Working with English Learners (ELs)

* It generally takes 5-7 years for an English Learner to become proficient in academic English
* Usually, the younger a student is when introduced to English, the sooner he will “catch up” to the English level of his peers. So newcomers to Kindergarten will advance in English far more quickly than newcomers to High School.
* Strategies you use to support EL students will be beneficial to *all* of your students.

When working with ELs, maintain high yet realistic expectations, and remind yourself frequently that limitations in English do not mean limitations in *thinking.* In fact, these students are (by necessity) processing more information than most other students because they are constantly learning vocabulary and making connections with their first language.

El students are often referred to as LEP (Limited English Proficient) but it’s best to think of them as LEP (Language *Enriched* Pupils)!

Starting Strategies:

* Make sure you repeat the student name until you say it like he/she does! That is a big deal to our students!
* Pair EL students with other strong students.
* Keep lines of communication open. Check frequently to make sure the student understands what is expected.
* Focus attention on key vocabulary. Use pictures, charts, graphs, and stories to teach vocabulary in context.
* Model, model, model! Model the steps to completion and show an example of the finished product.
* Send resources (newsletters, permission slips, ets.) home in Spanish AND English when possible.

Resources:

* Our ESL staff:
  + Kristy Northcutt, ESL Teacher ([Kristy.northcutt@grant.kyschools.us](mailto:Kristy.northcutt@grant.kyschools.us), 859-866-2762)
  + Deyadira Torres, Translator and Instructional Assistant ([deyadira.torres@grant.kyschools.us](mailto:deyadira.torres@grant.kyschools.us), 859-824-2865)
* Translation: You can email documents for translation. Please try to send them a few days ahead of when you need them.
  + [www.wordreference.com](http://www.wordreference.com) This is a good online dictionary for words/phrases.
  + [www.translate.google.com](http://www.translate.google.com) This works in a pinch, but often it’s not very clear.

We want to assess **content knowledge**, NOT their ability to express that knowledge in English!

Modifications for English Learners

**Early/ Beginner English**

Modified Instructional Strategies:

* Provide visuals and graphic organizers
* Pre-copy the class notes and give students the notes before the lesson so that they can read along but don’t have to struggle to write them simultaneously.
* Try to write out simplified directions for them, or highlight key words in the directions.
* Use highlighters and sticky notes to identify the most important points

Modified Assessments—at this stage, an alternative assessment is best

* Label a picture or diagram
* Draw a picture that demonstrates a key idea
* Explain an idea orally or answer a few questions orally
* Draw lines between vocabulary terms and pictures
* Allow students to submit a project instead of an in-class test

**High Beginner/ Intermediate English**

Modified Instructional Strategies:

* Identify several essential ideas for students to learn
* Provide a concentrated list of core vocabulary that you’ve identified as the most important for this unit

Modified Assessments—at this stage, a simplified and/or modified assessment is best

* Multiple choice with two answers
* Matching with a limited number of choices
* Provide word banks
* Require students to complete only certain portions of the test
* Allow students to choose to answer 6 of 10 questions
* Provide multiple choice answers for questions which would normally require students to create an answer
* Shorten the length of the required answer

**Advanced English Speaker**

\*Because these students have **strong social language skills**, it is easy to assume that they understand much more than they do, or that they have the background knowledge needed to make good progress. However, they may still struggle with **academic language skills**.

These EL students should be expected to learn the majority (or all) of the content that you teach to mainstream students. However they may need **more time** to complete assignments and demonstrate their knowledge. They may need **more support and structure** during lessons and assignments. Continually check in with them about how much they understand—formative assessments! During assessments, be sure to allow the accommodations outlined on the PSP.