

MOVING FORWARD

*News and information about the education of special
needs students for teachers and parents*

Winter 2018

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND LEARNING

English Language Learners (ELL's) are not a uniform group. They all have unique histories, experiences and knowledge. Their approach to learning can be different as well and greatly influenced by the many aspects of their culture.



The difficulty with ELL students in school is that they are typically learning English while they are trying to grasp the content of classroom instruction. That is no easy task since so much of the material is language-based.

Important factors such as the age in which they learned to speak English, memory, motivation and the dominant home language all play a role in determining future success. If the child is receiving instruction in English during the school day, but only hears another language at home (and for long periods of time during the summer), the road to language proficiency becomes even more of a challenge.

So much about language learning centers on the consistent **exposure** to vocabulary and other facets of communication. Through conversation, media outlets or reading, the intensity and the time a child interacts

with language, the greater the probability of progress.

Remember that the acquisition of language is only the beginning. The more difficult component reflects the accurate **application** of linguistic principles. For any ELL student, this can be a slow and tedious process, especially if

the child has learning difficulties that extend into other areas.

The key for parents and teachers is to acknowledge the many barriers that face ELL students. Trying various approaches to learning in an inclusive environment that encompasses the needs of all students, including those with disabilities, creates a win-win situation.

The learning strategies that seem to generate the most success in the mastery of language are culturally responsive classrooms, tiered interventions and embracing universal design. Each of these approaches are outlined in this newsletter. The ultimate goal when working with ELL students is enhancing language without diminishing the pride and respect for their individual culture.

**“A different language is a
different vision of life.”**

– Federico Fellini

Language and Learning Disabilities

When assessing an ELL student for a possible learning disability, the key is to investigate the presence of the specific processing deficit in BOTH languages. Many struggling students are referred for a special education evaluation when the real culprit is language proficiency.

Tiered Vocabulary Intervention for ELL Students

Addressing the many needs of ELL students can be very challenging. A tiered intervention approach that increases in intensity and varies in terms of modalities seems the most successful.

At the core of most ELL programs is the vocabulary used in most classrooms. The goal is not conversational mastery, but rather an effective reflection of the words and phrases used in the learning environment.

The vocabulary words to be taught are pre-selected and should be the result of consistent collaboration between general education and the ELL instructors. These words should not only mirror academic content, but should meet state academic standards as well.

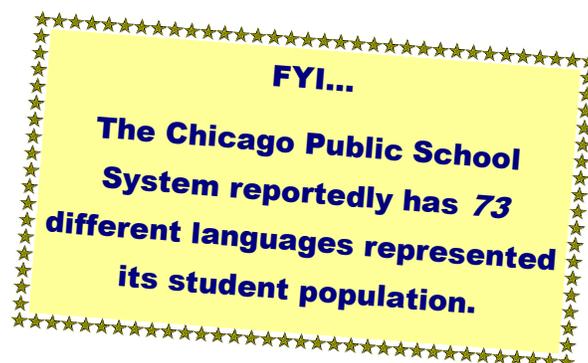
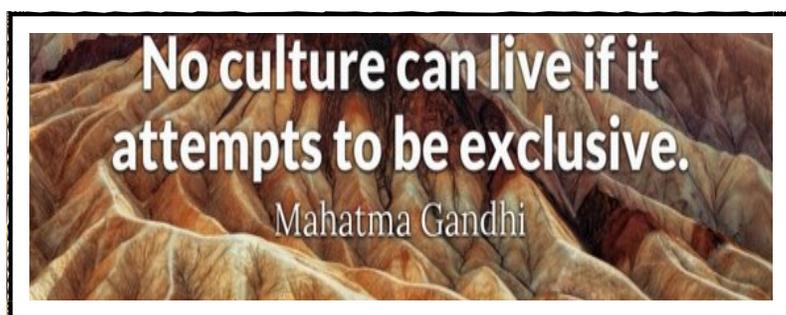
Here is an example of a tiered system for vocabulary acquisition for ELL education. (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002)



Tier 1-Common classroom words, sight words and everyday classroom language.

Tier 2-High frequency vocabulary found across content areas, multiple meanings and synonyms.

Tier 3-More complex domain and content-specific vocabulary across subject areas.



Language Assessments: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), and WIDA

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) refers to the linguistic skills needed in everyday, social interactions. According to research, it typically takes 1-3 years for an English Language Learner to acquire social language.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) focuses on proficiency with the language used in teaching academic content. According to recent research, it may take ELL students 7-10 years to acquire academic language. This projection may underestimate the new content of the more complex state standards.

WIDA is an organization that was established to help support academic language development and academic

achievement for children in the school setting who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 was created by WIDA and is the English language proficiency assessment administered in the School City of Hammond to Kindergarten through 12th grade students who have been identified as ELL. It is given to monitor students' progress in acquiring academic English. ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 is aligned with the WIDA English Language Development Standards and assesses each of the four language domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.



The School City of Hammond Language Development Program (LDP)



Mr. Anthony Salinas is the current director of the Language Development Program in the School City of Hammond. It is the vision of the Language Development Program and School City of Hammond to ensure equal educational access and opportunities for ELL students and their families along with providing supplemental instruction that develops the linguistic and academic skills needed to meet the rigorous Common Core Standards required for college and career readiness.

The department consists of the director and various case managers, certified teachers, and paraprofessionals. The services provided by the LDP team vary with the needs of each building, as well as the individual language proficiency of each student. The services can include push-in/pull-out support, and/or co-teaching. The assistance provided focuses on both language and culture.

In consideration of language, the LDP team works to ensure all staff involved are being intentional with the vocabulary within the context of what is being taught.

In consideration of culture, the LDP team works to ensure the students understand the daily routines, procedures, and expectations within the school setting. Regardless of the level of English proficiency, the LDP team strives to ensure these students have access to the general education curriculum as well as the social and educational discussions that occur on a daily basis within the classroom setting.

Support from the LDP department is obtained through information detailed in the Home Language Survey as well as the students' performance on the WIDA ACCESS 2.0 Assessment.



<http://www.everythingsl.net>

Multiple ELL websites are listed by grade clusters.

<http://www.colorincolorado.org>

Designed for parents, teachers, and administration. This website contains a variety of articles about ELL and activities for ELL students.

<http://www.storylineonline.net>

Audio books for families to read together

<http://www.starfall.com>

Audio books for grades PreK-3

<http://www.pbskids.org>

Variety of learning activities for PreK-5

<http://www.babbel.com>

Designed for parents to learn the language. There are several languages offered within the website.

Moving Forward

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