

Bobbi Janssen
Elsa Palza-Rink
Rachel Holcombe
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Guidance for Classroom Teachers

Peer Reviewers:
Carla J. Montoya
Laurie Clark

Teaching With the ESL Learner in Mind

One of the greatest disservices teachers at any level can do is to assume that all students will learn the same material from one teaching style... their own. Teachers need to remember that not only are students' learning styles unique, but also teachers have unique teaching styles that may cater better to certain learning styles than others. It is the teacher's responsibility to be sure that all students' learning styles are considered, including that of the ESL student. There are a number of guidelines which can aid teachers in better facilitating learning for the ESL student; not only will ESL students benefit, but all learners can find a way to greater understanding through these learner oriented teaching practices.

Pointer

What classroom teachers can do for greater success of ESL learners within the mainstream classroom environment.

- *Teach language through content*, that way it (the language) is interesting and relevant to the students. This will also prepare students for "testing language," the academic language they will encounter on standardized tests.
- *Social language is not the same as academic language*. Students may converse fluently with others on the playground and in the lunchroom, but may still struggle to comprehend what happens inside the class.
- *Environmental print, big books, seating arrangements*, and other teaching methods often used in the elementary classroom should be considered by secondary teachers to be equally as critical for learning in the secondary classroom.
- Use a *scaffolding* approach for introducing new concepts, including:
 - **Background knowledge**
 - **Student interest** - thus creating a need/desire to learn
 - An **authentic** experience
- *Believe* that this approach (language through content) will work and students will learn. As with native English speakers, students will be as successful as you expect for them to be when provided opportunity with care and support.
- *Avoid labeling!* A teacher's attitude of the student's potential can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The question is not can every student learn; the question is how can I, as the

teacher, stretch myself to meet these students where they are and guide them to the next level of success?

- Assignments should be oriented to *group/collaborative projects* rather than individual reading or oral presentations.
- *Encourage and allow time for processing/comprehension with peers* in English or the student's native language.
- Maintain *predictable routines and schedules* so all students spend less time wondering what will come next, and more attention focused on the material to learn.
- Provide *high interest "easy reading" and culturally appropriate books at the ESL student's current reading level.*
- Seek *student interests to direct content* by using simple interest inventories; residually this will increase student self-esteem from knowing that their opinions were significant enough to impact curriculum.
- *Encourage parents to continue native language fluency at home.*

Administrators can promote better teaching practices by classroom teachers by providing:

- *Staff development and training for classroom teachers* to better understand ESL teachers and other specialists.
- *Time to collaborate* with ESL teachers and other specialists.

References

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