

Literacy Guidelines for ELs: The Explanation

Literacy Guidelines for ELLs: Supporting the Development of Language and Literacy for Emergent Bilinguals

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Introduction

Literacy is the foundation and purpose of education. Literacy gives us the ability to engage with this world as knowers who can communicate with others clearly and confidently as well as find and learn from sources of interest that improve living standards, health, and employment. Literacy helps people decide how to vote, file taxes, take care of the estate of a loved one, address community challenges, and simply enjoy the writings of those who know how to use language to feed souls. The simple definition of literacy as reading and writing is not enough for the 21st century. Literacy is “the ability, confidence, and willingness to engage with language to acquire, construct, and communicate meaning in all aspects of life” (Alberta Canada, <https://equitypress.org/-mco>). This means educators need to include reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, presenting, and thinking when planning for, teaching, and assessing the language and literacy development for their English Language Learners (ELLs).

These Literacy Guidelines for ELLs explain three concepts which are accompanied by guiding questions. They also include six guidelines professional educators can use to evaluate the language and literacy development needs of their ELLs and guide their responses. These concepts help break down the complexity of literacy and provide educators with a tool to use when attending in planning, teaching, and assessing their students. The purpose of this tool is to reinforce and address the fundamental elements of literacy. The concepts are presented separately to clarify and further understanding, but educational practices should attend to all of the guidelines simultaneously. These concepts, guiding questions, and guidelines are:

- **Concept 1: Build Literacy:** How can I differentiate instruction to build literacy skills for all students?
 - Guideline 1: Provide Comprehensive Reading and Writing Instruction
 - Guideline 2: Use and Produce Expository and Narrative Texts\
- **Concept 2: Expand Literacy:** How do I use literacy to push students to broaden their content knowledge?
 - Guideline 3: Support Broad and Narrow Reading of Texts
 - Guideline 4: Build Knowledge of Academic Language
- **Concept 3: Create Literacy:** How can I promote critical thinking to create deeper literacy experiences for my students?
 - Guideline 5: Think to Read, Read to Think
 - Guideline 6: Think to Write, Write to Think

In answering the question that accompanies each concept, educators naturally attend to the concept and seek to meet the two guidelines. The guidelines are the focus of the literacy framework. Through attending to them, educators will meet the needs of their ELLs and strengthen the literacy development of all students. In this article, we have grounded the concepts and guidelines theoretically and explained their practical implications. In addition, the article helps educators understand how to incorporate these concepts into their educational practices. When educators understand

and use these guidelines, they will identify gaps in learning and adjust their teaching practices to better plan for, assess, and meet the language and literacy needs of their ELLs while reinforcing their strengths.

Concept 1: Build Literacy: How can I differentiate instruction to build comprehension skills for all students?

The concept Build Literacy invites educators to develop an understanding of the essential building blocks required to improve language and literacy development, determine where each student is in that process, and attend to differentiating instruction to meet the needs of each student. The question invites educators to interrogate their literacy practices and determine their effectiveness in individualizing instruction to build comprehension for all students. The building blocks of literacy are present in all of the guidelines, but Guideline 1, *Provide Comprehensive Reading and Writing Instruction*, directs educators to focus on the essentials ELLs need to become literate in their L2. Guideline 2, *Use and Produce Expository and Narrative Texts*, orients educators to focus on all genres of literacy and invites them to build literacy by differentiating their instruction in ways that enable all students to engage more completely in reading and writing tasks that promote academic language development. This demands educators utilize both narrative and expository texts in their practices.

Guideline 1: Provide Comprehensive Reading and Writing Instruction

Definition

Educators need to *provide comprehensive reading and writing instruction* for all students. By comprehension, we mean integrating all of the components of literacy (reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking) into contextualized instruction. These components include oral language development, phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, comprehension, fluency, and the writing process—all elements noted as essential for student learning by The National Reading Panel and The National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth. Contextualized instruction involves hands-on learning and real-world experiences. It also recognizes and supports differentiated instruction, understanding that each student has different needs to reach educational requirements. This type of instruction is essential because it gives students concrete ways to apply abstract concepts. Educators must teach literacy components concretely, clearly, and explicitly. Implicit and abstract instruction often leaves ELLs more confused and frustrated, which leads to a lack of participation in the necessary tasks required for building their literacy skills (Goldenberg 2010).

Oral language is the foundation from which all literacy emerges. Thus, this principle encourages educators to strategically plan how they will attend to listening and speaking as fundamental strategies in the development of reading and writing. When listening and speaking skills are assumed, educators don't consider explicit ways to engage students in developing these skills. The development of these skills is essential for building literacy. Students with stronger oral language skills demonstrate increased reading skills vis-à-vis those with weaker oral language skills. In observing Long Term English Learners (LTELs), we have noticed they often possess adequate conversational skills but lack the academic oral language skills sufficient to progress in academic settings. ELLs with stronger oral language development - specifically in listening and vocabulary comprehension - are better writers (Wright, 2019). Practice time speaking in academic terms helps students formulate thoughts and language they can transfer to their writing. Although oral language development leads to successful literacy skills, most ELLs spend less than two percent of their school time each day speaking, and those conversations are usually not about academic topics (Soto-Hinman 2011).

To develop strong oral language, students need a firm understanding of phonological and phonemic awareness and phonics. Phonological awareness is the overarching umbrella which contains phonemic awareness and phonics. Phonological awareness is understanding the different sounds used in spoken words and how to use these sounds to create words. It also enables students to decode and spell words and recognize sounds, rhyming words, and counting syllables or sounds in words (Reading Rockets, 2002).

Phonemic awareness and phonics are part of phonological awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. For example, 'sat' contains three phonemes: /s/, /a/, /t/. Among native speakers, this is generally learned informally. Playing with language sounds starts soon after birth. Phonics is

recognizing letter sounds in print. Phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and phonics, must be all explicitly taught to ELLs who don't have these letter-to-sound skills (Goldenberg and Coleman 2010). It's important to remember that phonics gives new readers necessary skills, but it is only one part of a successful reading program. Beginning reading receives a lot of attention, but when students come to kindergarten with these skills, this kind of instruction can be unnecessary for their progress. But, for those without these skills, it is vital—particularly for ELLs who aren't fluent in their L1. It is only through attention to phonics and phonemic awareness, and the alphabetic principal, that the deficit created by not learning to read and write in your first language can be overcome.

Word study is a method used to learn to spell words that incorporates phonemic awareness. Students look for patterns when spelling words and works directly with phonics to help students in reading and spelling. It is used as an alternative to learn traditional spelling techniques. Word study helps students see the relationship between letters and sounds. They learn that letter patterns represent the sounds used in spoken words; this builds critical thinking skills, rather than encouraging students to rely on memorization to simply spell words. (Vaughn, 2004). (For more information about word study follow this link: <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/word-study-instruction-k-2-classroom>)

Comprehension and fluency are important components of reading and writing instructions. Comprehension is the ability to understand and interpret input. Input is anything coming into the student's mind: reading a book, watching a video clip, listening to a presentation, collaborating in a group, etc. Input must be comprehensible and comprehended in order for a student to learn. Fluency means to read with speed, accuracy, and prosody (expression). ELL educators who use activities designed to increase fluency have seen significant benefits for ELLs in learning the sounds and rhythms of the English language, developing oral language, and improving both reading and listening comprehension (Ford, 2020).

The writing process allows students to learn, think, reflect and display their knowledge. This guideline reinforces the idea that the writing process will strengthen student writing. Writing is a process with a variety of steps, and attention to those steps will help students improve their literacy skills. These steps can vary depending on the task and requirements, but ELLs need repeated exposure to the same writing assignment so they can focus on improving one or two aspects at a time. Language skills developed in a student's L1 can transfer to his or her L2, but usually require a teacher to facilitate that transfer through explicit instruction. Just like native speakers, ELLs bring a range of writing skills from their first language that can support the development of their writing skills in their second language. Since there is variability in the writing skills of students, educators need to take that into account when supporting their writing development (Wright, 2019).

Support

Attention to oral language development requires more than providing opportunities to speak. Effective oral language development requires both quality comprehensible input and intentional and orchestrated opportunities for interaction. To help ELLs develop oral language, educators need to intentionally plan, model, and explicitly teach the language they are asking students to use. Educators must be made aware of the significance well-structured language has in building academic discourse in their students and accept their fundamental role in modeling that language (Love, 2009). Instruction that supports strong oral language development constantly refers to and integrates written language.

Besides modeling academic language, educators can use context-embedded, cognitively demanding tasks to help students develop oral language. Context-embedded tasks are performed in-person and include body language, gestures, and visual cues to aid in understanding. Context-embedded tasks rely heavily on the physical environment to help others comprehend what is being said. Cognitively demanding tasks are task that are challenging, but always include the necessary support to make the challenges achievable. In developing oral language, educators should engage students in partner, small group, or whole class discussions that include topics featuring cognitively demanding language. Educators should also create and model exposure to academic language and use these opportunities to directly and explicitly engage students in language instruction (Freeman, 2009). (For more information: <https://equitypress.org/-mit/>)

Phonological awareness and word study need to be addressed differently based on the L1 literacy skills of the ELL. Some elementary students may have enough literacy development in their L1 that they need minimal help and will quickly catch up with their mainstream peers. Some secondary students may struggle with literacy in their L1 and need extensive work with phonological awareness before they can even begin reading and writing. Therefore, it's important that all educators have some knowledge of phonological awareness and strategies for attending to it when needed in their regular instruction.

Attending to fluency helps ELLs develop oral language and improve reading and listening comprehension. When creating activities to develop fluency, include an explicit model of fluency as a standard for all students, but especially for ELLs. This means giving them opportunities to read a text more than once. When fluency is practiced repeatedly with the same text, it reinforces correct practices and gives ELLs the opportunity to work on problem areas within a text. A similar technique requires having a native speaker read the text to an ELL while the ELL follows along in the text. For ELLs, following along in the text while listening deepens their processing and increases their comprehension while providing a model for expression. In addition, creating a rubric of performance criteria will clarify expectations for speed, accuracy, and prosody that will help students know where they are and where they need to improve. Also, providing students both background knowledge and vocabulary support before and after reading helps them understand content, build fluency, and decide how to best use expression. Vocabulary support impacts fluency development because attending to vocabulary gives ELLs more practice reading words and develops clarity about meaning so they can read with expression. Know your students' needs and strengths and provide them situations in which they can be successful. Beware of passages that may be too difficult. Avoid mandatory public readings when you're unsure of your students' fluency skills. These situations can heighten the affective filter, weaken their performance, and make them resistant to reading (Vaughn 2007).

Comprehension is the goal of reading instruction; reading accomplishes very little if readers don't make meaning from the text. During reading tasks, engage with students in ways that focus more on meaning making than simply decoding. Even when students have poor L2 language skills, educators should orient the work to meaning making; if they do so, ELLs' reading and writing skills will continue to improve. After all, "you me downtown fun", though grammatically poor, makes complete sense.

ELLs need comprehension skills taught with high quality ESL instruction that focuses on academic oral language development. The National Academies states that those elementary schools that don't combine both high quality ESL instruction and comprehension skills in their pedagogy put ELLs in a situation where they don't progress and will continue to require ESL support beyond the seven to twelve years required to achieve academic language acquisition (Wright, 2019). This means ELLs that don't receive high quality ESL instruction combined with literacy instruction who come to us in kindergarten will need ESL support well beyond middle school. Additionally, all students learn better when they are involved in choosing what they learn, and this is especially important in building and expanding literacy. Research shows the significance of giving students of all ages time for reader's choice. This voluntary reading exercise improves not only reading comprehension, but vocabulary, writing, and grammar (Krashen, 2018). Some aspects of reading instruction specific to ELLs differ from native speakers. ELLs need explicit instruction on comprehension strategies that are often implicitly provided in educational tasks, and good readers usually adopt them; however, ELLs will need instruction, opportunities for practice, and guidance in developing these strategies. Educators should also provide opportunities for ELLs to interact with more proficient English speakers.

Writing experiences need to be authentic and meaningful for ELLs, so allowing for student choice increases better learning outcomes. According to the ELA Standards, ELLs need both longer and shorter writing assignments. Longer assignments encourage the opportunity to practice research, reflection, and revision, while shorter assignments include a variety of audiences, tasks, and purposes (Wright, 2019). Dialogue journals are a fun way to engage students in short assignments where students are eager to interact with the teacher and receive responses to their work. As with all aspects of literacy development, explicitly teaching form (grammar, spelling, structure, etc.) works best in context, so choose specific readings, writing assignments, and oral language activities that provide context in the most helpful forms to attend to students' needs. Give timely and appropriate feedback on writing assignments and highlight

improvements on meaning over form. Don't ask students to correct all their mistakes, but identify their stage of development and pick a couple of appropriate writing skills to improve.

Guideline 2: Use and Produce Expository and Narrative Texts

Definition

Students need to *use and produce expository and narrative texts*, to gain experience reading and writing both kinds of texts. Educators can support student learning by introducing them to a range of literary, informational, and technical texts. This gives students a wide range of appropriate grade level text types and exposes them to various text features, academic language, purposes, and styles. Literary texts include stories, poems, dramas, etc. Informational texts include non-fiction, biographical, historical, and other content area texts. Technical texts include procedural and how-to texts. As students read and study these different texts, the texts can also be used as models to guide their writing as they produce texts. These examples, along with linguistic scaffolding, give students what they need to produce expository and narrative texts of their own.

Narrative texts engage students in extensive reading and are meant to entertain as well as inform. They typically tell a story and can be fiction or nonfiction. The entertainment aspect helps motivate students to read more, which increases high frequency vocabulary knowledge and literacy skills in word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. Narrative texts can also help create personal connections to expository texts, which in turn ease the effort to gain mastery over academic vocabulary because it has become more intrinsically interesting. Narrative texts can be used to introduce topics in a fun and exciting way that gets students interested in diving into more complicated and denser expository texts.

Expository texts can also be engaging, but they focus on the goal of the author instead of a story. Often, the author's goal is to educate the reader on a topic. Informational texts are akin to expository texts, but informational texts solely relay information, whereas expository texts can also include opinions. Examples of expository texts include news articles, essays, interviews, and trade books. They follow text structures like problem/solution, compare/contrast, cause/effect, etc. When a student is particularly interested in a topic, a well-written expository text on that topic can be quite engaging. Requiring students to read expository texts teaches them to read for information. In the process, they gain content knowledge and academic language essential to mastery of the content area.

Support

Some educators may shy away from exposing ELLs to expository texts (not wanting to overwhelm them with more 'difficult' reading material), but ELLs should be exposed early and often to expository texts along with strategies to scaffold their learning. Even when these texts are more challenging, some students will prefer them and be more likely to engage with them in contrast to narrative texts. These more challenging texts are exactly what ELLs need to gain exposure to the academic language required to be academically successful. Incorporating instructional conversations with multiple readings of texts helps ELLs obtain the scaffolding necessary to achieve comprehension (Wright, 2019). One of the key differences between narrative and expository texts is how language is used. As we suggested earlier, the purpose of the text will produce different structural patterns: problem/solution, compare/contrast, cause/effect, etc.

Informational texts are often more lexically dense than narrative texts and require more scaffolding to help construct meaning. The lexical density of a text measures the ratio of content area words to total words: the higher the lexical density, the more difficult the text. Because the vocabulary of such texts may be overwhelming, ELLs require help understanding the meaning of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Asking students to engage in hands-on learning activities provides them opportunities to practice talking about content meaning, asking questions, and using the academic discourse of the text. Creating instructional conversations that focus on the specific language of the text provides students and educators time to work together to co-construct meaning, and for educators to demonstrate that process (Filmore, 2013). Connecting texts to the outside world renders them relatable to students, making their concepts more concrete. Educators can also use text features like tone, style, and structure to teach text meaning.

All professional educators must understand their role as literacy educators to ensure that ELLs have significant, successful reading experiences every day, across all content areas (Wright 2019). In their role as literacy educators, professional educators can carefully select appropriate reading materials for both traditional (i.e. language arts, social sciences, science) and non-traditional literacy-focused content areas (i.e. art, P.E., math, music). They should also create writing assignments and prepare learners for reading and writing activities. ELL educators need to use research-based strategies, learning activities, and materials that help scaffold content for their students' success.

Concept 2: Expand Literacy: How do I use literacy to push students to broaden their content knowledge?

The concept Expand Literacy means to push students out of their comfort zones and learn to feel comfortable in the discomfort of more challenging texts that broaden their content knowledge. Strong educators understand that as they support students in building literacy, they also need to push students to expand their literacy skills. This means that they take up the task of supporting students in becoming literate in different content areas. Successful secondary educators recognize what it takes to be literate in their content areas and have the ability to build and expand on the literacy skills necessary for ELLs to fully participate in their discipline. Broadening content knowledge includes teaching what they know about a certain topic - including the accompanying text structures and academic language - and introducing experiences that develop and expand on students' skills so they feel confident and comfortable in the world. Guideline 3, *Support Broad and Narrow Reading of Texts*, provides students new tools to expand their literacy through deeper engagement in content knowledge. Guideline 4, *Build Knowledge of Academic Language*, pushes students to expand their understanding and use of academic language to participate in academic conversations, reading, and writing.

Guideline 3: Support Broad and Narrow Reading of Texts

Definition

Educators *support broad and narrow reading of texts* to expand students' literacy skills by frequently providing opportunities for both. Broad reading encourages students to read from a vast range of genres and topics. Narrow reading focuses on deep readings of texts by the same author or the same subject. Reading both broadly and narrowly is how academic language is built. Many educators interpret this guideline as the traditional view that broad reading gives students knowledge of the world and narrow reading provides them a more narrowly oriented and focused perspective; however, this guideline defines the purpose of broad reading not only as learning about the world, but as gaining experience with different language uses, structures, and purposes while also reading to find the right texts that motivate and engage students to read more. The purpose of narrow reading is not only to learn more deeply about a topic, but to provide the repetition of concepts, ideas, vocabulary, and text structures needed to expand literacy skills without purposeless redundancy that leaves students disengaged. When students engage in broad reading, they bring their general knowledge of the world and combine it with their repetitive experiences from narrow reading. This combination of broad and narrow provides abstract and detailed perspectives. The study of these two perspectives has the potential to release students' imaginations, which encourages them to better analyze and respond to their world.

In the current educational climate, it is important to understand that the word 'text' is understood more broadly than just reading a book, article, or website. By expanding the meaning of this word, as well as what counts as literate behavior, educators will support students in evaluating, interpreting, and applying what they are able to extract from this broader conception of 'text'. This may include interpreting a painting, or extracting meaning from charts, graphs, data sets, and political cartoons. It may include reading a room, or making meaning from materials obtained from the Internet, apps, or games. It may also include the literacy required to engage in a lab, build an engine, make a dress, or paint a work of art.

Broad reading encourages students to read from a variety of subjects and genres to broaden their background knowledge and expand their vocabulary. Educators provide broad reading experiences to both helps students learn about the diverse ways words and language can be used and to provide enough interesting material that there is something for everyone. The more students read, the better readers they become (Stanovich, 1986). Recommendations for broad reading can be based on student or educator interest and can come from a variety of materials: magazine articles, newspapers, editorials, websites, informational and expository texts, narrative texts, poetry, and novels. To

support a broad reading of texts, educators should compile a collection of reading materials at an appropriate level of readability which are easily available to students. A large collection of reading material should contain a wide and diverse variety of topics to communicate across a wide range of reading skills and levels.

Narrow reading is defined as reading deeply on one specific topic from various sources or reading multiple texts by the same author (Krashen, 2018). Narrow reading can serve different purposes, depending on the texts used. When narrow reading focuses on student motivation, they are encouraged to read more, and the outcome is better comprehension skills because of the repetition of text structure, language, and ideas. When students read narrowly on topics they are interested in, they read about those topics repeatedly. This provides multiple exposures to content vocabulary and discourse, and text structures and patterns, while gathering information from different sources on a topic. Two examples of the narrow reading of texts by the same author include the fictional series *Harry Potter* and *Magic Treehouse*, where the author's writing style helps students reinforce specific ideas, text structure, and vocabulary, which helps them quickly acquire language. This type of narrow reading works well to build fluency and reader engagement and motivation. Personal interest is the catalyst to this process because the reader is truly reading for meaning and understanding and is willing to engage with more complex text structures and vocabulary to understand the content.

Another narrow reading focus is studying a specific topic to help ELLs build academic knowledge, language and discourse. This can be helpful in preparing students for successful academic experiences in your classroom and beyond. Providing students with a variety of texts about a current event gives them multiple exposures to the same details and facts, ideas and vocabulary, but each text can add greater detail to their understanding, or different perspectives from different writers. Engaging students in this expands their literacy skills.

Support

By creating student experiences based on broad and narrow reading, educators naturally and consistently expand their students' literacy development. The purpose of broad reading is to motivate independent literacy development by getting learners excited to read while expanding their knowledge of the different ways authors use language to write. This improves reading comprehension, fluency, and accuracy, and expands vocabulary. Engaging learners in authentic and meaningful reading and writing activities for extended periods of time each day and providing a forum in which learners can discuss and apply insights from their readings are essential elements to promoting language and literacy development across content areas (Wright, 2019).

Book Talks allow educators and students to use their broad reading experiences to help other students find interesting books. They share and highlight some of their favorite books, giving recommendations to others for further reading. As educators communicate with students about their reading engagement, they help students find a wide range of reading materials and they set expectations for when students lose interest in a particular text. It's important to teach students they don't need to finish everything they start, but to try something else that may be more interesting. Successful educators give students time to read, write, and discuss what they are reading. They understand that student choice based on interest is key to effectively engaging students in broad reading for desired outcomes, but they are also aware that students may need guidance and support in identifying topics and genres they engage in.

Educators also need to guide and support ELLs in narrow reading to help them make meaning. In making meaning, students learn text structure, build vocabulary, deepen understanding, and increase their ability to see multiple perspectives from a specific topic. Such exposure can come through deep engagement with a single author or a narrowly defined topic. Krashen suggests focusing on reader's choice as a strategy to engage students in narrow reading. He argues this is fundamental because reader engagement is essential in expanding literacy. Strong teachers take note of the texts, topics, and ideas that intrigue particular students and then adopt and use this information as they construct instruction for the whole class, or provide opportunities relevant to the content being taught that allow students to pursue their own topics and share what they learn. For example, a student interested in fashion design could study the specific clothing of a time period and learn how the styles reflect the significant events during that time. A student interested in science fiction might explore particular scientific ideas and learn how a science fiction author

would incorporate these in a book. In both cases, the teacher combines student interest with narrow reading and in this way expands students' more general literacy skills.

To engage students in this type of narrow reading, first make sure the reading is fun and interesting to the reader. Search out texts that are intriguing, build on and promote alternative perspectives, and provide a variety of opportunities for students to expand literacy skills. These could be comics, romance novels, silly magazines - anything that is genuinely interesting to the reader. For example, a history teacher studying the Spanish American War found a text that was written exclusively from the Mexican perspective on the war. When educators engage in this kind of curriculum making, they are focusing as much on expanding student literacy as they are on supporting them in learning new information. When you build literacy, you empower students to engage both with the material at-hand and in the future. Indeed, these kinds of academic tasks prepare student to more skillfully and profitably engage with academic text. The focus at this stage is not about learning new information; it's simply preparation for more academic texts (Krashen, 2004).

Krasen argues that promoting academic literacy supports students in naturally moving from fun reading to academic reading. Don't push readers to work faster or harder; just keep introducing them to a wide variety of genres and subjects and let them find texts that really interest them. Allow them to stop reading a text if it's too hard or not very interesting. Simply encourage them to pick a different text and start again. Educators should encourage students to take the text with them wherever they go (that is reasonably appropriate). Motivated readers generally find a little extra time to look at something that is interesting to them (Krashen 2004). Obviously, there are many times when it's difficult for educators to incorporate student choice. When educators supplement mandated texts with interesting narrative and expository texts (Guideline 2), they help students better navigate these readings and can more easily find purpose and meaning. Scaffolding and modeling is essential in these situations so students see and learn to make meaning from texts that hold less interest for them.

Educators often think of thematic units as examples of narrow reading, but narrow reading must be much more specific than thematic units allow. This does not mean thematic units do not have a place in today's education system; it simply means they do not necessarily promote the kind of narrow reading that builds depth of knowledge to expand students' academic literacy. Well-designed thematic units generally pull texts from many different genres that relate to the theme in broader spectrums (Kinsella, 2018). A thematic unit on the solar system could include a poem, an article from a current newspaper showing a new finding, a science fiction book where humans encounter different species on different planets, and some Dorling Kindersley non-fiction explaining teaching different aspects. This is an example of broad reading, because students are introduced to many different text structures and language, but doesn't fit the definition of narrow reading. For narrow reading, educators compile sets of texts with specific texts that focus on narrow topics with repetitious academic language and knowledge. When compiling a selection of texts for narrow reading, look for engaging writing with similar text structures and language so students experience multiple exposures. This helps them become familiar with the intended structure and language. Educators also need to explicitly teach students the structure and language of texts in context, so they can identify and understand them. Academic conversations on these readings allow students to discuss and analyze their learning. With intentional planning, educators create the criteria for academic conversations that build academic oral language which translates into improved writing skills and allows students to build on each other's knowledge to deepen their understanding. These academic conversations can include jigsaw activities, where students prepare specific parts of the text to share, analyze and discuss, without requiring everyone to have read all of the text. This is especially helpful for ELLs, giving them smaller chunks of reading when their brains have been overworked in other areas.

Guideline 4: Build Knowledge of Academic Language

Definition

In order for ELLs to reach their potential as learners, developing academic language is of fundamental importance. Building academic language is also key in expanding student literacy. Educators help ELL students *build knowledge of academic language* by shifting their thinking from teaching academic vocabulary to teaching the language of their

content area (Nagy, 2012). This means creating an academic language learning program that promotes reading, writing, listening, speaking, and thinking in the content area. Vocabulary knowledge is the strongest measurement of academic success across all content areas. According to Feldman and Kinsella, only 6% of school time is used teaching vocabulary and most of that instruction is decontextualized. They found that only 1.4% of school time is actually focused on content-area vocabulary (Feldman, 2005). Educators need to provide more instructional time during school that engages ELLs in developing academic language. Educators help ELLs build the language of their content area by directly teaching vocabulary words and word learning strategies, encouraging word awareness, and providing students opportunities to use their expanding academic vocabulary by engaging each other in understanding and producing academic discourse.

Incorporating the direct teaching of vocabulary, word learning strategies, and word awareness helps students effectively learn academic vocabulary. When directly teaching vocabulary, educators can explicitly teach word teaching strategies to help students learning the meaning of words on their own. These word learning strategies include dictionary use, morpheme study, context analysis, and cognates (Feldman, 2005). They help students incorporate words and discourse into their language development. Students need multiple opportunities to see and use the language in authentic and meaningful contexts. Word learning strategies are strategies students can use independently to learn new words. Students also excel in language development when educators encourage word awareness, meaning they promote interest in words, what they mean, and how to use them. This provides positive learning activities for students to think about the words around them, find interest in the relationships between words, and experiment with new words in their speech and writing. When educators foster words awareness among their students, it become easier for the students to learn more words because it becomes a game they enjoy. They also realize new words allow them to learn and express new information. "Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but it also implies how that word fits into the world" (Stahl 2005). When educators understand and teach vocabulary as knowledge acquisition instead of word learning, academic language is learned more deeply and seen more often in student work. Students find purpose in their efforts and see words as a tool to promote accessibility to ideas.

With all of this new language knowledge, students need interactive opportunities to practice listening to and using academic language for successful school experiences. These interactions must also include rich language in a variety of contexts. Social language, sometimes referred to as BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) is learned more rapidly than academic language because there is greater exposure to this type of language and more opportunities to practice using it. When educators understand that after third grade, all learners - whether native English speakers or ELLs - are learning academic language, they see the importance of intentionally attending to the teaching of academic language in their instruction. Academic language knowledge comes from exposure to certain kinds of materials and requires expectations for communication not often found in social settings. Intentionally planning interactions increases academic language understanding and supports the production of academic discourse. When educators create learning opportunities for all students to more fully participate in academic language development, students genuinely enjoy the challenge of meeting high expectations. Remember, reading practices in the modern home vary and may not lead students to develop strong academic language. This is particularly true for ELLs. For educators, that means in order to expand ELLs' literacy, they need to focus on explicitly teaching academic language.

Support

Developing ELLs' academic language begins with - but is not exclusive to- developing vocabulary. Thus, educators should provide strong vocabulary instruction. Word learning strategies support ELLs in independently learning words, but first they must be explicitly taught how to use them. When using dictionaries, teach ELLs to use them sparingly after using other strategies. Far too often, when educators do not understand ESL instructional strategies, they have students rely on dictionaries or Google translate to learn English. These options do not provide the substantial rich language context required to help them understand and learn new words. Necessary language learning takes place with literacy instruction combined with high-quality ESL instruction (Wright, 2019), not directly translating words, phrases, or even passages. Learning morphemes is a word learning strategy that helps students learn to guess the meaning of words, based on the smallest parts: roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Learning these meanings helps them figure out the meaning

of other words on their own. Analyzing the context around unknown words is highly effective, but many older students need help using context because they don't have the skills in their L1 to transfer to their L2 (Freeman, 2009). When a student's L1 is similar to English, cognates (words that share the same root) are very helpful in building academic language. Students often need explicit instruction on cognates; it is not automatically transferred (Freeman, 2009).

There are many strategies available to directly teach words, but it's important to use strategies that are authentic and meaningful within a given context. Marzano's model represents a strategy to use. The first three steps of Marzano's model can be taught at the same time. First, the educator starts of describing, explaining, or giving an example of the word. Next, students restate the educator's definition in their own words. Finally, students draw something to represent the definition. After these steps, educators help students notice the word in other interactions that help deepen their understanding. They also discuss the word with other students, which helps clarify misunderstandings. Finally, Marzano recommends games as highly effective in student learning (Freeman, 2009). Graphic organizers also support students' efforts to learn new words. They help ELLs visualize and critically think about words. Frayer's model is one of the most popular graphic organizers used, but there are many others. Employ those that help students define and learn to use words in context.

Intentionally planned interactive activities are crucial in academic language acquisition because they provide practice for students to develop understanding of and produce academic discourse. Educators can provide support to learn both the meaning and form of new words. Students can practice integrating new words in authentic and meaningful discourse. Always consider ways to orchestrate classroom interactions that require the use of academic language in speaking, reading, writing, and listening in a variety of contexts (Nagy, 2012). This includes interactions around broad and extensive reading of expository and narrative texts (Guidelines 3&4) to build academic language. Not only does incidental learning of words take place when students read (Freeman, 2009), it gives students a foundation to conduct interactions in a meaningful and authentic way. It also allows students to see new words in a variety of contexts, deepening understanding of meaning, and seeing other language needed to place the words in context.

Educators encourage word awareness when they create a word-rich environment through classroom décor, rich language texts, and authentic and meaningful interactions. Educators can also foster word awareness by noticing and encouraging articulate and clearly pronounced language. Educators provide opportunity for students to have fun with words and investigate different ways to use them (Graves 2008). Most importantly, educators can simply help instill a deep curiosity about words in their students and enjoy the discovery of words together. Successful bilingual students know how to play with words and enjoy the process. Playing with words is playing with the creation and expression of ideas. Excluding students' native language limits their opportunity to play with language and transfer L1 knowledge into L2.

Concept 3: Create Literacy: How can I promote critical thinking to create deeper literacy experiences for my students?

Focusing on the practices *reading to think*, *thinking to read*, and *writing to think*, *thinking to write* creates independent learners who know how to create the learning environment that motivates them and pushes them to improve. Thus, the concept Create Literacy means teaching students to use metacognition and critical thinking in their learning which then allows them to build and expand upon their literacy and develop a new relationship with it. Often, when we think of literacy development, we don't consider the central role of thinking. As the guidelines for this concept suggest, in order to gain meaning from text to comprehend and use it we have to think about it. Reading and writing give us content and skill in doing that. Once we make meaning of text, it pushes our thinking forward, opens new opportunities for learning, enables us to make connection across content areas and everyday contexts, and builds a foundation for writing. We have to understand places, people, and ideas, and recognize how they're expressed. Combining thinking and reading enables this. Thinking, reading, and writing enable us to become deeper thinkers. This concept points to the integration of the elements of literacy in promoting it. This becomes even more apparent when we are thoughtful and metacognitive about our reading and writing.

Guideline 5: Think to Read, Read to Think

Definition

Educators who support students in *think to read, read to think* understand the roles of critical thinking and metacognition in reading comprehension. Why think to read? Students need practice thinking to actively engage with a text. How often do students read words on a page without thinking about what they are reading? Effective reading is an active process that necessitates thinking. Why read to think? When students make reading an active process, they think about what they are reading, ask questions to further their understanding, evaluate the credibility of the author, decide if they agree or disagree with what is being said, and connect what they read to their lives and the world in which they live. Through this process, educators support thinking as students learn to become active readers. Educators must model and expect students to use thinking strategies as they read. This helps students build reading competence in fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. The more they read, the better readers they become, and the more knowledge they have to assess each situation and make educated decisions.

The purpose of *think to read, read to think* is for ELLs to learn to make meaning from texts, then make judgements based on what they learn. Making meaning demands critical thinking skills and metacognition. Meaning occurs when readers engage with texts in order to think about interpretations and implications from which students and educators then make judgments. John Goodlad (Sirotnik et al, 1990) argues that, "We pay educators for their judgments." These judgments help educators determine their priorities and values and enable them to make decisions about student learning. As educators exercise their judgment, they teach their students to make better and wiser decisions.

Students learn to think during reading as educators model thinking and hold expectations for students to incorporate what they learn into their own thinking. When students learn to make their thinking visible, educators are able to see how students think and feel about what they are learning so they can support further learning. As a result, they find ways to engage them more deeply in academic work (Ritchhart, 2011). Educators modeling thinking and students practicing making thinking visible happens as they interact with each other through oral and written communication. To most effectively build and expand literacy, these interactions need to be meaningful and authentic and focus on the texts. These strategies include (but are not limited to) activating knowledge, anticipation, finding details and meaning, challenging points of view, and considering implications (Abbot, http://magi.tc2.ca/uploads/PDFs/Critical%20Discussions/reading_as_thinking.pdf).

Educators help build reading competence in ELLs by promoting critical thinking, attending to the development of thinking metacognition, and thinking about their thinking. Research shows that struggling readers - including ELLs - can improve comprehension by learning skills employed by successful readers. Metacognition contributes significantly to their success because it leads them to examine how they process written information, develop strategies that support their comprehension, and devise ways to strategically apply the strategies. Through metacognition, ELLs can also learn to identify where breakdowns in comprehension occur and practice correcting them (Karbalaei, 2011).

Support

Think to read, read to think promotes ELL language and literacy development. This means educators introduce thinking strategies early and often, not waiting for students to learn to read first. Educators can help ELLs learn to think about reading by modeling reading strategies that incorporate critical thinking skills and metacognition. Strong readers are strategic readers. Students rely on different strategies when reading, but they know how to read with purpose and apply strategies to support making meaning. ELLs need to be taught to be strategic readers in each content area because reading can look different based on the text structures and language of each text. Understanding text structure directly relates to comprehension. Explicitly teaching common text structures for each content area is one way to help students become strategic thinkers when reading. Showing them the thinking processes behind each reading strategy shows them the thinking that takes place when creating a Venn diagram, KWL chart, or participating in a class retell. It also helps them learn to use those strategies independently when reading activity supports are not available.

Educators can also model and expect ELLs to use specific metacognitive strategies to improve reading comprehension. These include: clarifying purpose; identifying main points; focusing on the main points without getting distracted by

insignificant details; monitoring comprehension; considering if reading goals were met; and noticing comprehension failures and correcting them. The hardest part of incorporating these strategies is learning how to use them strategically (Carrell, 1998). Modeling helps significantly. Educators can model think alouds while reading. They can also show ELLs that different strategies are needed at different times and in different ways. ELLs practice metacognition when explaining what strategies they use during specific passages, why they chose them, and how they used them to better comprehend and make meaning in reading. This process also helps students make their thinking visible for educators to evaluate, support, and redirect learning.

Combining close readings with academic conversations both builds upon and expands literacy to create new literacy. It helps students make their thinking visible and can be used in all content areas. Close reading means reading a text multiple times for different purposes. Each purpose allows the reader to look deeper into the layers and complexity of the text (Chauvin, 2015). Academic conversations about their findings are crucial to this process to allow students to talk about what they learn. This not only solidifies understanding but allows them to learn even more from their peers and the reading they have done to support their participation. These conversations work best when educators teach students to use accountable talk. Accountable talk means the student is accountable for their learning as they build knowledge of a topic, learn to provide evidence for their comments, and engage in healthy conversations of varying opinions (Chauvin, 2015). Teaching students to use reading as a tool for thinking allows for a more inquiry-based classroom, where students are questioning what they read and building knowledge through texts to solve real-world problems. This makes learning more engaging and gives students the opportunity to manage their own education (Chauvin, 2015).

Using text features to identify and make connections to big ideas gives students the opportunity to incorporate thinking into their reading. Text features vary depending on the genre but may include a table of contents, glossary, diagrams, pictures, captions, side bars, bolded words, etc. Most students are in a hurry to finish the reading and don't pay attention to the text features, so it's best to explicitly teach their purpose and how to use them. Ask students to think about why certain text features are there, how they point to the main ideas, and connect other ideas together.

Guideline 6: Think to Write, Write to Think

Definition

Think to write, write to think reminds educators and students that “writing is thinking in action”, (Menary, 2007). Interestingly, like speaking, it is in communicating their understanding that students realize what they know. Writing is a process that naturally facilitates thinking both by manipulating language and creating ideas. Students need to see language as a tool that helps them use language to convey meaning, and as a tool that creates new thoughts and ideas. Writing is also a tool that makes thinking visible and knowledge explicit. When thinking is visible, it reveals to both students and educators where their strengths and needs are in writing skills, language, and content knowledge, and it helps them decide the next steps to support students in improving both their strengths and weaknesses. Teaching students that writing makes knowledge explicit helps students see the purpose in a difficult process. Francis Bacon (1601) said, “Writing makes an exact man.” One of the reasons writing is difficult is because students’ thoughts and ideas are not always clear, but writing pushes students to clarify and articulate what they know. This process involves wrestling with the language and ideas to figure out how to clearly and proficiently convey meaning. One way educators provide support in this process is by modeling strategies to promote thinking.

Educators need to model writing strategies that promote thinking. Critical thinking skills and metacognitive skills are both crucial to this work. Critical thinking skills help students solve problems while metacognitive skills help students regulate learning. In the writing process, metacognitive skills include planning, monitoring, and evaluating (Goctu, 2017). Critical thinking skills specific to writing include observing, reflecting, evaluating, explaining, problem solving, and decision making. As educators promote *think to write, write to think*, they also need to support ELLs as active participants in writing by using academic language and identifying students’ ideas. As active participants, they need to understand the writing system, including grammar, structure, vocabulary, etc. Educators can also foster word awareness (Guideline 4) to help ELLs become aware of the world of language and the ability it has to help them express

what they know, and show others who they are. These practices help maximize ELLs' experience with writing (Menary, 2007).

Support

When students understand that writing is a process that naturally facilitates thinking, it helps lower the affective filter to create stronger writing because they are allowed to focus on their thinking first, find out what they know, and then decide how to express it in writing. David McCullough said, "Writing is thinking. To write well is to think clearly. That's why it's so hard." (Cole, 2002).

When educators use writing as a tool that makes thinking visible and knowledge explicit, they support more significant learning in the writing assignments they give students. As educators highlight and model these ideas, students gain an awareness of their own metacognitive process and their independence as learners. They learn to self-assess their writing in terms of form (manipulating words to convey meaning) and content (creating new knowledge). As students increase their awareness of the thinking and knowledge they are demonstrating through writing, they see writing as a tool to achieve academic success. To help them with this process, giving ELLs time to speak and write in their L1 promotes the critical thinking they need. They also need to co-construct knowledge with other students to build a foundation of thinking and knowledge to use in their writing. With a strong foundation built, educators can then focus on teaching writing as a process, promoting rewrites, and teaching different aspects of academic writing to improve ELL language and literacy development.

Educators promote language and literacy development by modeling thinking strategies like planning, monitoring, and evaluating in common writing tasks. For example, students generally take notes to remember important summary points of a lecture. Educators should encourage students to use notes to reflect the learning and thinking that happened in class and the new understandings they are developing. The teacher and students can then use the information from these notes to create challenging and engaging learning experiences (Haave, 2007).

Additionally, educators should encourage students to use visual organizers. As students take a more focused thinking approach to their writing, visual organizers can significantly impact the outcome of writing for ELLs by providing structure to their thoughts and ideas. Through this, they can plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing because critical academic language and clear ideas are accessible via the visual organizers in support of their writing. Promoting thinking through writing also demands more engaging and meaningful student group discussions about reading and writing assignments. These enable students to co-construct knowledge, which leads to more insightful writing experiences. It also provides them practice communicating ideas orally that they will subsequently use in their writing, making writing assignments easier. Prioritizing thinking in writing helps educators see and teach the connection between the thinking strategies used in reading and writing assignments. As ELLs learn to transfer strategies between reading and writing, their skills as readers and writers will increase. Connection and transfer need to be explicitly taught; neither of these skills are necessarily learned implicitly. Students also need to discuss texts they are reading and specifically examine the language, content, and structure of the text to connect and then transfer them to their academic writing. Writing reflections or journal entries helps students analyze texts and think about the purposes of their various text selections (Chauvin, 2015).

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