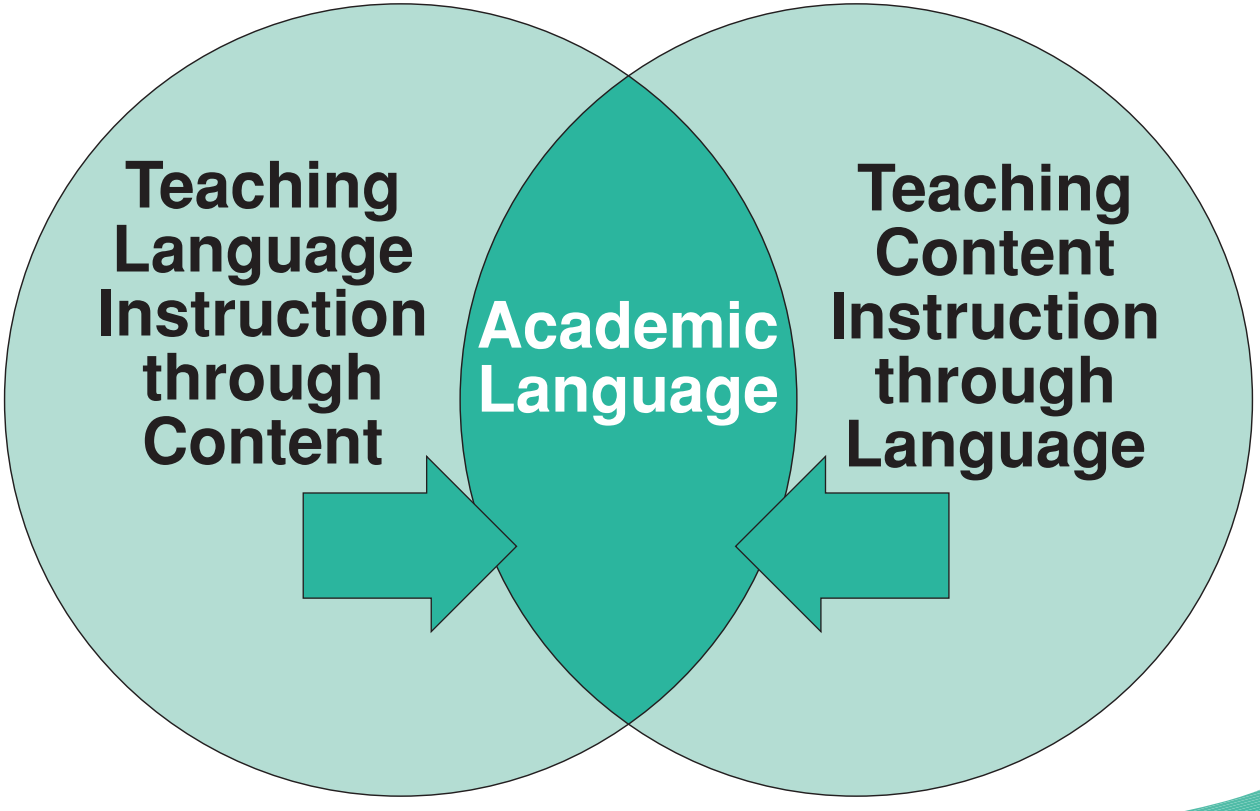
Students who are learning English as an additional language are the fastest growing segment of the school-age population in the United States, and almost all teachers will have linguistically and culturally diverse students in their classrooms during their teaching careers.

Sheltered instruction is a research-based, professional development model of instruction, an effective approach for teaching both language and content to ELs that can increase English learners' chances of success in school. The model has been used to implement effective instruction in urban, suburban, and rural districts around the United States.

Sheltered instruction does not mandate cookie-cutter instruction, but it provides a framework for well-prepared and well-delivered lessons for any subject area. The sheltered approach draws from and complements methods and strategies advocated for both second language and mainstream classrooms. Language and content objectives are systematically woven into the curriculum of a particular subject area.

In effective sheltered lessons, there is a high level of student engagement and interaction with the teacher, with other students, and with text, which leads to elaborated discourse and critical thinking. Students are explicitly taught functional language skills. Through instructional conversations and meaningful activities, students practice and apply their new language and content knowledge.

Academic Language Connects the Language and Content Standards



Adapted from Margot Gottlieb, Ph.D

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Terminology

- **Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English (ACCESS)**: the annual English proficiency exam.
- **Basics Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS):** Social Language that can take from two to three years to acquire.
- **Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP):** Academic language associated with schooling, and the abstract language abilities required for academic work. It can take anywhere from 4-6 years to develop.
- **Discourse Complexity:** the organization, cohesion and relationship between ideas expressed in the variety and kinds of sentences that make up different genres and text types in oral or written language
- **English Learners (EL):** students who are learning English as a second or additiional language.
- **ESOL:** English to speakers of other languages
- **Features of academic language:** the performance criteria associated with discourse, sentence, and word/phrase levels of oral and written communication; namely, linguistic complexity, language forms and conventions, and vocabulary usage.
- **Instructional supports:** available sensory, graphic, and interactive resources to assist students in constructing meaning from language and content.
- **L1:** First language
- **L2:** Second language
- **Language development standards:** descriptions of the language expectations for students that are marked by specific progressions or levels across the language development continuum.
- **Language domains:** the modalities of language; listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- **Language Forms and Conventions:** the grammatical structures, patterns, syntax, and mechanics associated with the sentence level meaning.
- **Language functions:** linguistic processes required in conveying a message that indicate how ELs are to process or use language to demonstrate their English language development.
- **Language proficiency:** a student's competence in processing (through listening and reading) and using (through speaking and writing) language.
- **Limited English Proficient (LEP):** a term used to refer to a student with restricted understanding or use of written and spoken English.
- **Sheltered Instruction (SI):** teaching content matter to ELs using sheltered instruction techniques. Teachers use scaffolding techniques, adjust speech patterns, and have both content and language objectives present in the classrooms.
- **Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP):** the only research-based model designed for sheltered instruction, by Mary Ellen J. Vogt, Jana A. Echevarria, and Deborah J. Short.
- **Vocabulary Usage:** the specifity of words or phrases for a given context.
- **WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT):** English language proficiency "screener" test given to incoming students who may be designated as English language learners.
- **WIDA Standards –** English Language Development Standards used in Georgia.
- **World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA):** is a consortium of states dedicated to the design and implementation of high standards and equitable educational opportunities for English learners.

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Differentiated Language Functions and Academic Supports for English Learners

Level 1 - Entering	Level 2 - Emerging	Level 3 - Developing	Levels 4-5 - Expanding/Bridging
Listen Point Match Locate Select Sort Respond Identify Draw Illustrate Circle Name Repeat Copy Trace Define	Predict Label State/Restate Describe Group Respond List Categorize Sequence Answer Tell or Say Ask/Request Classify Create Connect Make lists	Recall Retell Define Explain Summarize Role-play Compare/Contrast Discuss Express Outline Sequence Peer edit Give opinions	Analyze Interpret Justify/Defend Explain (in detail) Elaborate Critique Narrate Conclude Convince Reflect Resolve Infer Synthesize Hypothesize Predict Evaluate

Interactive Supports	Graphic Supports	Sensory Supports
Clarification in concepts in L1 Pairs or partners Mentors Small group Cooperative grouping structures Interactive websites Software programs	Graphic Organizers (i.e., concept definition maps, Venn diagrams, semantic webs) Timelines Number lines Charts (i.e., pie, T-chart) Tables Graphs	Real life objects (realia) Manipulatives Pictures & photographs Illustrations, diagrams, & drawings Magazines & newspapers Physical activities Streaming video, broadcasts, podcasts

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WIDA's English Language Development Standard

Language Domain
(Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing)

Connection

Example Topic

(Print concepts, Life cycles, Money, etc.)

Common Core Standard:

Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Emerging	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging

Model Performance Indicators

Differentiated language tasks that can be translated into standards-based activities.

Topical Vocabulary: *ELs should be exposed to the rigor of grade-level vocabulary within differentiated language instruction. ELs must have ample opportunities to examine, explore, and experiment with key grade-level concepts from the earliest levels of language proficiency.*

Cognitive Function: *Uniform underlying cognitive function demonstrating that even at the lowest levels of English language development, students engage in higher level thinking. While the cognitive function relates the mental process involved in learning the language function communicates the linguistic process required in processing or conveying a message.*

Example Context for Language Use: *Purpose for the context – the end goal. Situates the strand of MPIs within informational and narrative text reflective of multiple text types/genres that are listed in standards documents. Helps teachers think about how to implement a strand of MPIs using an authentic instructional setting; it also reinforces the notion that language is never learned in isolation but is bound by the situation in which it occurs.*

Level 6 Reaching

Topical Vocabulary | **Cognitive Function** | **Example Context for Language Use**

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Standard 2 - Language of Language Arts - GRADE 7

SPEAKING	Connection **Example Topic** Main Ideas	**Common Core State Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration #2 (Grade 7):** Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.					
		Level 1 Entering	**Level 2 Emerging**	**Level 3 Developing**	**Level 4 Expanding**	**Level 5 Bridging**	**Level 6 Reaching**
	Topical Vocabulary: Students at all levels of English language proficiency are exposed to grade-level words and expressions, such as: supporting details, theme, thesis	Respond to yes or no questions about the main idea with visual support (e.g. captioned illustrations of plot, characters, etc.)	Identify main idea using graphic organizer (e.g., story map, plot line) with a partner or small group	Explain main idea using graphic organizer (e.g., story map, plot line) to a partner or small group	Distinguish between the main idea and supporting details using graphic organizer and examples from the text	Discuss the main idea using extended discourse	
		Cognitive Function: Students at all levels of English language proficiency ANALYZE main ideas of short stories and novels.					
		Example Context for Language Use: Students discuss main idea of short stories and novels with partners or in small groups.					

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Standard 3 - Language of Mathematics - GRADE 7

SPEAKING

Connection

Example Topic

Algebraic equations (linear equations)

Topical Vocabulary: Students at all levels of English language proficiency are exposed to grade-level words and expressions, such as: inequality, linear equation, non-linear, simplify the expression, input/output

Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, Expressions and Equations #4 (Grade 7): Use variables to represent quantities in a real-world or mathematical problem, and construct simple equations and inequalities to solve problems by reasoning about the quantities. a. Solve word problems leading to equations of the form px + q = r, where p, q, and r are special rational numbers. Solve equations of these forms fluently. Compare an algebraic solution to an arithmetic solution, identifying the sequence of the operations used in each approach. For example, the perimeter of a rectangle is 54 cm. Its length is 6 cm. What is its width? b. Solve word problems leading to inequalities of the form px + q> r or px + q < r, where p, q, and r are specific rational numbers. Graph the solution set of the inequality and interpret it in the context of the problem. For example, as a salesperson, you are paid $50 per week plus $3 per sale. This week you want your pay to be at least $100. Write an inequality for the number of sales you need to make, and describe the solutions.

Level 1 Entering	Level 2 Emerging	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging
Recognize words and phrases that provide key information to solve real-life mathematical problems using manipulatives, visual, and graphic supports	Recognize language that provides key information to solve real-life mathematical problems using visual and graphic supports	Identify language that provides key information to solve real-life mathcmatical problems using visual and graphic supports	Interpret language that provides key information to solve real-life mathematical problems using visual and graphic supports	Identify key implicit information to solve real-life mathematical problems

Cognitive Function: Students at all levels of English language proficiency APPLY their algebraic knowledge to solve real-life problems.

Example Context for Language Use: Students read real-life problems and construct mathematical equations to find their solutions in small groups.

Level 6 Reaching

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GRADE 8 Expanded Strand Standard 4 - Language of Language Arts

LISTENING	Connection **Example Topic** Analysis of an argument	**Common Core Speaking and Listening Standards #3 (Grade 8):** Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelavent evidence is introduced.					
		Level 1 Entering	**Level 2 Emerging**	**Level 3 Developing**	**Level 4 Expanding**	**Level 5 Bridging**	
		Answer yes/no questions about an argument with illustrations	Identify key words or phrases related to an argument using a word bank	Match claims with supporting evidence in an argument using a graphic organizer	Categorize information in an argument using graphic organizers (e.g., relevant/irrelevant; pros/cons)	Recognize strengths and weaknesses in an argument	
		Cognitive Function: Students at all levels of English language proficiency UNDERSTAND the difference between making a claim and providng evidence.					
Criteria from the Performance Example Expectaions	**Discourse Complexity** (Quantity and variety of oral and written text)	The main character, Loretta, is kind. She is also stubborn. She helps her best friend, but she does not go with her to the pond.	I think Loretta shows courage in chapter two. For example, she goes to the magical forest alone. She also does not run away from the dragon. So, I believe Loretta is brave.	In general, Loretta is a strong character. She is both faithful and fearless. As a companion, for instance, she never leaves Sandra's side. Additiionally, Loretta challenges the dragon in the forest.	Of all the protagonists in the story, I think Loretta is the star. She frequently faces scary creatures when she wants to flee. More specifically, she conquers the dragon and prevents the goblins hurting Sandra.	Undeniably, Loretta represents the heroine of the tale. She not only defeats wicked monsters throughout the story, but she also proves herself as a loyal friend, except when she leaves her cousin behind. In addition to having admirable character traits, she is physcially strong whenever she has the magical powers. In terms of leadership qualities, Loretta shows how to do the right thing.	Level 6 Reaching
	Language Forms & Conventions (Types, array, and use of language structures)	she is/does v. she is not/does not but	shows For example, also So,	In general, both …, for instance, … never additionally,	Of all … rather than More specifically,	Undeniably, Not only … but also In addition to In terms of	
	Vocabulary Usage (Specificity of word or phrase choice)	kind tough best friend pond	I think … courage magical dragon I believe	faithful fearless companion challenge	frequently flee conquer prevent	represents defeat serve character traits leadership	
	Topical Vocabulary: Students at all levels of English language proficiency are exposed to grade-level words and expressions, such as: relevant, irrelevant, evidence, premise, assumption, claim, persuasive						
	Example Context for Language Use: Students listen to oral arguments to differentiate between claims and evidence about literature.						

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General Instructional Guidelines

- Print instructions legibly on the board.
- Face the classroom when speaking.
- Simplify and be consistent with oral and written instructions.
- Speak in a normal tone. Avoid raising your voice when the student doesn't understand.
- Ask students to repeat or rephrase instructions.
- Learn the student's given names. Do not anglicize or shorten a student's name unless requested by the student.
- Be aware of idiomatic expressions. Explain where necessary.
- Explain key vocabulary words.
- Model / demonstrate directions.
- Involve students actively and physically in learning.
- Use gestures and references to concrete objects and shared experiences.
- Use small groups as much as possible.
- Involve the EL in simple classroom tasks to promote a feeling of belonging.
- Let students try making their own exercises, test questions, activities, etc.
- Be aware of tutorial assistance that is available for ELs.
- Summarize at the end of the day what was taught.
- Note taking is an overwhelming task for many ELs. Allow them to copy a good student's notes or make copies of your own notes.
- Encourage students to say, "I don't understand," or develop ways for students to let you know when they don't understand.
- When assessing students, look beyond written or oral, grammatical, or idiomatic problems to underlying thoughts.
- Encourage students to share ideas and/or items from their culture that relate to the subject matter being taught.
- Be aware of the speed of your speech and the complexity of the words you use. Simplify your language just enough to make the content comprehensible, without "talking down" to your students. When rephrasing something, be sure that you don't make your statement more difficult.
- Check for comprehension frequently during a lesson. Student paraphrasing or summarizing key concepts work well.
- Vary the type of instruction to reach all learners. Differentiate based on the WIDA CAN-Do Descriptors.
- Be aware of the English proficiency levels of the students in your classroom. Consult the ACCESS test scores, the CAN-DO Descriptors, and your school's ESOL teacher(s).
- While bilingual peer tutoring can be useful to lower anxiety and increase comprehension, use it constructively for academic purposes.

General Instructional Guidelines, continued

- Teach vocabulary specific to a task, for example - circle, underline, match, and fill in the blank.
- Integrate technology.
- Use teacher and student drawings and labeling of concepts.
- Write all information on the board. When you are saying the page number, be sure to write it on the board, and also write homework on the board.
- Point to words when you read them from the board.
- Allow and encourage students to use bilingual dictionaries.
- Show videos and/or pictures before story or lesson to increase comprehension.
- Involve and encourage ELs to participate in field trips.
- Strategically place ELs in the middle of the classroom, not at the front or back or all in the same group. By placing them in the middle, they can view what other students are doing.
- Allow time to practice new skills in the classroom. ELs need extra practice for mastery.
- During practice activities, provide ongoing feedback. When necessary to correct oral language errors, it is better to correct as a rephrasing or restatement at the end of the student's response.
- Allow extra wait time when asking a question.
- Keep the purpose of the lesson in mind when designing activities. All activities should reinforce the lessons' objectives. For example, encourage students to describe the results of an experiment. This process will help students produce and practice new language and vocabulary.
- To conserve time, you can incorporate activities that utilize all four language skills – reading, writing, listening, and speaking. For example, after reading a text passage, have groups discuss and generate a list of key concepts and vocabulary words. Groups then select a point to present to the class. All class members then write a summary of the presentations.
- ELLs are learning both the content and the language of the lesson. Provide opportunities for extra language practice such as retelling, summarizing, oral presentation, peer teaching, cooperative activities, journal writing, computer research, role-playing and literature circles.
- Throughout the lesson, refer to language and content objectives that are posted in the classroom. Remember that each activity should support these objectives.
- Consistently check with students to ensure that the pacing is appropriate for their ability level. Asking a student to summarize or rephrase information presented will indicate whether the pacing is appropriate.

Instructional Guidelines

CONTENT AREAS

Language Arts & Reading

- Make sure that students understand academic language used in instruction. Simple words like evaluate, summarize, and express can be difficult for ELs.
- Consider providing concrete graphics when presenting new ideas to your class. Language arts focuses on abstract concepts and ELs need concrete connections.

Math

- Allow students to verbally explain their answers. “How did you get x=5?” “What are vertical angles?”
- When rephrasing, write the equations down. Remember numbers transcend language barriers.
- Model problems prior to practice. You can solve equations on one side and write down the corresponding steps. This will allow students a chance to see and hear how you achieved the answer through numeric and verbal expression.

Science

- Demonstrate tasks, especially laboratory activities, to clarify step by step instructions. Speak slowly and clearly, allowing them to process each step and to translate the steps mentally into their native language.

Social Studies

- ELs will benefit from visual aids such as realia, drawings, diagrams, graphic organizers, pictures, overheads, PowerPoint slides, etc. Look for websites which present the topic using simpler language than is in your textbook.
- If you use videos, learn how to turn on the closed caption feature so that your students can hear and see the words being spoken. This will increase your students’ ability to comprehend the material. Stop the video after key points in order to summarize and check for understanding.

How To Design Lessons: General Guidelines

- Everyday language and content objectives should be posted in a visible place. These objectives should be read aloud at the beginning and end of instruction. It is helpful to point to each word as it is read aloud. Also, students can keep an "objectives journal" where they record daily objectives for later reflection.
- Choose which vocabulary words to emphasize; keep in mind that all of your words will not always be content specific. For example, when teaching a science lesson on topography, a teacher may choose the words elevation and depth. For beginning ELs, they will also need to learn the concepts of above and below to understand elevation and depth.
- Simplify the language - be prepared with many synonyms for the key concepts. Vocabulary words should be written in a visible place so students can refer to the words during the lesson. At the end of a unit, vocabulary words should be posted on a word wall.
- Gather many supplementary materials to support your lesson. Examples include real-life objects, manipulatives, pictures, overhead transparencies, models, and videos. Provide an atmosphere of predictability – utilize classroom routines and practice them consistently.
- Plan meaningful activities that engage all students in learning. Utilize lessons which engage as many learning styles as possible.
- Design lessons incorporating listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Know your students' proficiency levels in your classes when you design lessons. Refer to the *Differentiated Language Functions and Academic Support Chart* as a guide (see page 14).

How To Design Lessons for ELs

CONTENT AREAS

Language Arts & Reading

- Consider providing visual images to convey abstract or difficult concepts.
- During poetry lessons, providing a description of the poem's message can help ELs.
- If reading longer works, it is helpful to provide a brief summary to ELs before the reading.

Math

- Example of content objective: To solve algebraic equations. Language objective: To read algebraic equations as verbal sentences.
- Post a student created vocabulary list in the room and encourage students to copy it in their notebooks.
- Supplementary materials can include: overhead dice, dominos, algebra tiles, overhead calculators and computers.

Science

- The science curriculum is filled with so many complex vocabulary words that it may become overwhelming for an EL student. Providing them with visual supports takes the concept from abstract to concrete. For example, providing a visual of bacteria will assist students to comprehend abstract concepts such as "unicellular."

Social Studies

- Sample content objective – Students will understand the concept of balance of power among 3 branches of US government.
- Sample language objective – Students will understand and be able to use new vocabulary. (misconduct, veto, override, appoint, bill, impeach).
- Consider using differentiated reading materials covering the same content.

Tapping in to Prior Knowledge: General Guidelines

- Get to know your students—their background, customs, family, educational experience. Be sure to make connections for students from other cultures and explain culturally-biased content. Employ materials from the students' cultures and histories to illustrate principles and concepts.
- Assess prior knowledge by using KWL, brainstorming, visuals from text, and graphic organizers.
- It can be a challenge to link concepts to the background experience of students, but this step is crucial. While making the link between background and new concepts, be aware that student experiences can be vastly different. You will need to make multiple links explicit using the varied background experiences of your students.
- In addition to linking to background experiences, it is also important to link to prior knowledge. Consistently point out links to previous lessons and courses, keeping in mind that students new to the school may not have experienced these courses.
- It is vital to "front-load" vocabulary before addressing a reading assignment. Vocabulary words should be posted visibly in the classroom. Emphasize and explain them before reading. Then revisit and reinforce these vocabulary words throughout the lesson. Word walls, student-built dictionaries, vocabulary games, and word sorts/classifying can be helpful tools.

Fulton County Schools
Where Students Come First

Tapping in to Prior Knowledge

CONTENT AREAS

Language Arts & Reading

- Often there are popular stories from a student's native culture that focus on the same concepts from class.
- Consider adapting writing assignments to allow students to focus on issues from their own cultures.

Math

- Venn Diagrams and flow charts are excellent graphic organizers for math students. They can follow the steps of a flow chart to solve problems.
- In the word problem, "Sharon gets a $5 allowance and Juan gets $3 more…" ELs' will stop at the word allowance. It may not be a part of their culture. The mathematics is not an issue; it is the non-academic vocabulary. Keep this in mind when solving application problems.

Science

- Provide the students with the tools to link their prior knowledge with the current learning material.
- Target word charts are an excellent resource where students predict the meaning of words prior to the lesson. Students revisit the target words upon completion of the lesson or after reading a passage to provide clarification.

Social Studies

- Consider having students create a dictionary of new words from your class. You can make a set of pages with a letter of the alphabet in a large font on each page. Copy these and put them in a binder. Words to include can be teacher- and/or student-selected. As the quarter or semester progresses, you can use these words in games or activities as a way of revisiting and reinforcing them. Vocabulary games such as Concentration, Pictionary, Scrabble and word sort/classification activities are helpful and engaging for ELs.

General Instructional Strategies

- Select a few learning strategies to utilize each year. Teach students explicitly what the strategies are, model how to use them, and teach students when it is appropriate to use them. Give students frequent opportunities to utilize these strategies in and out of class.
- When text is difficult to read, it is helpful to pull out key concepts, write an adapted version of the text, or provide a detailed study guide. For example, on your standard study guide, provide the page number where the information can be found.
- Through the use of scaffolding techniques, you can implement higher order questioning and promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of key content. Even students with lower language proficiency are capable of higher order thinking. They may use pictures, manipulatives, and gestures to communicate their thoughts.
- Use a variety of open-ended questions to engage all students actively in discussions.
- Review concepts.
- Use mnemonic devices.
- Teach students to visualize.
- Use graphic organizers—story maps, Venn Diagrams, webs, lists, timelines, etc.
- Teach self-questioning/self-monitoring.
- Teach predicting strategies.
- Outline - give students the framework and model the process on the overhead.
- Highlight key words on handouts, parts of speech with different colors, key words in questions. (Key words in text when permissible).
- Have students make flashcards.
- Provide opportunities for success by alternating difficult tasks with easier ones.
- Avoid oral correction of language errors; model correct language. Errors may be developmental.
- Use peer tutoring.
- Prompt students to elicit responses.
- Accept any effort to answer questions.
- Use think-alouds.
- Have students teach what they have learned to other students.
- Implement guided reading.
- Design cloze procedures in the content areas.
- Use language frames to help ELs with speaking and writing tasks, for example, “The author used _____ in order to _____.”, “I decided to represent _____ this way because _____.”, “At first...but now...”, “Based on _____, I can infer that _____.”

Instructional Strategies

CONTENT AREAS

Language Arts & Reading

- Providing students with an outline or timeline of the stories they read will help them follow the text and focus on underlying concepts.
- Be careful not to relegate ELs to activities that only focus on concrete concepts. Try to provide activities allowing students to express their understanding without using complicated language.

Math

- Some helpful strategies include: notes frames (or fill in the blank notes), bisected problems (algebraic work on half the sheet and verbal explanation corresponding on the other half) and detailed study guides (including page numbers).
- Use manipulatives! Computers, algebra tiles, coins (for counters), overhead calculators and dice all work well to engage students and aid comprehension.

Science

- Encourage students to take ownership of their learning material by providing them with the tools to promote their higher order thinking.
- Utilize tools and games such as Jeopardy, PowerPoint, concentration, and debates.
- When explaining an experiment, always provide written instructions. It is helpful to guide students through the experiment one step at a time or chunk the steps into groups and present one chunk at a time.
- Before you set students loose to complete an experiment, ask a group to summarize each step of the experiment.

Social Studies

- Consistently use verbal scaffolding, such as paraphrasing a student response with correct grammar and information. Graphic organizers are a vital procedural scaffold in Social Studies. Examine those that you are already using to determine if they can be clarified or simplified for your ELs. You may want to add key words or concepts to a note-taking organizer, give students a cloze passage with a word bank, or utilize guided notes.
- Check for succinct chapter summaries or resources designed for second language learners in your textbook's ancillary materials. Some publishers make these materials available on their websites.
- Frequent short sessions of practice are more valuable than long sessions that occur sporadically.

Communication in the Classroom: General Guidelines

- Create a classroom environment that encourages interaction and expression of ideas without prejudice or judgment about content or language. Remind students that all class members come from different cultures, backgrounds and language that may impact their willingness or ability to speak out.
- Provide frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion - teacher-student and student-student. Some suggestions are to pose an opening question to begin a class discussion, to confer individually with students, and to circulate during group work to provide focus and clarity.
- Cooperative group work is a valuable tool. Utilize a variety of grouping techniques – both homogeneous (same-language students can help each other interpret material) and heterogeneous (group ELs with native English speakers to enhance vocabulary acquisition).
- In order to increase interaction and encourage participation of all, set the expectation among students that you do not automatically call on the first student to raise his or her hand. Always pose a question and allow think time before calling on a student to respond. ELs need extended wait time in order to translate questions to their first language, formulate a responses, and translate back to English.
- Encourage students to bring a bilingual dictionary to class daily. Allow them to use first language resources whenever possible.
- Clearly explain academic tasks.
- All instructions and tasks need to be expressed explicitly. Posting tasks on the board will help students focus.
- Speak slowly and clearly...not loudly. Speaking loudly does not increase comprehension.
- Use shorter sentences with beginning ELs.
- Use subject-verb order for beginners/newcomers.
- Use active voice not passive voice for beginners/newcomers.
- Avoid the generic use of “you” when meaning “I” or “the children” in general.
- Paraphrase and repeat information. Find more than one way to say things.
- Use speech that is appropriate for students.
- Simplify language but not the concept.
- Print key information on the board. Remember many ELs cannot read cursive handwriting.
- Check for comprehension—do not ask “Do you understand?”
- Ask students to reword or explain. Clearly explain your academic task; consider having a student restate instructions to be sure they understand. It is helpful for all students to have step-by-step instructions on the board for clarity.

Communication in the Classroom

CONTENT AREAS

Language Arts & Reading

- Pairing native speakers with ELs gives the EL someone to help explain abstract concepts and vocabulary. It also allows the native speakers to solidify their own understanding.
- Consider asking the class to jot down ideas before asking them to share with the class. This added time gives ELs an opportunity to come up with the necessary language to express their ideas.

Math

- Use cooperative groups, making sure that each person shows his/her portion of the work. Round Robin problems show this well. One student completes step one and passes the paper along, then the next student completes the next step and so on.
- Use wait time. Praise students for their excitement about math but encourage them to give others a chance to think about the problem.

Science

- When creating a hypothesis for a lab, use a think-pair-share strategy. First have students think about what they predict the outcome will be. You may have them jot down a few notes. Then have them pair up and share their hypothesis with a buddy or with their group members. Last, have groups report back the hypothesis they created.

Social Studies

- Be aware of your students' lack of background in U.S. culture and history, and look for cultural bias in your teaching materials. For example, your students may not have experience with democracy. You can set up a classroom activity in which they vote on an issue of direct importance to them in order for them to internalize the concept.
- Give your EL some advance information about the next day's discussion, and pre-arrange to ask him or her specific question. Your student will have extra time to view the information, understand it, and formulate a response.

Evaluation of Concepts & Vocabulary: General Guidelines

- To bring things together at the end of a lesson, review the day's objectives and vocabulary. Repeating and reinforcing language patterns helps students become familiar with English structures. Use of language through multiple modalities encourages students to remember and use new academic and content vocabulary. Examples – discuss, share ideas, ticket out the door, create and share sentences using vocabulary words, using discussion prompts such as: I wonder…, I discovered…, I still want to know…, I learned…, I still don't understand….
- Provide regular feedback to students on their output. Specific feedback (written or oral) is important to the progress of students, more so than a letter grade. Strive to provide constructive comments on written and oral student responses. Replace comments such as "good job" with more specific feedback such as "I really like the way you…"
- In addition to major formal assessments, you can use short quizzes, checklists, formative assessments, ticket out the door, etc. to assess student comprehension and learning. Traditional assessment tools often test a student's knowledge of the English language as much as they test the academic content. Providing support such as word banks, modified rubrics, reducing the answer options on a multiple choice test, or reading the test aloud, levels the playing field for a capable student who is not a native language speaker.

Evaluation of Concepts & Vocabulary

CONTENT AREAS

Language Arts & Reading

- ELs are not always able to express their thoughts in written English. Consider giving them opportunities to express their thoughts either orally or using alternative means of expression, i.e. concept drawings.
- When assigning in-class writing or essays on assessments, consider giving ELs the prompts ahead of time. This preparation time will give them an opportunity to solidify their thoughts.

Math

- Use creative yet specific adjectives to describe student work. “Miguel, you plotted the intercept correctly but we should work on the slope.” “Fatimah, you found the inverse perfectly.”
- When completing assessments, students may get troubled by non-academic vocabulary. Try to use word problems that are similar to those completed in class and change the values. This will help students move beyond the language into the mathematics where they may feel more comfortable.

Science

- When grading a science lab, take a moment to comment on the student’s hypothesis, data collection, and/or conclusion rather than just putting a score on the top.
- When completing a hands-on activity on classification, provide students with specific feedback such as, “I like how you decided to group your shells by color and size,” instead of just saying, “Great job!”

Social Studies

- Utilize games and shortcuts for review and assessment each class period. A soft squishy ball can be tossed from student to student to review key lesson concepts or vocabulary. A thumbs up/thumbs down sign can be used to signal responses to questions with yes/no or agree/disagree answers. Word sorts are a good way to review vocabulary and assess the student’s mastery of the terms. (Example: Sort the words according to these labels: types of government, principles of government, framers of the Constitution).

What is Difficult for ELs?

CONTENT AREAS

Math

- Technical terminology
- The complex nature of problem solving
- Understanding multi-step instructions
- Many synonyms and abbreviations for math terms
- Unfamiliarity with U.S. currency
- Difficulty in understanding relationships such as; is greater than, half as much as, smaller than, etc.
- Difficulty reading textbooks

Science

- Locating information in textbooks and other resource books
- How to interpret charts, tables, figures
- Technical academic vocabulary
- Expository passages
- Language structures of expository passages such as; passive voice, long noun phrases serving as objects or subjects
- Lack of background knowledge of concepts
- Scientific beliefs taught in US schools may be in conflict with the scientific beliefs of other cultures

Social Studies

- The quantity of information is extensive regarding places, events, and ways of living
- Unfamiliar concepts
- Tasks that require students to analyze, inform, contrast, compare, make adjustments, explain and describe
- Expository passages and reading demands
- Unfamiliarity with cause and effect, drawing conclusions, making inferences, etc.
- The need for specific reading skills such as understanding titles, headings, subheadings, main ideas, analyzing graphics and locating information
- Background knowledge of topics

Home-School Partnerships

- Establishing a personal relationship with the parents of ELs may be the single most important factor in fostering student success.
- At the beginning and throughout the year, communicate school rules and expectations to the parents. Use an interpreter if the parent does not speak English. With advance notification Fulton County will provide interpreters. Do not rely on the student to translate.
- Parent conferences should be in person since telephone communication is difficult.
- Invite the parent to observe in the classroom even if he/she is not proficient in English.
- Include parents in classroom activities and field trips.
- Work with PTA to make parents feel comfortable at meetings, festivals, volunteer opportunities.
- Schools should develop workshops that educate parents about the curriculum standards.
- Parents in many cultures only go to school if there is a problem so they need to be encouraged to come to school for school activities, parent conferences, etc.
- Schools should develop workshops that educate parents about the American education system. (attendance, discipline, homework, after-school activities).
- Invite parents of ELs into your classroom as cultural resources even if they are not proficient in English.
- Speaking in an unfamiliar language disrupts the communication process between parent and child.
- Children lose their identities if deprived of the native language. (value student experiences they bring to the classroom).
- Obtain a list of adult ESL classes to share with your parents. Many free classes are found in local communities.

Additional Resources

Activities for ESL Students
http://a4esl.org

WIDA (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment)
www.wida.us

ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development)
www.ascd.org

CAL (Center for Applied Linguistics)
www.cal.org

CREDE (Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence)
www.cal.org/crede

Dave's ESL Café
www.daveseslcafe.com

ESL Resource Center
www.eslsite.com

Everything ESL
www.everythingesl.net

GATESOL (Georgia Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages)
www.gatesol.org

TESOL (Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages)
www.tesol.org

Booklet compiled by Torrie Voss, Title III Staff Development Planner

Fulton County Schools
Where Students Come First

Robert M. Avossa, Ed.D., *Superintendent*

Equal Opportunity Agency Compliance Coordinator 404-763-4585
TTY 1-800-255-0135

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