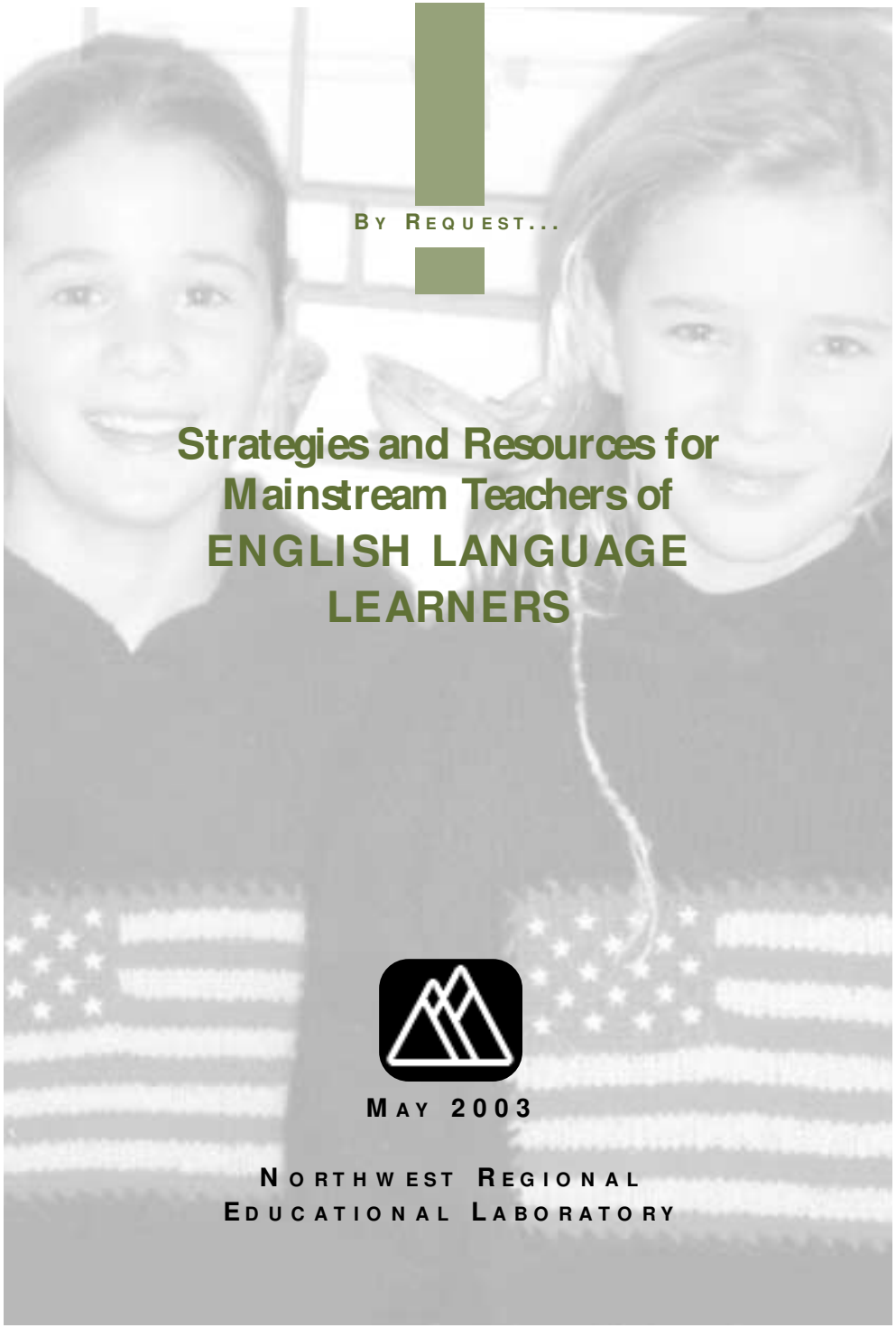


BY REQUEST...

Strategies and Resources for Mainstream Teachers of ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

MAY 2003

NORTHWEST REGIONAL
EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

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- Full-Day Kindergarten: Exploring an Option for Extended Learning

BY REQUEST...

Strategies and Resources for Mainstream Teachers of ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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MAY 2003

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FOREWORD

This booklet is one in a series of "hot topics" reports produced by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. These reports briefly address current educational concerns and issues as indicated by requests for information that come to the Laboratory from the Northwest region and beyond. Each booklet contains a discussion of research and literature pertinent to the issue, a sampling of how Northwest schools and programs are addressing the issue, selected resources, and contact information.

One objective of the series is to foster a sense of community and connection among educators. Another is to increase awareness of current education-related themes and concerns. Each booklet gives practitioners a glimpse of how fellow educators from around the Northwest are addressing issues, overcoming obstacles, and attaining success. The goal of the series is to give educators current, reliable, and useful information on topics that are important to them.

This By Request has been compiled from existing research in the field of second language acquisition and education of English language learners, including works by acknowledged experts in ELL. Several researchers have noted (e.g., August & Hakuta, 1997; Costantino, 1999; Thomas & Collier, 2002), that the reader should keep in mind the limitations of many research studies. Without randomized trial and control-group studies focused on the effects of an individual strategy, it is difficult to speak unequivocally of a strategy as scientifically based. See the Appendix of this publication for forthcoming research that may address ELL issues and programs using scientific or quasi-experimental research methods.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

Numerous acronyms exist to describe those students who are learning English as an additional language (EAL). For example, "learners of English as a second language" (ESL) is often found in the literature to date. Both EAL and ESL refer to students as people first, much as we now term a person with a disability as "a person who is hearing impaired" rather than "the deaf person." Recent federal legislation continues to use the term limited English proficient (LEP). In our survey of recent literature we found English language learners (ELL) to be the most prevalent and widely accepted term. We use this term throughout this publication, except when referring to specific program models that use other terminology.

INTRODUCTION

Mainstream teachers throughout the region face new challenges as rapidly changing demographics have collided with new federal and state policies, politically charged debates on bilingual education, and limited school resources, to create classrooms that are more diverse than ever.

Approximately 4.6 million students identified as English language learners attended school in the U.S. pre-kindergarten through grade 12 education system in 2000–2001, representing 9.3 percent of the total public school enrollment (Kindler, 2002). Since the 1989–1990 school year, the ELL population has increased approximately 101 percent, in a trend that researchers predict will continue for at least the next two decades (Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Regional trends in the Northwest closely mirror these national statistics. In Idaho the ELL population increased by 18.2 percent between the 1999–2000 and 2000–2001 school years, while nearly every state in our region had an increase of at least 4 percent during that same period.

In this issue of By Request, we attempt to avoid current debates about program models and legislative policies by focusing instead on practical, research-based principles and instructional strategies that mainstream teachers can use to meet the needs of these diverse learners.

We have provided a brief overview of the major legislative changes in the No Child Left Behind Act, an outline of instructional methods and program models, and a description of important theories of second language acquisition

that have direct implications for mainstream classroom instruction.

We have also provided a list of resources and references at the back of the book that will guide you to organizations, Web sites, research studies, and instructional materials that can further your understanding of this complex and important topic.

In the Northwest Sampler section, we profile four schools in the region that are answering the challenge of serving culturally and linguistically diverse students in the mainstream classroom.

IN CONTEXT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

The federal legislation for Title III (Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students) of the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2001) is both a continuation and an alteration of previous federal policies designed to meet the needs of diverse learners in the U.S. public school system. There are several key differences between the new legislation and the previous Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, some of which have significant implications for the mainstream classroom teacher. These changes include:

- Title VII under IASA is now Title III in the No Child Left Behind Act.
- The bilingual education program and the immigrant education program were consolidated into a single, formula-driven, state grant program. All funds are awarded at the state level.
- All ELL students must be tested at least once a year using an English proficiency test.
- ELL students who have been in U.S. schools for three consecutive years must be tested in reading/language arts using a test written in English, although students who meet certain criteria may receive a waiver for up to two more years.

- ELL students must meet specific annual targets of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and State Education Agencies (SEAs) will be held accountable for ensuring that ELL students meet these targets.

- SEAs must submit an education plan to the U.S. Department of Education containing a list of requirements for serving ELL students. The plan must be approved to receive Title III funding.

- LEAs must then submit a similar education plan to the SEAs. This plan must be approved to receive funding.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND FOR THE MAINSTREAM TEACHER

The passage of NCLB brings ELL students into the same context of standards and accountability as their native English–speaking peers. According to Kathleen Leos of the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), these new guidelines ensure that all students, not just native English–speaking students, are "part of each state's accountability system and their academic progress is followed over time. States must now develop standards for English Language Proficiency and link these standards to the Academic Content Standards set by the state" (personal communication, January 27, 2003).

These changes have major implications for mainstream teachers. As Leos acknowledges, "The role of every teacher in every classroom in the nation has never been more important than today. The teacher, who is the key component within the standards reform model, must link core academic instruction to the content standards set by the state. In classrooms with language diverse populations, teachers must also ensure that the curriculum and teaching strategies reflect an alignment with English Language Proficiency Standards."

It is exactly this context that makes it imperative for schools to ensure that mainstream teachers gain a better understanding of the programs, theories, principles, and strategies that have proven successful in educating ELL students.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND PROGRAM MODELS FOR SERVING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: AN OVERVIEW FOR THE MAINSTREAM TEACHER

There are four major instructional methods for serving English language learners, characterized by the degree to which they incorporate a student's native language and the approach they take to delivering academic content. In addition, several specific program models have been developed using these instructional methods as a guide (Linquanti, 1999).

We have not attempted to evaluate or compare these methods and models, or to draw conclusions as to the best design for a particular district, school, or classroom. In their report, *Program Alternatives for Linguistically Diverse Students* (Genesee, 1999), researchers from the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, & Excellence (CREDE) observed: "No single approach or program model works best in every situation. Many different approaches can be successful when implemented well. Local conditions, choices, and innovation are critical ingredients of success" (p. 4).

1. Instructional methods using the native language:

These programs use the ELL's primary language to provide lessons in core academic subjects and/or to teach reading and language arts. Classes are usually taught by a teacher who is fluent in the ELL's primary language.

Transitional Bilingual Programs (also known as Early-Exit Bilingual): The primary goal of this model is to mainstream students to all-English classrooms. Native language is used to help students keep up with academic content, but the focus is on phasing students into English-only instruction as quickly as possible. After students have been mainstreamed, no emphasis is put on the retention and development of their native language skills.

Developmental Bilingual Programs (also known as Late-Exit Bilingual): Developmental programs differ from transitional programs "primarily in the amount and duration that English is used for instruction" (Ramirez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991, paragraph 3, as cited in Rennie, 1993) and in the length of time students are in the program. Developmental programs typically last throughout elementary school and students may continue to receive up to 40 percent of their instruction in their native language even after they have been reclassified as English-proficient.

Two-Way Immersion Programs (Also known as Dual-Language or Bilingual Immersion): The goal of these programs is to develop proficiency in the student's first or native language (L1) and in a second language (L2). Usually about half the students are native English speakers and half are English language learners from the same language group and similar cultural backgrounds. Instruction can be 90/10: that is, starting at 90 percent in non-English and 10 percent in English, gradually increasing to 50/50. Or, instruction can be 50/50 from the beginning. These programs require significant school, family, and community commitment, significant peer interaction, and bilingual teachers who are trained to teach in both languages.

Newcomer Programs: These programs are designed to meet the needs of incoming ELL students with low-level English literacy skills and often limited formal schooling in their native countries. Students enrolled in newcomer programs are usually recent arrivals to the United States. The goal of these programs is to help students acquire beginning English skills and core academic skills, and to acculturate to the U.S. school system. Some programs may have the additional role of promoting students' native language skills. These programs can vary widely in their organization.

2. Instructional methods using the native language as support:

These instructional methods can exist within nearly every program model. Some programs use bilingual paraprofessionals within the mainstream classroom to provide native language support. Other programs may use teachers trained in a variety of sheltering strategies. In its most general sense, these are methods in which teachers or paraprofessionals use the ELL's primary language to translate unfamiliar vocabulary or clarify lessons taught in English.

3. Instructional methods using English as a Second Language (ESL):

These include various approaches to teaching English to non-native speakers. The three common subdivisions of ESL emphasis are:

Grammar-Based ESL: Instruction in English that teaches about the language, including its structure, functions, and vocabulary.

Communication-Based ESL: Instruction in English that emphasizes using the language skillfully in meaningful contexts.

Content-Based ESL: Instruction in English that attempts to develop language skills while preparing students to study grade-level material in English. Although using content as a means, these programs are still focused primarily on the learning of English, which distinguishes them from sheltered instructional methods.

(adapted from Linquanti, 1999)

4. Content-Based Instruction/Sheltered Instruction Method:

This method of instruction is also known as Structured Immersion. In California it is known as Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE). This involves the teaching of grade-level subject matter in English in ways that are comprehensible and engage students academically, while also promoting English language development. Sheltered instructional strategies are part of almost every other method and model, but can also be organized into a unified program model in their own right. This method of instruction requires significant teaching skills in both English language development and subject-specific instruction; clearly defined language and content objectives; modified curriculum, supplementary materials, and alternative assessments (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000).

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP):
A program model for teaching grade-level content in a way that is understandable for ELL students while at the same time pro-

moting their English language development. SIOP was developed by researchers at the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence in response to the variability, both in design and delivery, of sheltered instruction methods. It uses a variety of sheltering strategies in a unified, structured way. Research using a control group design has compared ELL students in classes whose teachers had been trained in implementing the SIOP to a control group class (taught by teachers not trained in the SIOP model). ELL students in classes whose teachers had been trained in implementing the SIOP outperformed control group students. (*See Echevarria & Short, 2003, for more information on the research.*)

Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA): A program model based on cognitive learning theory, CALLA integrates content-area instruction with language development activities and explicit instruction in learning strategies (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994). CALLA emphasizes active learning, in which students are given the skills and opportunities to take an active role in their own learning. Developed by Anna Uhl Chamot of George Washington University and J. Michael O'Malley, CALLA is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States and in several other countries. Chamot and O'Malley (1996) report that some studies in certain districts show ELL students in "high implementation CALLA classrooms performed significantly better" (p. 271) than ELL students in low-implementation classrooms on the use of procedures such as problem solving. They do, however, acknowledge that more research and formal program evaluations are needed. (*For more information see www.gwu.edu/~calla/)*

OVERVIEW OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION THEORY

An understanding of second language acquisition can improve the ability of mainstream teachers to serve the culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms (Fillmore & Snow, 2002; Hamayan, 1990). While significant professional development is necessary to gain a full understanding of second language acquisition theory, some key concepts can be quickly understood and applied in the classroom.

Current theories of second language acquisition are based on years of research in a wide variety of fields, including linguistics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and neurolinguistics (Freeman & Freeman, 2001).

One concept endorsed by most current theorists is that of a continuum of learning—that is, predictable and sequential stages of language development, in which the learner progresses from no knowledge of the new language to a level of competency closely resembling that of a native speaker. These theories have resulted in the identification of several distinct stages of second language development. These stages are most often identified as:

Stage I: The Silent/Receptive or Preproduction Stage: This stage can last from 10 hours to six months. Students often have up to 500 "receptive" words (words they can understand, but may not be comfortable using) and can understand new words that are made comprehensible to them. This stage often involves a "silent period" during

which students may not speak, but can respond using a variety of strategies including pointing to an object, picture, or person; performing an act, such as standing up or closing a door; gesturing or nodding; or responding with a simple "yes" or "no." Teachers should not force students to speak until they are ready to do so.

Stage II: The Early Production Stage: The early production stage can last an additional six months after the initial stage. Students have usually developed close to 1,000 receptive/active words (that is, words they are able to understand and use). During this stage students can usually speak in one- or two-word phrases, and can demonstrate comprehension of new material by giving short answers to simple yes/no, either/or, or who/what/where questions.

Stage III: The Speech Emergence Stage: This stage can last up to another year. Students have usually developed approximately 3,000 words and can use short phrases and simple sentences to communicate. Students begin to use dialogue and can ask simple questions, such as "Can I go to the restroom?" and are also able to answer simple questions. Students may produce longer sentences, but often with grammatical errors that can interfere with their communication.

Stage IV: The Intermediate Language Proficiency Stage: Intermediate proficiency may take up to another year after speech emergence. Students have typically developed close to 6,000 words and are beginning to make complex statements, state opinions, ask for clarification, share their thoughts, and speak at greater length.

Stage V: The Advanced Language Proficiency Stage: Gaining advanced proficiency in a second language can typically take from five to seven years. By this stage students have developed some specialized content-area vocabulary and can participate fully in grade-level classroom activities if given occasional extra support. Students can speak English using grammar and vocabulary comparable to that of same-age native speakers.

Understanding that students are going through a predictable and sequential series of developmental stages helps teachers predict and accept a student's current stage, while modifying their instruction to encourage progression to the next stage. (*For examples of instructional strategies explicitly tied to language acquisition stages, see page 30.*)

A concept endorsed by most language acquisition theorists is Stephen Krashen's "comprehensible input" hypothesis, which suggests that learners acquire language by "intaking" and understanding language that is a "little beyond" their current level of competence" (Krashen, 1981, p. 103). For instance, a preschool child already understands the phrase "Get your crayon." By slightly altering the phrase to "Get my crayons," the teacher can provide an appropriate linguistic and cognitive challenge—offering new information that builds off prior knowledge and is therefore comprehensible (Sowers, 2000). Providing consistent, comprehensible input requires a constant familiarity with the ability level of students in order to provide a level of "input" that is just beyond their current level.

Research by Merrill Swain and others has extended this concept to include "comprehensible output." According to sev-

eral studies, providing learners with opportunities to use the language and skills they have acquired, at a level in which they are competent, is almost as important as giving students the appropriate level of input (Pica et al., 1989, 1996; Swain & Lapkin, 1995).

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis is another concept that has found wide acceptance with both researchers and ELL instructors (Krashen, 1981; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). This theory suggests that an individual's emotions can directly interfere or assist in the learning of a new language. According to Krashen, learning a new language is different from learning other subjects because it requires public practice. Speaking out in a new language can result in anxiety, embarrassment, or anger. These negative emotions can create a kind of filter that blocks the learner's ability to process new or difficult words. Classrooms that are fully engaging, nonthreatening, and affirming of a child's native language and cultural heritage can have a direct effect on the student's ability to learn by increasing motivation and encouraging risk taking.

Another theory that has directly influenced classroom instruction is Jim Cummins's distinction between two types of language: basic interpersonal communications skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Research has shown that the average student can develop conversational fluency within two to five years, but that developing fluency in more technical, academic language can take from four to seven years depending on many variables such as language proficiency level, age and time of arrival at school, level of academic proficiency in the native language, and the degree of support for achieving academic proficiency (Cummins, 1981, 1996; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 1997).

Later, Cummins expanded this concept to include two distinct types of communication, depending on the context in which it occurs:

- **Context-embedded communication** provides several communicative supports to the listener or reader, such as objects, gestures, or vocal inflections, which help make the information comprehensible. Examples are a one-to-one social conversation with physical gestures, or storytelling activities that include visual props.

- **Context-reduced communication** provides fewer communicative clues to support understanding. Examples are a phone conversation, which provides no visual clues, or a note left on a refrigerator.

Similarly, Cummins distinguished between the different cognitive demands that communication can place on the learner:

- **Cognitively undemanding communication** requires a minimal amount of abstract or critical thinking. Examples are a conversation on the playground, or simple yes/no questions in the classroom.

- **Cognitively demanding communication**, which requires a learner to analyze and synthesize information quickly and contains abstract or specialized concepts. Examples are academic content lessons, such as a social studies lecture, a math lesson, or a multiple-choice test.

Understanding these theories can help teachers develop appropriate instructional strategies and assessments that guide students along a continuum of language development,

from cognitively undemanding, context-embedded curricula, to cognitively demanding, context-reduced curricula (Robson, 1995).

A basic knowledge of language acquisition theories is extremely useful for mainstream classroom teachers and directly influences their ability to provide appropriate content-area instruction to ELL students. It is especially important in those schools or districts where limited resources result in little or no instructional support in a student's native language. In these "sink-or-swim" situations, a committed mainstream teacher with a clear understanding of language acquisition can make all the difference.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING ELL STUDENTS

Language acquisition theories have highlighted four key principles that can be directly applied to the mainstream classroom. These principles are important for all students, but are of particular importance to English language learners (Jameson, 1998).

Increase Comprehensibility: Drawing from Krashen's theory of comprehensible input, this principle involves the ways in which teachers can make content more understandable to their students. With early to intermediate language learners, these include providing many nonverbal clues such as pictures, objects, demonstrations, gestures, and intonation cues. As competency develops, other strategies include building from language that is already understood, using graphic organizers, hands-on learning opportunities, and cooperative or peer tutoring techniques.

Increase Interaction: Drawing from Swain's emphasis on comprehensible output, a number of strategies have been developed that increase students' opportunities to use their language skills in direct communication and for the purpose of "negotiating meaning" in real-life situations. These include cooperative learning, study buddies, project-based learning, and one-to-one teacher/student interactions.

Increase Thinking/Study Skills: Drawing from Cummins's theories of academic language and cognitively demanding communication, these strategies suggest ways to develop more advanced, higher order thinking skills as a student's competency increases. Chamot and O'Malley (1994) developed the

Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) mentioned above to bridge the gap between Cummins's theories and actual classroom strategies. These include asking students higher order thinking questions (e.g., what would happen if...?), modeling "thinking language" by thinking aloud, explicitly teaching and reinforcing study skills and test-taking skills, and holding high expectations for all students.

Use a student's native language to increase comprehensibility: Drawing from several different theories, including Krashen and Cummins, this principle also draws on a wealth of current research that has shown the advantage of incorporating a student's native language into their instruction (Berman, Minicucci, McLaughlin, Nelson, & Woodworth, 1995; Lucas and Katz, 1994; Pease-Alvarez, Garcia & Espinosa, 1991; Thomas & Collier 1997). Thomas and Collier, for example, in their study of school effectiveness for language minority students, note that first-language support "explains the most variance in student achievement and is the most powerful influence on [ELL] students' long term academic success" (p. 64). As mentioned in our section on instructional methods and models, using a student's native language as a support can be seen as both a general method or as any of a number of specific strategies. Many of the strategies we list below include, implicitly or explicitly, the use of a student's native language to increase his or her understanding.

A Sampling of Teaching Strategies

Below we list some strategies and approaches that numerous evidence-based sources suggest may be beneficial for students learning English as a second language. We advise the reader, however, that researchers have not found conclusive evidence that individual strategies will lead to higher student achievement or increased English proficiency. Although evidence-based research exists, methods of collecting the evidence vary. Much of the current research is based on surveys, case studies, correlational studies, and a few control-group studies. In educational settings, it has been difficult, if not impossible, to conduct random assignment studies.

With little conclusive evidence to go by, the research does suggest that some approaches may be more fruitful than others (August & Hakuta, 1997; Berman, et al.; Costantino, 1999; Derrick-Mescua, Grognet, Rodriquez, Tran, & Wrigley, 1998; Thomas & Collier, 2002, 1997; Wrigley, 2001). These strategies are rarely used in isolation, and some are more appropriate for certain age levels or language proficiency stages. This list is by no means comprehensive or exclusive. Our purpose in sharing this list is to give mainstream teachers a starting point for incorporating stragegies to use with their English language learners.

For more information on implementing these strategies in the classroom and the research-base of the effectiveness of the strategies, consult the resources listed in the Resources and References sections.

- **Total Physical Response (TPR).** Developed by James J. Asher in the 1960s, TPR is a language-learning tool based on the relationship between language and its physical representation or execution. TPR emphasizes the use of physical activity to increase meaningful learning opportunities and language retention. A TPR lesson involves a detailed series of consecutive actions accompanied by a series of commands or instructions given by the teacher. Students respond by listening and performing the appropriate actions (Asher, 2000a). Asher emphasizes that TPR can be the major focus of a lan-

guage program or an extremely effective supplement, but that in order for it to be truly effective, training should include "a special course along with hands-on experience monitored by a senior instructor who is also skilled in the intricate applications of TPR" (par. 11). (*For a detailed review of the research validating this approach, as well as sample lesson plans and examples of how to use it in the classroom, see Asher, 2000b.)*

- **Cooperative Learning.** Robert E. Slavin (1995) has shown cooperative learning can be effective for students at all academic levels and learning styles. Other research indicates that cooperative learning can be an "effective vehicle for learning content and learning in a second language" (Calderon, 2001; Cohen, Lotan, Scarloss, & Arellano, 1999; McGroarty, 1989, as cited in Calderon, 2001, p. 280). Cooperative learning involves student participation in small-group learning activities that promote positive interactions. As Cochran (1989) notes, "Cooperative learning makes sense for teachers who have LEP pupils in their classes because all students are given frequent opportunities to speak and because a spirit of cooperation and friendship is fostered among classmates." Through a shared learning activity, students benefit from observing learning strategies used by their peers. ELL students can benefit from face-to-face verbal interactions, which promote communication that is natural and meaningful (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994; Kagan, 1994). Calderon suggests that "cooperative learning is effective when students have an interesting well-structured task such as a set of discussion questions around a story they just read, producing a cognitive map of the story, or inventing a puppet show to highlight character traits" (2001, p. 280).

- **Language Experience Approach** (also known as Dictated Stories). This approach uses students' words to create a text that becomes material for a reading lesson (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002). Students describe orally a personal experience to a teacher or peer. The teacher or another student writes down the story, using the student's words verbatim. The teacher/student then reads the story back as it was written, while the student follows along. Then the student reads the story aloud or silently. Other follow-up activities can be done with this approach. In this way, students learn how their language is encoded as they watch it written down, building sight word knowledge and fluency as they use their own familiar language. This approach allows students to bring their personal experiences into the classroom—especially important for culturally diverse students (Peterson, Caverly, Nicholson, O'Neal, & Cusenbary, 2000).

- **Dialogue Journals** (Also known as Interactive Journals). This approach is a way for teachers to engage students in writing. Students write in a journal, and the teacher writes back regularly, responding to questions, asking questions, making comments, or introducing new topics. Here the teacher does not evaluate what is written, but models correct language and provides a nonthreatening opportunity for ELL students to communicate in writing with someone proficient in English, and to receive some feedback (Peyton, 2000; Reid, 1997). Reid's literature review and her action research project show dialogue journaling with a teacher to be beneficial in improving spelling and fluency.

- **Academic Language Scaffolding.** The term "scaffolding" is used to describe the step-by-step process of building students' ability to complete tasks on their own (Gibbons, 2002). Academic language scaffolding draws on Cummins's research into Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency that

we described above (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Cummins, 1981). Scaffolding actually consists of several linked strategies, including modeling academic language; contextualizing academic language using visuals, gestures, and demonstrations; and using hands-on learning activities that involve academic language. These strategies are a central part of sheltered instruction methods, but can be used in any classroom context. (*See Gibbons [2002] for specific scaffolding strategies.*)

- **Native Language Support.** Whenever possible, ELL students should be provided with academic support in their native language (Thomas & Collier, 2002). Even in English-only classrooms, and even when an instructor is not fluent in a student's language, this can still be done in a number of ways. According to Lucas and Katz (1994), a student's native language serves several important functions: it gives students "access to academic content, to classroom activities, and to their own knowledge and experience" (paragraph 5). In addition, they found that it also "gave teachers a way to show their respect and value for students' languages and cultures; acted as a medium for social interaction and establishment of rapport; fostered family involvement, and fostered students' development of, knowledge of, and pride in their native languages and cultures" (paragraph 24).

  Teachers can use texts that are bilingual or that involve a student's native culture, can decorate the classroom with posters and objects that reflect the students' diversity of language and culture, can organize entire lessons around cultural content, and can encourage students to use words from their native language when they cannot find the appropriate word in English (Freeman & Freeman, 2001).

- **Accessing Prior Knowledge.** As mentioned in the previous strategy, using a student's native language can be an important way to access his or her previous knowledge (Marzano, Gaddy, & Dean, 2000). All students, regardless of their proficiency in English, come to school with a valuable background of experience and knowledge on which teachers can capitalize. One example when teaching a new concept, is to ask students what they already know about a subject. Creating a visual, such as "semantic webs," with the topic in the center and students' knowledge surrounding it, is a good way to engage students in the topic and to find out what they already know. Another simple technique is to ask them what they want to learn about a topic. As Savaria-Shore and Garcia (1995) note: "Students are more likely to be interested in researching a topic when they begin with their own real questions" (p. 55). This is another example of a strategy that works equally well with native English speakers and English language learners.

- **Culture Studies.** The importance of including a student's home culture in the classroom is a well-documented, fundamental concept in the instruction of English language learners (Doherty, Hilberg, Pinal, & Tharp, 2003). Culture study, in this context, is a project in which students do research and share information about their own cultural history. This often involves interviewing parents and/or grandparents as well as others who share the student's cultural background. Culture studies can be appropriate at any grade level and can incorporate many skills, including reading, writing, speaking, giving presentations, and creating visuals. Culture studies can be combined with other strategies such as project-based learning, cooperative learning, and accessing a student's prior knowledge. They

can also be effective as part of an alternative assessment process (Freeman & Freeman, 1994).

- **Other strategies for including culture.** As many researchers and practitioners have noted, incorporating culture into the classroom should be about more than holidays and food. There are many strategies that teachers can use to encourage an awareness of student diversity. Story-telling is one important strategy that can be used across grade levels. Asking students to tell a story that is either popular in their home country or draws on their own experience, and allowing them to tell it both in their native language and in English, can help build their confidence and can send a powerful message of cross-cultural appreciation. A similar strategy, and one that is not limited to elementary school, is Show & Tell. Inviting students to bring an object that represents their home culture and to tell the class about its uses, where it is from, how it is made, and so on., sends a similar message of inclusiveness and awareness. A third strategy for working culture into the classroom is known as Misunderstandings. Teachers can ask students to share an incident they have experienced that involved a cultural misunderstanding. Questions can be asked about the nature of the misunderstanding—whether it involved words, body language, social customs, stereotypes, or any number of other factors. Students can examine the misunderstandings and gain insight into the complexities and importance of cross-cultural awareness. The humor that is often involved can also help engage students in further culture-based inquiry (Derrick-Mescua, et al., 1998).

- **Realia Strategies.** "Realia" is a term for any real, concrete object used in the classroom to create connections with vocabulary words, stimulate conversation, and build background knowledge. Realia gives students the opportunity to use all of their senses to learn about a given subject, and is appropriate for any grade or skill level. Teachers can defray costs by collaborating on a schoolwide collection of realia that all can use. When the real object is not available or is impractical, teachers can use models or semi-concrete objects, such as photographs, illustrations, and artwork. The use of realia can also be an ideal way to incorporate cultural content into a lesson. For example, eating utensils and kitchen appliances (chopsticks, a tortilla press, a tea set, a wok) can build vocabulary and increase comprehension while also providing insight into different cultures. Studying clothing items from different cultures is another good example (Herrell, 2000).

Examples of Instructional Strategies Linked to Appropriate Language Acquisition Stages

The chart on the following page is adapted from the Oregon Department of Education publication *The English Language Learners' Program Guide* (n.d.). Each of the five stages of second language acquisition is linked to appropriate and specific instructional strategies.

Silent/Receptive Stage I	Early Production Stage II	Speech Emergence Stage III	Intermediate/ Advanced Proficiency Stages IV & V
Use of visual aids and gestures	Engage students in charades and linguistic guessing games	Conduct group discussions	Sponsor student panel discussions on the thematic topics*
Slow speech emphasizing key words	Do role-playing activities	Use skits for dramatic interaction	Have students identify a social issue and defend their position*
Do not force oral production	Present open-ended sentences	Have student fill out forms and applications*	Promote critical analysis and evaluation of pertinent issues
Write key words on the board with students copying them as they are presented	Promote open dialogues	Assign writing compositions	Assign writing tasks that involve writing, rewriting, editing,, critiquing written examples*
Use pictures and manipulatives to help illustrate concepts	Conduct student interviews with the guidelines written out	Have students write descriptions of visuals and props	Encourage critical interpretation of stories, legends, and poetry*
Use multimedia language role models	Use charts, tables, graphs, and other conceptual visuals	Use music, TV, and radio, with class activities	Have students design questions, directions, and activities for others to follow
Use interactive dialogue journals	Use newspaper ads and other mainstream materials to encourage language interaction*	Show filmstrips and videos with cooperative groups scripting the visuals	Encourage appropriate story telling
Encourage choral readings	Encourage partner and trio readings	Encourage solo readings with interactive comprehension checks*	
Use Total Physical Response (TPR) techniques			

*It is important to structure activities that are both age- and linguistically appropriate.

Ten Things the Mainstream Teacher Can Do Today To Improve Instruction for ELL Students

These tips were adapted from the *Help! They Don't Speak English Starter Kit for Primary Teachers* (1998) (developed by the Region IV and Region XIV Comprehensive Centers, the Center for Applied Linguistics, and ESCORT, a national resource center dedicated to improving the educational opportunities for migrant children) and from *Integrating Language and Content Instruction: Strategies and Techniques* (1991) by Deborah Short of the Center for Applied Linguistics.

1. Enunciate clearly, but do not raise your voice. Add gestures, point directly to objects, or draw pictures when appropriate.

2. Write clearly, legibly, and in print—many ELL students have difficulty reading cursive.

3. Develop and maintain routines. Use clear and consistent signals for classroom instructions.

4. Repeat information and review frequently. If a student does not understand, try rephrasing or paraphrasing in shorter sentences and simpler syntax. Check often for understanding, but do not ask "Do you understand?" Instead, have students demonstrate their learning in order to show comprehension.

5. Try to avoid idioms and slang words.

6. Present new information in the context of known information.

7. Announce the lesson's objectives and activities, and list instructions step-by-step.
8. Present information in a variety of ways.

9. Provide frequent summations of the salient points of a lesson, and always emphasize key vocabulary words.

10. Recognize student success overtly and frequently. But, also be aware that in some cultures overt, individual praise is considered inappropriate and can therefore be embarrassing or confusing to the student.

CONCLUSION

Many questions regarding best practices for teaching English language learners remain, and additional research will be critical to determine the answers. The good news is that much work has already been done and many success stories already exist. It is possible to deliver meaningful, engaging, grade-level content to all students while supporting the language development needs of ELLs. Mainstream teachers who are committed to meeting this challenge are not alone in their endeavor—there is a wealth of research and practitioner knowledge at their disposal.

We recognize that professional development is a significant issue for mainstream teachers who are attempting to implement new instructional strategies. Schools and districts must provide teachers with resources, training, and support in order to take new strategies beyond the surface level and truly transform their instruction. Ideally, teachers do not work in isolation, but are a seamless part of a school- and districtwide effort to meet the needs of diverse learners. In this publication, we provide background knowledge, researched-based strategies, and real-world classroom experiences that can serve as a starting point for mainstream teachers who are truly motivated to leave no child behind.

NORTHWEST SAMPLER

On the following pages we profile several Northwest schools where teachers are working to improve the achievement of their English language learner students*. We profile schools with higher and lower percentages of ELL students, and schools in both rural and more urban areas, to show how strategies are used in different contexts. Although we do not have data on the success of these efforts, we provide these examples to show how schools are meeting the challenge of No Child Left Behind.

*Descriptions of practices in these samples do not imply endorsement by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.



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Staff Development Model for Mainstream Teachers of English Language Learners in Low Incidence ELL Populations

Fairbanks North Star Borough is located in interior Alaska and is the second largest population center in the state. Almost 10 percent of the borough's population is Alaska Native; 8 percent of students are English language learners.

Two years ago, the district began an evaluation of its services for ELL students. At the time an ESL pull-out model was being used, where children were "pulled" from their classrooms and taught English proficiency in small groups. Mainstream classroom teachers were not adequately trained to meet the needs of their ELL students, and the teachers had little time to learn strategies, as they had no staff preparation time and few professional development opportunities.

The district knew that more support for ELL students was needed. Although bilingual immersion programs had been



successful in other schools with larger groups of students who speak the same heritage language, the district determined that this model would not fit with their smaller percentage of students who speak several different languages. As a result, the district knew that professional development in content and language instruction for mainstream teachers would be vital to ensuring success for their ELL students.

To obtain resources for this professional development, in 2001 the district applied for and received two Title III staff development grants: Training for All Teachers: a five-year grant focusing on K–8 mainstream teachers; and a three-year bilingual development and implementation grant that provides for staff development for K–8 mainstream teachers and paraeducators.

The goals of the Training for All Teachers and Bilingual Development and Implementation Grants were to:

- Provide one-to-one collaboration of mainstream classroom teachers and bilingual specialist teachers to teach ELL students more effectively. This includes co-planning, co-teaching, and co-reflecting.
- Aim to foster academic achievement and an environment of inclusion for ELLs in the classroom.
- Offer graduate-level courses.
- Provide resources and develop materials for classroom teachers' specific needs.
- Train paraeducators to work with ELL students.
- Encourage parent involvement for language minority families.

The collaborative teaching model is implemented through an integrated approach. In the past, the classroom teachers



focused on content objectives with ELL students, while the bilingual specialist focused on language objectives. In the integrated approach, the classroom teacher and the bilingual specialist work together on both objectives.

The instructional model used for professional development is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, or SIOP, a model for teaching grade level content in a way that is understandable for ELL students while at the same time promoting their English language development. Developed by researchers from the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, Excellence, SIOP is based on research into best practices, and takes into account the special language development needs of English language learners, which distinguishes it from high-quality non-sheltered teaching. Research findings indicate that students whose teachers implemented the SIOP model outperformed similar students whose teachers were not trained in the model (Echevarria & Short, 2003).

SIOP was chosen to provide a framework for systematic implementation of practices known to be effective for ELL students rather than just a "mishmash" of strategies. There are eight components of the SIOP model: lesson preparation, building background, comprehensive input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, and review and assessment. (*For more detailed information on this research-based framework, with examples of lesson plans, see www.siopinstitute.net. and www.cal.org/crede/si.htm*)

Fairbanks North Star bilingual partner teachers and classroom teachers have designed their own detailed lesson plans that integrate SIOP features of content and language objec-



tives, adapting content, using techniques to make concepts clear, clearly explaining tasks, and providing meaningful activities to integrate lesson concepts.

For a lesson on the book *The Cay*, a bilingual teacher and classroom teacher worked together to develop two lessons. Each lesson has a content and language objective. For example, Understanding the meaning of a "Literature Circle" and Identifying Question Answer Relationships (Right There, Think and Search, Author and You, and On My Own questions) are content objectives. The language objectives are to write the different types of questions for their discussions, and to write questions for the Literature Circle.

After the first year of implementation, bilingual partner teachers Jelinek and Sinclair praise the SIOP framework as an exemplary alternative to the "pull-out" approach, because children are using language as a vehicle to learn the content. Says Sinclair, "The SIOP model is the most effective framework we have seen so far because the protocol includes what the research says are 'best practices' for all teachers." Although Sinclair acknowledges that more time is needed for mainstream teachers and bilingual paraprofessionals to collaborate during the day, she knows that long-term self-directed teacher development is necessary. "Unlike a weekend workshop approach, the SIOP model allows teachers to use what they learn the next day in their own classrooms."



Location

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Peer Tutoring, Alternative Assessments, and Vocabulary Studies Are Just a Few Strategies Used at an Idaho High School

Burley, Idaho, is a small farming town in the south-central part of the state. In recent years, statewide budget cuts and the closure of a local Simplot plant have brought difficult times to Burley and the surrounding area. Enrollment is down in the entire school district as many families have moved to Boise or out of state looking for work. Jobs have been cut and programs slashed in an attempt to stretch district funds to the limit. At Burley High School, one consequence is that English language learners, ready or not, are finding themselves in the mainstream classroom. We visited with two classroom teachers and the ELL coordinator to see how they were handling these challenges and what strategies they were using to help these students succeed.

Burley has both a long-standing Hispanic population and a small group of more recent migrants, mostly from southern Mexico and El Salvador. Many of the students come from



Spanish-speaking homes, have received limited formal schooling in their native country, and have parents with limited literacy skills even in Spanish. Currently, more than 1,000 students in the district are designated as Limited English Proficient, with nearly two-thirds of these also designated as Migrant. In past years, the district supported a Newcomer Center in which students with little or no English skills were given a year of intensive instruction in both language development and content areas, using their native language for support. This program has also been a victim of recent budget cuts, but there are hopes of reviving it as soon as possible. In the meantime, several teachers have refused to use these hard times as an excuse, and have focused instead on developing effective strategies for delivering content and supporting language development in their classrooms.

Karen Christensen teaches both English and biology at Burley High School. She has taught in the district for many years, through bad and good economic times and in varying political climates. One often-overlooked key for working with ELL students, she says, is simply to have empathy for their situation. "There is a difference between having high expectations for all students and having unreasonable expectations. Everyone expects these kids to be up to speed almost immediately. They don't seem to understand the difficulties that are there when Spanish is still spoken in the home."

Christensen addresses the needs of these students in several ways. "I try to demonstrate rather than simply discuss," she says. "I use a lot of visuals like drawings and charts, and a lot of hands-on projects." In her biology class, for instance, students recently constructed paper birds while learning about evolution and natural selection. "I try to make every lesson hands-on as much as I can, and to build in a language component whether I'm teaching biology or English," she says. "Any project that encourages them to speak English in a meaningful context is a good start."



Christensen also pays particular attention to the development of academic language skills. "We go over any specialized language, in detail, before we get into a lesson," she says. "In English classes I have a vocabulary study every morning. Two students work in a buddy system to make a presentation. They use pictures to demonstrate the meaning of words and they use the overhead projector a lot, so it's very visual-oriented. They can also talk about the equivalent word in their native language if they are comfortable with that."

Another important strategy Christensen uses with her ELL students is alternative assessments. "I try to use assessments that aren't totally writing-dependent," she says. "Student portfolios work well—they allow for more time and more individual attention. I also use open-book tests, where they look for the answers in the book. If you ask a lot of these students to sit down and pass a standardized test, they simply can't. They just haven't had enough time yet."

All seniors at Burley are required to make a Senior Presentation to a panel of community members. ELL students who are uncomfortable presenting solely in English are allowed to present in their native language as well. "That's been very successful," says Christensen. "We have bilingual panel members, both Hispanic and Caucasian. It's good for the kids and it's good for the community. And



it makes sense. The point with this is to assess the student's presentation skills, not their English proficiency."

ELL Coordinator Yolanda Sapien is also a believer in alternative assessments. "Meaningful, authentic assessments show improvement," she says. "They don't water down the curriculum, they show real student improvement, which keeps students interested and motivated, and that keeps them from dropping out. If these students are working hard, showing up every day, doing all their work, and then they're forced to take an assessment that doesn't register any of the improvement they've made, then they're just going to get discouraged."

Another important strategy at Burley is peer tutoring. Math teacher Wes Nyeblade often pairs up students who speak the same (non-English) language and are only slightly apart in their ability levels. "It's really important to match ability levels," he says, "or it just doesn't work. If you have one student that is way ahead of the other, they'll both get frustrated. But when you can make the right match it's really useful—the student who is tutoring learns a lot by having to articulate what they know, and the other student has the benefit of learning from someone who knows their native language."

Nyeblade also stresses the importance of individualized and cooperative instruction. "We use block scheduling here, which gives you more time with each class, so you have more opportunities for one-on-one interaction. And I also try to make things as cooperative as possible—rather than me standing there lecturing. I give them examples and then I immediately have the students try it, while I walk around and help them individually as they need it. No matter what



their background, students learn better by doing, but with ELL kids it's absolutely imperative."

A key ingredient for student success is simply appropriate placement, says Nyeblade. "We evaluate over the first couple of weeks and try to get an accurate picture of a student's skill level in the content area, not just in their language development."

Teachers at Burley also rely heavily on Sarah Pelayo, the full-time bilingual aide at the high school. ELL students receive a 90-minute tutorial every other day (one classroom period in the block schedule) as well as "impromptu pull-outs" as needed. Ms. Pelayo provides mainstream classroom assistance whenever possible and serves as a translator in testing situations. She also continues to monitor all students who have exited from the ELL program.

Yolanda Sapien is an invaluable resource for students and teachers alike. A tireless, enthusiastic presence at the school, Sapien is also a positive example. "I was these kids," she says while looking around her classroom at the five students who have shown up for after-school help. "I was a migrant kid; I was married at 15, and had my first child at 16. I was limited English proficient—you name the label, I was it. And I try to show these kids that it's possible; that they can make it and have a good life. That's why I'm here. That's what keeps me going."

It's obvious from the admiring and affectionate looks on the students' faces that she is making a big difference. They are proud of her, they are proud of themselves, and they're here in her classroom after normal school hours, ready to get to work.



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International School Provides Culturally Diverse Experience for All Students

Irving School is located in downtown Bozeman, Montana, a university town with a population of 30,000. The school has a "low incidence" population of English language learners (between 9 and 13 percent during the last three years); however, this percentage is relatively high compared with other schools in Bozeman and other Montana schools.

For the 2002–2003 school year there were 12 students in the ESL program: one from Russia, four from Korea, three from Mexico, one from Colombia, one from Israel, one from Poland, and one from Mongolia. Most were children of University of Montana's international students and professors. As a result, many of Irving's ELL students are highly literate in their native language. Because of the families' transitory lifestyle many students leave Irving School after only a year or even mid-year to return to their home country.

Irving School has traditionally enrolled the largest number of Native American students in all schools of Gallatin and



Park Counties (about 7 percent this year). Although some Native American students receive ESL and Title I pull-out services, many are also disproportionately enrolled in special education services. Classroom teachers have redoubled efforts to improve their academic performance with the assistance of Title I teachers who provide additional direct reading, writing, and vocabulary instruction.

ESL Services

Because the ELL students speak a variety of different native languages, bilingual immersion programs are not realistic options. However, the principal and staff are committed to providing the support they can with certified ESL and Title I teachers, as well as providing training to their mainstream teachers on certain strategies.

If newly enrolling students have a native language other than English, they are tested on their English language proficiency using the Woodcock/Muñoz Language Survey. The WMLS surveys a student's likely ability to succeed in grade-level academic tasks in English. It addresses primarily oral Cognitive-Academic Language Proficiency (CALP); letter-word identification (decoding and sight words); and writing conventions (spelling, grammar, and usage) in the language(s) assessed. The results of this test determine placement in the appropriate classes.

Depending on the results of the assessment, a student will receive 30 minutes a day of instruction with the district's ESL-certified teacher, Christine Jonsson. Jonsson, who has taught at Irving for 15 years, is the only ESL teacher for the entire district. As a result, she has limited time to spend with

students, but she provides the most instruction she can in that period of time. One of her goals is to provide the children as much opportunity as possible to use conversational English in a small-group environment.

Among other resources, Jonsson uses materials developed for classroom teachers called Classroom Teachers ESL Survivors Kit by Elizabeth Claire and Judy Haynes. The kit provides practical ideas for all teachers, and explains culture shock and the various challenges ELL students face in learning to understand, read, write, and speak a new language. There are step-by-step instructions for cooperative learning activities, guided peer instruction, and helping newcomers make friends and maintain self-esteem during the long period of academic adjustment. The kit has reproducible content area activities for use in mainstream or ESL classrooms, with low-intermediate ESL students, grades 3 to 8. (*For more information see www.elizabethclaire.com/books/survivalkit.html*)

Jonsson explains that a key to her success with ELL students is to use more of her students' native languages in the classroom. This not only helps them learn English but also eases their discomfort, especially if they have just recently arrived from their native country. "Adjusting to culture shock needs to be taken into account when teaching these children," says Jonsson.

Strategies and Programs Used by Irving Mainstream Teachers

During an all-staff meeting, Irving teachers shared with NWREL some strategies they use when working with ELL students. Fortunately, class sizes are relatively small at Irving

(fewer than 20), so that teachers can provide more individualized instruction.

One teacher said that having the children work together in small groups and in pairs was very helpful for learning. Another emphasized that one should never assume that a student comprehends what is being said: "After you give instructions to the whole class, check with individual students to make sure they understood."

Communication with parents about teacher expectations for their children is very important, indicated some of the teachers. "It is helpful to make sure notes on report cards, or notes to parents are clearly printed so they can read it easily." The teachers try to connect families who speak the same language so that they have a support group. Some parents have taken leadership roles with other parents of ELL students. One parent of an ELL student regularly helps her child in the classroom, writing translations of English into Russian.

First-grade teachers have been trained to use an approach called Visual Phonics, a system of 46 hand signs and written symbols that help make the connection between written and spoken language less confusing. As the teacher says a word, she uses a sign to cue the student to the mouth movement of the phoneme. For example, if a student is having trouble distinguishing "d" from "b" letter, the teacher uses the hand sign for d, which is to extend the finger downward.

"This approach," explains Resource Specialist teacher Meg Cech, a certified trainer in Visual Phonics, "is wonderful for ELL students and for all students, because the physical

movement and the kinesthetic sensations are ways for students to internalize the sound association of a phoneme. They learn to separate sounds that seem the same." Cech says that at first she was concerned that the approach would not be appropriate for students in a class who already knew the sounds; however, she soon noticed that the visual phonics also helped students write the correct sound on paper. "Children don't necessarily understand how sounds are to be spoken," says Cech, "and Visual Phonics help children learn sounds faster."

First-grade teacher Shirley Handsaker, who has taught for more than 30 years, is also trained in this approach. She explains that many ELL learners may not understand the "silent e" in words. The visual hand sign for silent, putting two fingers to your lips, has greatly helped children learn the silent e.

Irving School first-grade teachers use Visual Phonics in conjunction with their spelling curriculum called Process Spelling. A lesson might proceed like this: the teacher says the word, using the hand signs for the sounds, and writes the word on the blackboard. The students repeat the word in unison, and write it on their individual eraser board. The students are then told to "cheer" the word, in which the students spell the word (Welding—W-E-L-D-I-N-G, Welding).

A program used for fourth-graders is the Title I HOTS program. Developed by Stanley Pogrow, HOTS stands for "Higher Order Thinking Skills." The program's goal is to develop the types of thinking skills needed to process more complex and integrative classroom content found in grades 4–8. It combines the use of computers, drama, Socratic dialogue, and a detailed curriculum to stimulate thinking processes. The Title I teacher says that ELL students benefit because language learning is built into the lessons, and because students are able to work together in pairs. (For more information about the HOTS program, including evidence of effectiveness studies, see www.hots.org)

Another aspect of instruction that may assist ELL students is an embedded vocabulary program. All classroom teachers are required to teach Daily Oral Vocabulary, Daily Oral Language, and Daily Analogies. These involve 10-minute instructional sequences, usually at the beginning of every school day. These programs are published by Great Source, a branch of Houghton Mifflin. Word meanings taught in semantically related clusters and the eight to 10 fundamental analogical relationships among words are the core of the DOV and DA programs; DOL involves reading and proofing sentences. Although directed at all the students in the class, these programs provide an opportunity for ELL students—whatever their individual stage of English language development—for structured, systematic oral vocabulary instruction every day.

Supportive School Culture

Irving uses a comprehensive staff development model called the Montana Behavior Initiative that improves the capacities of schools and communities to meet the complex emotional, social, and behavioral needs of all students. Handsaker says the MBI has been integral to providing a nurturing environment for all children, and especially newcomers from another country.

The culture shock and acclimation to the new culture is most overwhelming for new students, says Handsaker. She

is proud of the students who take newcomers under their wing, showing them where things and places (like the bathroom) are located, explaining rules and lessons, and making them feel safe and welcome. Her first-graders sit in small groups, and are encouraged to work together; she says helping each other out "is not cheating"!

Irving School celebrates its cultural diversity every year with International Day. Each classroom hosts a nation, such as China, Mongolia, Russia, and Venezuela. Students who represent each nation speak to other classrooms about the customs, languages, music, geography, and special interests of their cultures. The "globe-trotting" students also sample each country's foods, travel to each country using a passport, participate in a parade of flags, and sing to international music in the gym. The event not only brings together students of different cultures, but also celebrates the unique spirit of the school.

Student Reflections

Three students in the Irving School District shared with us their perspectives on learning a new language. A high school student said that it was often hard to understand the teacher's explanation of assignments, and that it would be helpful if the teacher could give him written instructions as well as verbal. He also said that although language arts classes were very challenging, geometry and biology were much easier, because the pictures and diagrams were easier to understand than words. Watching videos in biology class also helped. He also was grateful for the support of the ESL teacher.

A fourth-grader who has been at Irving for a year and a half told us that at first he couldn't speak much English. "Once in a while I could understand what was going on in class," he said. "It was easier to read than to speak English." He developed conversational skills in his ESL class and by talking with other students. He also says that his classroom teacher used a dictionary to look up words in his native language. Now the young man is a voracious reader in both English and his native language—he has two shelves full of books at home. (His favorite books are the Lord of the Rings series).

A young woman about to graduate told us of her early experiences at the school district. She strongly emphasized that a newcomer's experience, good or bad, on the first day of school can set the tone for the rest of the year. In her case at Irving School, her teacher and fellow students took the time to provide a welcoming environment for her.

Irving School is currently developing a five-year comprehensive plan in response to No Child Left Behind that will address the needs of English language learners. Although the plan is still in draft form, Principal Bruggeman is encouraged that the approaches the teachers use "serve them well" when he receives e-mails from former students, now adults living in places as distant as Israel, Qatar, and Colombia, who tell him how much they appreciated learning English at Irving. Furthermore, he has received positive academic reports of former Native American students who have returned to reservation schools.



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Comprehensive Plan for ELL Students Includes ESL Classes, Core Content Classes in Spanish, and Sheltered English Instruction

Ontario High School is located on the Idaho/Oregon border, an hour northwest of Boise. With a population base of about 11,000, Ontario is the largest city in agriculturally-based Malheur County. The high school has a growing number of students in the English language learners program, currently 25 percent of the school's student body. Almost all ELL students are native Spanish speakers. Although some students have been in the school district for many years, most are recent newcomers to the United States.

Principal Shirley Vendrell, a native of Ontario and former Ontario teacher strives to provide the necessary resources for improving the academic achievement and the graduation rate of her ELL students. Because she foresees increasing numbers of participants in the district's free and reduced-price lunch program, and of new ELL students, she is even more committed to improving programming.



To obtain resources, Ontario High School applied for and received a three-year Title III grant in 2001. The grant—written by Vendrell, sheltered English teacher Verla Holton, and language arts teacher Lola Booth—provides a variety of resources within a comprehensive plan to boost the performance of all students. The resources include a free, ongoing Spanish language course for all teachers; a full-time ESL teacher, which frees up more funding for the sheltered English teacher; core content classes taught in Spanish; a bilingual secretary; training for all faculty members in instructional strategies to assist ELL students; and an inservice training program on cultural awareness (provided by the Equity Center at NWREL and Robert Bahruth at Boise State University).

English as a Second Language (ESL) Classes

If a newly enrolling student speaks a native language other than English, he or she is evaluated for English language proficiency using the Woodcock/Muñoz Language Survey. The WMLS surveys a student's likely ability to succeed in grade-level academic tasks in English. It addresses primarily oral Cognitive-Academic Language Proficiency (CALP); letter-word identification (decoding and sight words); and writing conventions (spelling, grammar, and usage) in the language(s) assessed. The results of this test determine placement in the appropriate classes.

Core Content Classes in Spanish and ESL Classes

Beginning-level students who speak very little or no English are placed in ESL classes and core classes taught in Spanish. This allows students to become proficient in content areas while they are achieving English-language proficiency during ESL classes. Before Ontario High had Spanish-instructed core classes, reflects Holton, "many newcomers were lost in core content classes, and just marked time," comprehending very little.



"Students who excel in these classes also have their confidence boosted and learn to have high expectations for themselves."

Sheltered English Instruction

Intermediate-level students who have achieved a certain degree of fluency make the transition from ESL classes to sheltered English classes. Sheltered English is an instructional approach used to make academic instruction in English understandable. Students are "sheltered" in that they are in classes with only ELL students. Strategies include modifying vocabulary and pacing, using repetition and rephrasing, using visuals, body language, cooperative learning, and interactive learning. Holton develops activities around Louis Sachar's novel *Holes* for the students to understand the meaning of the text, as well as learn vocabulary. She uses as much Hispanic literature as possible, and has students working in groups on projects, such as one on Cesar Chavez, so that the text will be more meaningful for them. Holton also uses graphic organizers to help ELL and all students with content, and uses real-life examples for teaching, such as items in a newspaper for food budgeting.

Content Classes in English With Sheltered Instructional Strategies

All content teachers, as part of the grant, have received training on strategies for their ELL students. Some teachers have had years of experience using these strategies, such as language arts teacher lola Booth and foreign language teacher Carol Martin, who is also certified to teach ESL classes.

Both teachers strongly believe that ELL students should not be shortchanged on activities that engage and motivate them and that develop their higher order thinking skills. "These kids may have difficulties in learning English," says Booth, "but



they are certainly capable of learning what other children learn. If ELL students are held to the same level of standards as all students, and if teachers have high expectations for them, then they will have high expectations of themselves."

That being said, Holton, Booth, and Martin offer some tips for other mainstream classroom teachers, based on their experience and training:

- Have the students engage in conversation, and speak in English as much as possible. Provide authentic opportunities to do so, through cooperative learning and group discussion. Says Martin, "People write the way they talk. If students are silent all class period, they won't be able to write as well."

- To make sure that students are comprehending, you must "repeat, repeat, repeat," rephrase, talk slower, and check for understanding one-on-one.

- Spend as much time as possible teaching vocabulary. Many students who don't learn vocabulary early in their schooling fall behind as they move into higher grades.

- Daily reader boards are helpful for introducing vocabulary and phrases that should become automatic. On the reader boards, write the day of the week, the date in the month, the weather, school activities, the lesson objectives, etc. Have students engage in dialogues with each other at the beginning of class. Have them practice greetings: "Hello, how are you today? What are you doing this weekend?" to practice conversational skills. It is not enough to repeat words out of context; put them in real dialogues.



- Establish a routine for the class, so that students know what to expect. In group work, make sure there is a format for students to follow so they don't get lost.

- Have active learning projects in which students talk with each other and move around. Dramatic readings, reading poetry, and choral reading are good examples.

- Learn how to be reflective in your teaching. Ask yourself, "Is this working? How do I know it is working?" Keep a journal to record reflections, says Booth. Martin suggests three questions to answer in a daily journal: what do I think I will do today, what did I actually do, and what kept me from doing what I didn't.

- Have firmly in mind what you want to do, and what expectations you have for your students. Curriculum mapping is an excellent way to do this. (For an online curriculum mapping assist, see http://currmap.ncrel.org/login.htm)

- Use portfolios to assess performance.

- All students can and should be given the same assignments, but they can be modified. For example, some book assignments may be too challenging for ELL students, but they can read an alternative book and still achieve the goals of the writing assignment or teaching objective.

Initial data show that the comprehensive approach to ELL services is working: ELL students improved an average of seven RIT points in both reading and math from before the grant to the first year of the grant. With these committed teachers and administrators, and continued funding from grants that provide the services Ontario students need, ELL students are sure to succeed.

APPENDIX

Forthcoming Research on English Language Learners

Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE)

Language Learning and Academic Achievement Synthesis Team is synthesizing research on the relationship between language and academic achievement within a variety of alternative programs for linguistically diverse students and exploring application of the findings to school and classroom settings. The synthesis is expected to be published in the summer of 2004. For more information, see www.coe.uh.edu/crede/synthesis.html. For a complete list of CREDE's research projects see www.cal.org/crede/credeprj.htm

National Literacy Panel on the Development of Literacy Among Language Minority Children and Youth

SRI International and the Center for Applied Linguistics will convene a National Literacy Panel (NLP) to conduct a comprehensive, evidence-based review of the research literature on the development of literacy among language minority children and youth.

This 24-month study complements the scope of the study conducted by the National Reading Panel (which excluded literacy development among language minority students). It is organized along similar lines, but will include quantitative experimental studies, quantitative nonexperimental studies, and qualitative studies. The 14-member panel will form six subcommittees, each of which will focus on different topics

in literacy research. The principal investigator for the study is Diane August of the Center for Applied Linguistics. Senior advisers are Donna Christian, Center for Applied Linguistics, and Regie Stites, SRI International. For more information see www.cal.org/natl-lit-panel/

What Works Clearinghouse (www.w-w-c.org)
The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) was established by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to provide decisionmakers with the information they need to make choices based on high-quality scientific research. The WWC will develop standards for reviewing and synthesizing educational research and will provide its findings in several free, searchable, user-friendly databases. It is also producing evidence reports on seven topic areas.

One report will focus on "Interventions for Elementary School English Language Learners: Increasing English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement."

The WWC Evidence Reports will be prepared in accordance with well-defined guidelines and undergo a rigorous review procedure, which includes peer reviews at key stages of the process. The report is due to be published in Spring 2004.

RESOURCES

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's Equity Center

The Equity Center provides training in second language acquisition, cultural diversity, and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), as well as staff development, workshops, and consultation in other areas related to ELL services. Contact the Equity Center at 503-275-9603 or eqcenter@nwrel.org

Regional Associations

Alaska Association for Bilingual Education
Moses Dirks, President
P.O. Box 570
Unalaska, AK 99685
Phone: 907-581-1221
E-mail: mdirks@ucsd.net

Idaho Association for Bilingual Education
Ellen Batt, President
2112 Cleveland Boulevard
Caldwell, ID 83605
Phone: 208-459-5814
E-mail: ebatt@albertson.edu

Montana Association for Bilingual Education
http://www.cantos.org/mabe/
Leon Rattler, President
P.O. Box 819
Browning, MT 59417

Phone: 408-338-5411
E-mail: leon_rattler@bfcc.org

Oregon Association for Bilingual Education
Kris Kibbee, President
P.O. Box 5225
Portland, OR 97304
Phone: 503-606-9016
E-mail: kibbee3@attbi.com

Oregon Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
http://www.ortesol.org/
Reuek Kurzet, President
Portland Community College
Phone: 503-977-4504
E-mail: rkurzet@pcc.edu or president@ortesol.org

Washington Association for the Education of Speakers of Other Languages
http://www.waesol.org/
Yilin Sun, President
P.O. Box 368
Centralia, WA 98531
Phone: 206-587-5411
E-mail: yilsun@sccd.ctc.edu

Web Sites of National Organizations

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (www.ncela.gwu.edu/)

National Association for Bilingual Education (www.nabe.org/faq.asp)

U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA) (www.ed.gov/offices/OELA/)

Online Directory of ESL Resources
National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA) and ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics (www.cal.org/ericcll/ncbe/esldirectory/)

Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence Publications and Products
(www.cal.org/crede/pubs/) CREDE has excellent resources on two-way immersion programs, sheltered instruction, newcomer programs, and much more.

Portraits of Success
(National Association of Bilingual Association, Boston College, and the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University)
Database of successful bilingual education programs (www2.lab.brown.edu/NABE/portraits.taf)

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

CREDE's Five Standards of Effective Pedagogy
(www.crede.ucsc.edu/standards/standards.html)

The Five Standards articulate both philosophical and pragmatic guidelines for effective education. The standards were distilled from findings by educational researchers working with students at risk of educational failure due to cultural, language, racial, geographic, or economic factors.

The Five Standards do not endorse a specific curriculum but rather establish principles for best teaching practices. These practices are effective with both majority and minority students in K–16 classrooms across subject matter, curricula, cultures, and language groups.

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Content-Based Instruction/Sheltered Instruction/Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Web Site
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