

# **Simpson County Schools**

## **EL Handbook**



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Students whose first language is not English represent the fastest growing minority population in Simpson County Schools. Language groups are continuing to grow in grades P-12. The English language proficiency of these students ranges from non-English speaking to communicatively competent.

Assisting students to learn English is a commitment of Simpson County Schools. In our school, English Learner (EL) students face the triple demands of learning the English language, English literacy skills, and curriculum content. We are challenged by these students who need our support and instruction in learning a new language, in feeling welcomed and comfortable in a new culture, and in researching high educational standards which will enable them to become college and career ready, able to succeed in our society.

## **WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT**

The incoming EL student may not be accustomed to the conventions of school culture and experience different educational experiences.

As a result of these differences, EL students may find it difficult to:

- Work with a student of the opposite sex. Sexes may be stereotyped in defined roles within certain cultures.
- Participate in group activities or work alone.
- Adjust to student-directed learning. They are reluctant to assume independence in learning.
- Relate to a teacher of the opposite sex. (Some male students find it difficult to accept the authority of a female teacher).
- Look directly at the teacher.
- Ask questions or express opinions in large group discussions.
- Work with students from many different cultures.

**EL students seldom create discipline problems. However, discipline techniques and practices are often very different in various cultures, and there may be misunderstandings.**

**Some behaviors merely reflect cultural or socioeconomic status differences. For example, some EL students may confuse basic student rights and freedoms with a lack of discipline.**

**Other behaviors considered problematic by teachers are in reality characteristic of students who are in the process of normal second language acquisition.**

**Generally, EL students are respectful, eager to learn, and will make tremendous progress in school.**

Some EL students have attained a level of communicative competence with the sounds, vocabulary, semantics, syntax, and rhythms of their native languages. Already they understand the nature and purpose of language. Other EL students, however, have had little or no formal education in their native countries. Regardless of their proficiency levels, EL students face tremendous challenges as they adjust to rigorous curricula within a demanding and difficult academic environment.

Several months may pass before EL students communicate willingly with teachers and peers. During this time, they are learning English by listening; in other words, they are in the preproduction stage of oral language acquisition. Despite their reproduction levels, EL students are learning and are able to demonstrate their knowledge if appropriate tasks are assigned. Students are gaining basic interpersonal communication skills, usually occurring first and informally within one to two years. Cognitive academic language proficiency skills take longer; conservative estimates are five to seven years. Other estimates suggest up to nine years for students to reach local, state, and national standards of academic achievement.

Second language acquisition follows a continuum of progress beginning with pre production, followed by early production, emergent speech, intermediate fluency, and near native fluency. Appropriate instructional activities are included in the EL Individual Service Plan.

## COMMUNICATING WITH EL STUDENTS

The regular teacher helps facilitate acquisition of language and literacy. Whether or not the teacher is certified in EL, he/she can help the EL students succeed in class. In planning for these students, consider the following suggestions:

- Encourage EL students to speak English and provide ample opportunities for doing so, but do not force new students to speak before they are ready.
- Speak to EL Students in a normal tone of voice, at a normal rate using simple sentences. Use simple verb tenses (He Went) instead of perfect tenses (He has gone). Use active voice instead of passive.
- Try to use and reinforce the language that EL students will encounter everyday. Include daily routines with repetitive language. Keep terminology consistent. Monitor your vocabulary and use of idioms.
- Realize that students do not comprehend all the forms of expression, vocabulary items, and sentence structures in the content area even though they seem to have mastered the basic forms of conversational English.
- Use gestures and examples to illustrate your oral statements, directions, and explanations. Write (print) on the dry erase board and demonstrate whenever possible. Model what you expect your students to do.
- Aid in comprehension by using charts, illustrations, maps, Venn diagrams, photos, media, and other representations. Present information both visually and verbally. Summarize frequently through visual and auditory means. This helps EL students as well as other students who learn best visually. Students may use tape recorders to practice new vocabulary.
- Correct errors with sensitivity. Accept errors in grammar and pronunciation while continuing to model appropriate language. After they have more assurance, you may wish to concentrate on major or frequent errors in speech. React to the intended meaning first and then attend to form.

- Encourage the EL student to join activities which enhance his/her self-concept and which do not demand proficiency in English. Although they may not volunteer answers, their language is developing. Opportunities to hear and use meaningful language in real context could include science experiments, art activities, games, music, field trips, and role play.
- Check frequently for understanding. Adequate wait time is especially important for EL students. Be patient and keep cognitively demanding task.

## **THE FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL**

It is important that the EL students become comfortable with their classmates and their teacher. The EL teacher is your best resource in identifying the needs of EL students in your class. Using the following strategies will assist EL students' adjustment.

- Introduce yourself and welcome EL students warmly as you would any new child. They may not know English, but they understand “body English.”
- Try to learn the correct pronunciation of the student's names. Help other students learn them, too. In some cultures students are referred to by “last” names, and many continue this practice here. Some students have a double first name. Use both names since one can be meaningless without the other.
- If the student selects an “American” name use it. Do not assign an “American” name. Changing a name is a choice for the individual and the family only.
- Seat the EL student in the middle of the classroom towards the front with other students in front and to the side, providing the student models to readily observe.
- Assist the new students who may not know or be able to tell you what they want for lunch. Make a conscious effort to interact with these students daily on a one-to-one basis.

- Pair EL students with another student who will be a “buddy” acquainting them with the school and classroom routines. Whenever possible, choose a bilingual buddy who is willing and able to communicate in the newcomer’s native language. Rotate the assignment among several students.
  - Buddies can:
    1. Take the student on a tour of the school.
    2. Explain the day’s schedule.
    3. Guide the student through the lunch line.
    4. Assist their classmate boarding the right bus or walking home
- Do not assume that students have the same background just because they speak the same language. They come from a variety of social classes, economic groups, and family educational background. Also, the history, the culture, and the traditions vary from country to country.
- Provide the school handbook in the student’s native language.

## **TIPS FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS:**

- Confer regularly with the EL instructor. They are good resources to help you cope with the challenges or special needs of your students.
- Request help from the EL teacher in advance for explaining the purpose of a field trip and for getting permission slips home and back. For instance, in some cultures the parents are very reluctant to allow their children to take field trips. Establish a trust with the family. Field trips are excellent learning experiences for all EL students.
- Continue in your efforts to build a sound relationship between home and school. Some parents may respond slowly to your overtures because of shyness, the inability to speak English, or fear of problems at school. Others may hesitate because close communication with the school is uncommon in their cultures. It may take several attempts to contact a family.
- Predict situations in which EL students may need an explanation of your expectations and ask for the EL teacher's assistance. To help EL students and their parents, make sure they understand the academic tasks expected in your class.
- Be realistic about the amount of English you expect students to practice at home since it is more natural for many families to use their native language.
- Be sensitive to the fears of the students and parents. Fear is a natural response to a new culture, a new language, a new school,...a new life. Do not assume the EL student does not like school or is not interested.
- The EL teacher can make suggestions for evaluating and grading EL students and for conferring with their parents. EL teachers maintain portfolios on each student's language development and they will be happy to share this information with you.



- Classroom teachers are experts in the content curriculum. When you share this expertise with the EL teachers, the resulting collaboration increases classroom effectiveness for everyone.

***We can accomplish anything if we work together!***

## **EL STRATEGIES**

The EL field of study suggests many helpful instructional strategies for teaching EL students in your classroom. You may be currently using some of these strategies. As you read the following list, check off those activities which you have already implemented. You may be surprised.

- **Cooperative learning** – group and pair work can be effective tools to help students learn to communicate in another language.
- **Demonstrations** – the teacher gives instruction on how to complete a task using props, pictures, pantomime, and other visual aids to facilitate comprehension.
- **Dialogue journal** – an interactive record of written conversations between the students and the teacher. These are not corrected since the focus is on the message rather than form.
- **Graphic organizer** – a visual map of vocabulary, concepts, and their relationships designed to help learners' comprehension. Timelines, flow charts, outlines, and semantic maps are a few examples.
- **Hands on approach** – hands on activities provide students the opportunity to acquire language naturally while “doing.” Activities involving the senses should be included.
- **Language experience approach** – an approach to learning to read which centers around the students' shared experiences. A student dictates something to the teacher who writes the sentences on an overhead or flip chart. This may be used later as a mini-lesson to discuss such things as punctuation, capitalization, etc. Younger students may copy and illustrate the story they have helped create.
- **Peer tutoring** – a student with a higher level of proficiency helps a student with a lower level of proficiency.
- **Role play and simulation** – students work together in a group to develop an unscripted conversation around a new situation. This moves the students one step beyond a dialogue and places them in a situation in which they are called on to cope with the unexpected or with a new setting.

- **Shared reading** – an effective literacy development strategy for working with students functioning at a wide range of levels.
- **Storytelling** – provides input for children at the early stages of language acquisition when the stories are familiar or highly predictable, repetitive, and lend themselves to dramatization with the heavy use of visuals and realia.

## **EL LEGAL ISSUES**

A number of specific federal laws provide equal opportunities to all citizens and forbid discrimination against citizens on account of race, color, or national origin in any Federally-funded activity:

### **1. EQUAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY ACT (1988)**

#### **This act states in part that:**

No state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin by...(f) the failure by an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs.

### **2. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**

#### **This act provides that:**

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

### **3. BILINGUAL EDUCATION ACT, reauthorized in 1988 describes a EL student as one who:**

- a) meets one or more of the following conditions:
  - i) the student was born outside of the United States or whose native language is not English;
  - ii) the student comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; or
  - iii) the student is American Indian or Alaskan Native and
  - iv. the student comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on his/her level of English language proficiency; and
- b) has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to deny him/her the opportunity to learn successfully in English-only classroom.

## **EL PROGRAM IN SIMPSON COUNTY SCHOOLS**

The English as a Second Language (ESL) Program in Simpson County Schools is grounded in the theory of language acquisition which maintains that second language learning is developmental and that there are stages of development through which each student progresses.

Teaching a second language through content is one of the most effective EL strategies. Content area teachers need to know that language can be simplified, but the content cannot be simplified. EL students learn best through more than one word, more than one reading, or more than one avenue for understanding a concept. EL instruction promotes the use of multiple modes of literacy (reading, writing, speaking, and listening).

Best practices in second language learning and language teaching focus on the goal of functional proficiency. Whether first or second language acquisition, language is learned most effectively when it is used on significant and meaningful situations as learners interact with others. EL learners need multiple opportunities to use English, to interact with others as they study academically challenging content, and to receive feedback on their language use.

When any student enters the Simpson County School System, the student or his/her guardian completes a home language survey. If the survey indicates that a language other than English is spoken in the home, the WAPT or WIDA Screener is administered to the student by the EL teacher and/or designated individual (i.e. counselor or assistant principal). These are English Language proficiency screeners given to incoming students who may be designated as English Learners.

After the testing is complete (4.5 overall composite score constitutes placement in the EL program) the EL teacher meets with the classroom teacher, parents and principal. If the student is English proficient, a Program Service Plan (PSP) will be developed for the student. The district is required to notify parents within 30 days of the student enrolling at the beginning of the school year and within two weeks if the student is enrolling after the start of the school year to complete WAPT or WIDA screenings. The committee will discuss assessment results and develop a plan for helping the student develop proficiency in spoken and written English.

At the K-5 level, students who score non English proficient or low limited English proficient should receive instruction with the EL teacher based on priority need as decided in meeting with teacher, parent, and administrator. Since the classroom teacher will be essentially delivering reading and writing instruction, he/she should assign all class work and grades for the language arts block. Students who score in the intermediate range of English language proficiency (WAPT or WIDA Screener score or ACCESS score) are usually served with a collaborative model. Exceptions to this practice can be made with agreement of the regular education teacher, the EL teacher and the building principal.

High school students may be served by the EL teacher in the tested area through direct services or collaboration as deemed appropriate. The EL teacher assigns school work and grades for the time periods in which he or she instructs students.

EL students are tested yearly in Jan.-Feb. using the ACCESS 2.0 for EL's Online test for grades 1-12; Kindergarten students are tested individually with ACCESS materials; an Alternate ACCESS test is available for qualifying special needs students. Recommendations for continued service are made on the basis of test results, EL and classroom teacher collaborative decisions, observations, multiple alternative assessments and regular and EL classroom performance. Some students continue with direct EL instruction, while some are exited from the program and status, services, and accommodations are end dated June 30th of that school year. Students moving from direct service must be monitored for four years and can continue with accommodations as established in their EL Individual Service Plan within the classroom setting, but not on statewide mandated testing. This must be documented in an EL meeting with the parent, teacher and an administrator. EL teachers are responsible for documenting proper exiting procedures. Classroom teachers are responsible for ongoing progress monitoring for the four year period. Results and observations should be passed on to the administrator of record for entry into Infinite Campus.

## APPENDIX A

### DEFINITIONS

Academic language-language used in the learning of academic subject matter in formal schooling contexts: aspects of language associated with literacy and academic achievement, including specific academic terms or technical language related to each field of study.

ACCESS for ELL's 2.0-secure large scale English language proficiency online assessment administered to 1st-12th grade students who have been identified as English Language learners (EL) annually. (The ACCESS paper test is still administered individually to Kindergarten students.)

Assessment standard -statements setting forth guidelines for evaluating student work; measures of student performance.

Body language-the gestures and mannerisms by which a person communicates with others.

Communicative competence-the ability to recognize and to produce language correctly and fluently in any situation; use of language in realistic everyday situations; involves grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse, and strategic competence.

Cooperative/collaborative group-a grouping arrangement in which positive interdependence and shared responsibility for task completion are established among group members.

Culture-the sum total of life of people; include norms, learned behavior patterns, attitudes, and material things; involves traditions, habits, or customs; how people behave, feel and interact; ways of perceiving, relating, and interpreting events based on social norms.

DLG-Dual Language

EBE- Early Exit Bilingual Education

EL-English Learner is a field of English as a second language, courses, classes, and/or programs (ELL– English Language Learner; ESL-English as a Second Language; LEP – Limited English Proficient) designed and refer to the students learning English as an additional language.

FEP-Fluent English Proficient

ACCESS-Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State is a yearly test (Jan.-Feb); given on English acquisition in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. ACCESS Online meets U.S. federal requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for monitoring and reporting ELLs' progress toward English language proficiency.

Home language-Language(s) spoken in the home by family members or caregivers who reside in the child's home. Sometimes used as a synonym for first language, native language, or L1.

Language proficiency-the level of competence at which an individual is able to use language for both basic communicative tasks and academic purposes (L1-L6)

Learning strategies-mental activities that assist in enhancing learning outcomes. May include metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, or social/affective strategies.

Migrant-students whose families work in seasonal occupations such as farming or in jobs such as poultry processing which require frequent relocation.

NEP-Non-English Proficient

NEW-Newcomer Program

Pull-out instruction-students are withdrawn from their regular classrooms for special classes of EL; instruction in small groups.



Second-language acquisition-the process of learning a foreign or second language (L2).

Social-language-the aspects of language proficiency associated with basic fluency in face-to-face interaction; natural speech in social interactions, including those that occur in the classroom.

WAPT- WIDA-Access Placement Test

WIDA-World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment