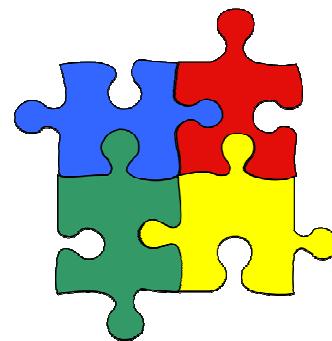


Instructional Strategies that Support the Success of English Language Learners



For additional information on this section contact jacqueline.irbarren@dpi.wi.gov.

Overview

Although the average time needed to acquire social English skills is two to three years, acquisition of academic English proficiency, essential for full academic parity with English-speaking peers, usually takes five to seven years. Students with strong academic or primary language backgrounds will typically transition more quickly (approximately four to five years). Conversely, students with weak academic or primary language backgrounds may take up to eight to ten years to reach full academic parity. Students who enter high school as new arrivals to the United States have a particularly difficult time accruing academic credits while attempting to gain the necessary academic English proficiency. A student arriving at age 16, with no prior exposure to English, will not be likely to reach full English proficiency or academic parity before graduation. This should not be viewed as a problem per se, as many university and technical colleges offer English as a Second Language (ESL). The goal in high school should be to provide for accelerated English literacy development while providing the key concepts and skills necessary to graduate and move into postsecondary preparation programs or pre-employment career-related education.

For more perspective on AYP, additional contacts and the Handbook, visit: https://www.dpi.wisconsin.gov/aysp/aysp_handbook.html.

While it is important to keep realistic timelines in mind when considering how long support may be needed, there is evidence that the process can be accelerated to some degree if adequate support is provided and innovative methodologies are used. Successful bilingual/ESL support programs around the country are taking students from beginner to near native English proficiency and academic parity with grade-level peers within four to six years.

Ensure higher-order thinking skills

High-level or higher-order thinking involves the mental processes of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Educators should implement curricula targeting these thinking skills for all students. While many educators would probably agree that thinking skills are important in education, research shows that English-language learners (ELLs) rarely receive higher-order thinking instruction. Among numerous reasons for a focus on higher-order thinking, ELLs need these skills to pass high-stakes tests, compete in a global job market and initiate social change. This point is important because some educators may confuse language proficiency with cognitive ability.

Students' access to instructional tasks requiring complex thinking is enhanced when linguistic complexity and instructional support match their levels of language proficiency. Providing modifications to students during classroom instruction and/or classroom assessments may have the unintended consequence of reducing their opportunity to learn critical content, and is not a recommended practice for ELL students. Therefore, teachers should provide rich learning opportunities, support and extend the learning and ensure higher order thinking skills are being taught and tapped. This balance is a critical component to the academic success of ELL students.

Short-Term Action Options

Make sure that English language learners have access to English-speaking peers

Teachers can facilitate English access by assigning and rotating English-speaking “peer buddies.” Peer buddies can assist in vocabulary acquisition by using dual language dictionaries or thematic picture dictionaries to create a context for conversation. They can also help recent arrivals adjust to the school culture or re-explain difficult “teacher talk.” Using several peer buddies over time allows for wider participation and sharing in both the privilege and responsibility of assisting the newcomer.

Teachers should not force production of English before students are ready

Avoid overcorrection of attempts to speak English, as this likely will lead students to be self-conscious about their speech and to practice less. Teachers should instead continue to model clearly spoken, correct English for their students without interrupting the normal flow of the conversation.

Utilize various sources of literature to inspire learning and literacy

For English Language Learners who have reached a second- or third-grade reading level in English, illustrations or comic books can provide an excellent supplemental literacy development tool. Search for text that is at an appropriate reading level, while equivalent in content and student interests for their chronological age. Children can often guess the meanings of unfamiliar words by looking at the illustrations; therefore, less time is lost looking up new words in dictionaries.

Respect the student’s primary language and culture

Schools should send home a strong message that the family language and culture represent valuable assets to be preserved as students learn English and master new content in English. Additionally, schools should not prevent students from using their primary languages during the school day, even when bilingual instruction cannot be offered. Two or more students speaking the same language can be an effective way to share content information learned in classes and can provide an important break from English, particularly for recent arrivals.

Ensure that educators and parents are familiar with English language learner levels

Level 1—Beginning/Preproduction (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) level = Entering)

A pupil shall be classified level 1 if the pupil does not understand or speak English, with the exception of a few isolated words or expressions.



Level 2—Beginning/Production (WIDA level = Beginning)

A pupil shall be classified level 2 if all of the following criteria are met:

- a) The pupil understands and speaks conversational and academic English with hesitancy and difficulty.
- b) The pupil understands parts of lessons and simple directions.
- c) The pupil is at a pre-emergent or emergent level of reading and writing in English, significantly below grade level.

Level 3—Intermediate (WIDA level = Developing)

A pupil shall be classified level 3 if all of the following criteria are met:

- a) The pupil understands and speaks conversational and academic English with decreasing hesitancy and difficulty.
- b) The pupil is post-emergent, developing reading comprehension and writing skills in English.
- c) The pupil’s English literacy skills allow the student to demonstrate academic knowledge in content areas with assistance.

Level 4—Advanced Intermediate (WIDA level = Expanding)

A pupil shall be classified level 4 if all of the following criteria are met:

- a) The pupil understands and speaks conversational English without apparent difficulty but understands and speaks academic English with some hesitancy.
- b) The pupil continues to acquire reading and writing skills in content areas needed to achieve grade-level expectations with assistance.

Level 5—Advanced (WIDA level = Bridging)

A pupil shall be classified level 5 if all of the following criteria are met:

- a) The pupil understands and speaks conversational and academic English well.
- b) The pupil is near proficient in reading, writing, and content area skills needed to meet grade-level expectations.
- c) The pupil requires occasional support.

Level 6—Formerly Limited English Proficient/Now Fully English Proficient

A pupil shall be classified level 6 if all of the following criteria are met:

- a) The pupil was formerly limited English proficient and is now fully English proficient.
- b) The pupil reads, writes, speaks, and comprehends English within academic classroom settings.

Level 7—Fully English Proficient/Never Limited English Proficient

The student was never classified as limited English proficient and does not fit the definition of a limited English proficient student outlined in either state or federal law.

Use the following charts to guide your instruction and support for limited English proficient students

Chart 1: Grades PK-2

	Levels 1-2	Levels 2-3	Levels 4-5
Classroom teacher (Note: Developmentally appropriate primary classes are usually very good environments for social English acquisition.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honor silent period • Encourage peer buddies • Use real objects • Use picture books • Alternate assessment and modified grading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s story/picture books on tape • Storytelling activities • Language experience approach • Alternate assessment and modified grading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s story/picture books on tape • Storytelling activities • Language experience approach
Bilingual teacher or aide (Note: Self-contained bilingual teachers also function as classroom teachers and ESL providers.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the connection with primary language and culture • Preteach/teach class themes /content in primary language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary language literacy development • Language experience approach in primary language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary language literacy development • Preteach/teach class themes /content in primary language
English as a Second Language teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total physical response • Language experience approach • Communicative-based methodologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2 plus the following: • Preteach class themes in English using sheltered-English methodologies • Literacy development in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preteach class themes in English using sheltered-English methodologies • Literacy development in English
Title I or supplemental academic support program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total physical response • Language experience approach • Communicative-based methodologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preteach class themes • Literacy development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preteach class themes • Literacy development
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a language-rich home environment by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2

	<p>involving children in conversations and household routines in the home language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When possible, read to children in the home language, or paraphrase English picture books into the home language • Ask children about their school day, what they learned, and if they have homework 		
Administrator and counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure translators for parent meetings and written materials going home • Welcome parents to all school events and provide translators • Promote alternate assessment and modified grading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2

Chart 2: Grades 3-5

	Levels 1-2	Levels 2-3	Levels 4-5
Classroom teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honor silent period • Encourage peer buddies • Use real objects • Use picture books • Alternate assessment and modified grading • Cooperative learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s story/picture books on tape • Storytelling activities • Language experience approach • Alternate assessment and modified grading • Cooperative learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling activities • Language experience approach • Cooperative learning • Comic books/visually supported content books • Testing accommodations and modified grading, as needed
Bilingual teacher or aide (Note: Self-contained bilingual teachers also function as classroom teachers and ESL providers.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the connection with primary language and culture • Preteach/teach class themes /content in primary language • Print exposure/literacy development in primary language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary language literacy development • Language experience approach in primary language • Preteach/teach key concepts and skills in primary language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary language literacy development • Language experience approach in primary language • Preteach/teach key concepts and skills in primary language
English as a Second Language teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total physical response • Language experience approach • Communicative-based methodologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2 plus the following: • Preteach key concepts, skills, and academic language in English • Literacy development in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preteach key concepts, skills, and academic language in English using sheltered-English methodologies • Literacy development in English
Title I or supplemental academic support program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total physical response • Language experience approach • Communicative-based methodologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preteach key concepts, skills, and academic language • Literacy development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preteach key concepts, skills, and academic language • Literacy development
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a language-rich home environment by involving children in conversations and household routines in the home language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When possible, read to children in the home language or paraphrase English picture books into the home language. • Ask children about their school day, what they learned, and if they have homework 		
Administrator and counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure translators for parent meetings and written materials going home • Welcome parents to all school events and provide translators • Promote alternate assessment and modified grading • Encourage involvement in extracurricular activities • Use Individualized Student Record Plan (IRP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2 plus the following • Promote testing accommodations and modified grading, as needed

Chart 3: Grades 6-8

	Levels 1-2	Levels 2-3	Levels 4-5
Classroom teacher (Note: LA = language arts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honor silent period • Encourage peer buddies • Use real objects and props in class presentations • Alternate assessment and modified grading • Use semantic mapping activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s story/picture books on tape (LA) • Language experience approach (LA) • Cooperative learning • Alternate assessment and modified grading • Semantic mapping • Visually supported content-area texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s story/picture books on tape (LA) • Language experience approach (LA) • Cooperative learning • Comic books (LA) • Testing accommodations and modified grading, as needed • Semantic mapping
Bilingual teacher or aide (Note: Self-contained bilingual teachers also function as classroom teachers and ESL providers.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the connection with primary language and culture • Preteach/teach class themes/ content in primary language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary language literacy development • Language experience approach in primary language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary language literacy development • Preteach/teach key concepts and skills in primary language
English as a Second Language teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total physical response • Language experience approach • Communicative-based methodologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2 plus following: • Preteach key concepts, skills, and academic language in English using sheltered-English methodologies • Literacy development in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preteach key concepts, skills, and academic language using sheltered-English methodologies • Literacy development in English
Title I or supplemental academic support program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total physical response • Language experience approach • Communicative-based methodologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preteach key concepts, skills, and academic language in English • Literacy development in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preteach key concepts, skills, and academic language in English • Literacy development in English
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a language-rich home environment by involving children in conversations and household routines in the home language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage maintenance of reading skills in the home language • Ask children about their school day, what they learned, and if they have homework 		
Administrator and counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure translators for parent meetings and written materials going home • Welcome parents to all school events and provide translators • Encourage involvement in extracurricular activities • Set up study halls with peer tutoring • Encourage nongraded learning • Participate in creating Individualized Student Record Plan (IRP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2 plus the following: • Encourage pass/fail grading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as levels 1-2 plus the following: • Encourage letter grades consistent with IRP goals • Promote testing accommodations and modified grading as needed

Chart 4: Grades 9-12

	Levels 1-2	Levels 2-3	Levels 4-5
Classroom teacher (Note: LA = language arts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honor silent period encourage peer buddies Use real objects and props in class presentations Alternate assessment and modified grading Use semantic mapping activities Cooperative learning Children’s story/picture books on tape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children’s story/picture books and books on tape (LA) Language experience approach (LA) Cooperative learning Alternate assessment and modified grading Semantic mapping Visually supported content-area texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children’s story/picture books on tape (LA) Language experience approach (LA) Cooperative learning Comic books (LA) Testing accommodations and modified grading, as needed Semantic mapping Visually supported content-area texts
Bilingual teacher or aide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen connection with primary language and culture Preteach/teach class themes/content in primary language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary language literacy development Language experience approach in primary language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary language literacy development Preteach/teach key concepts and skills in primary language
English as a Second Language teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total physical response Language experience approach Communicative-based methodologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as levels 1-2 plus the following: Preteach key concepts/skills/academic language in English using sheltered-English methodologies Literacy development in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preteach key concepts, skills, and academic language in English using sheltered-English methodologies Literacy development in English
Title I or supplemental academic support program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total physical response Language experience approach Communicative-based methodologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preteach key concepts, skills, and academic language in English Literacy development in English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preteach key concepts, skills, and academic language in English Literacy development in English
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a language-rich home environment by involving children in conversations and household routines in the home language Encourage maintenance of reading skills in the home language Ask adolescents about their school day, what they learned, and if they have homework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as levels 1-2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as levels 1-2
Administrator and counselor (Note: Carefully consider course placement issues with respect to language proficiency. If a bilingual program exists, content classes can be taught in the native language. If not, follow order for course introduction proposed here and remember that content-based ESL support must be provided either by sheltering the instruction or preteaching key concepts, skills, and language.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure translators for parent meetings and written materials to home Welcome parents to all events/have translators Encourage involvement in extracurricular activities Set up study halls with peer tutoring Encourage nongraded learning Participate in creating Individualized Student Record Plan (IRP) Schedule into most nonacademic courses, BL/ESL, and math Alternate assessment and modified grading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as levels 1-2 plus the following: Encourage pass/fail grading Schedule into most nonacademic courses, BL/ESL, and math Introduce science and modified language arts Alternate assessment and modified grading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as levels 1-2 plus the following: Encourage letter grades consistent with IRP goals Promote testing accommodations and modified grading as needed Schedule into nonacademic courses, BL/ESL, and math Science and modified language arts Social studies

(Charts, courtesy : Tim Boals, WIDA)

Long-Term Action Options

Be aware of the options you have to best serve your population of English language learners

Both English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual programs are supported by the Department of Public Instruction. Know the difference between the methods of these two programs, and ensure that your school develops a program that best serves your students. ESL is the teaching of English and academic content to students who are ELL students. Bilingual education encompasses any of a number of approaches that use to varying degrees the language of the child and English in the teaching of academic content and literacy skills.

Ensure that teachers utilize a variety of student-centered methodologies with English language learners

Cooperative or small-group learning, thematic instruction, and integrated approaches to language arts enhance the context for learning for ELL students. Storytelling activities, for example, provide a wonderful vehicle to integrate English language learners into the classroom. Students can use drawings and actions to support the stories they tell in either English or their native language.



Encourage the use of content-based sheltered English methodologies in the classroom

Sheltered English instruction teaches language through content by contextualizing the English but maintaining the crucial academic content and concepts. Sheltered strategies will benefit not only second language learners, but also any student who is struggling with class material. The guiding principle for sheltering English is to keep the standards for academic content and skill development as high as possible while simplifying the language, making it more accessible to students. Beyond the obvious example of avoiding complex syntax and vocabulary, language simplification usually involves creating enhanced contexts in which language and content are presented. Teachers enhance context by providing visual props, hands-on learning experiences, drawings, pictures, graphic organizers, and small-group learning opportunities.

Utilize a balanced approach to literacy instruction

A balanced approach is just as important for ELL as it is for students with English as their primary language. This includes a combination of teaching techniques such as systematic and explicit reading instruction with consistent feedback, guided reading, teaching learning strategies, and free reading. A combination of both teacher-directed and experiential techniques may be used according to the student's individual learning profile. Supplement these techniques with children's picture books/storybooks, both in print versions and on tape. Audio-taped versions of children's books are particularly helpful as second language learners can listen to the spoken English, follow the printed words, and use the pictures to facilitate meaning. Children's storybooks are now available in CD-ROM versions that offer an audio component, good visual support, and bilingual versions. Such strategies should be used in conjunction with other bilingual/ESL strategies, not as the sole strategy for language acquisition.

Integrate a priori teaching into your supports for English language learners

A priori teaching requires support staff to stay at least a week ahead of regular classroom teachers, pre-teaching the most important concepts, language, and skills soon to be presented within the regular class. This bolsters student prior knowledge of the topics and the specific language needed to make sense of what is taught in the regular classroom. Teachers using a priori teaching utilize the same highly visual, hands-on methods described earlier but simply make sure they are preteaching what their students will need for the following week. This is far more effective than a "mop-up" model of helping students after they have already fallen behind. There is no question that a priori teaching requires careful collaboration

and, often, significant restructuring of support services. For those who do it, however, the testimonials of increased academic comprehension are compelling.

Ensure that all staff members are receiving professional development directed at supporting the success of English language learners

It is important that all staff members receive training in language acquisition, cultural awareness, and instructional strategies for ELL students. Consider structuring professional development around strengthening educational staff in the following areas: student-centered instruction, content-based sheltered English instruction (e.g., Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach [CALLA] or Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol [SIOP]), balanced literacy instruction, a priori teaching, and alternate assessments.

Resources for Instructional Strategies that Support the Success of English Language Learners

Web Sites

Center for Applied Linguistics provides information on language, culture, bilingual/ESL education, SIOP (Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol), and literacy.

<http://www.cal.org>

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA) collects, analyzes, synthesizes, and disseminates information about language instruction educational programs for ELLs and related programs.

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu>

U.S. Department of Education, Office for English Language Acquisition identifies major issues affecting the education of ELLs, and assists and supports state and local systemic reform efforts that emphasize high academic standards, school accountability, professional training, and parent involvement.

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OELA/>

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) Program assists school districts serving ELLs so they become proficient in English while achieving academically.

<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/ell/effective-prac-ell.html>

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) is a professional association for English Language Educators.

<http://www.tesol.org>