Creating an Equitable Learning Environment for English Language Learners Through Being a Reader, Second Edition – Part 3

By Veronica Vasquez | Categories: English Language Learners, Reading

Part III—Bringing Intentional, Differentiated English Language Learner Support to Each Day of Instruction

As we wrap up this blog series, we will uncover how the second edition of Being a Reader brings differentiation to life within every day of instruction! Our ultimate goal as teachers is to set all students up for success within grade-level work. In Being a Reader, English Language Learner (ELL) support is designed to give ELL students access to and success with grade-level content. In addition to the pre-teaching support we explored in part 2 of this series, there are additional features embedded within the curriculum that provide options to differentiate for ELLs as needed.

ELL Notes

If you are familiar with the first edition of Being a Reader, you are aware that there are ELL notes in the margins of the teacher’s manuals. These notes provide specific suggestions for adjusting or enhancing instruction for ELLs during a lesson. What is different in the second edition? The ELL notes now highlight “categories of support” that spiral throughout the units so that teachers can develop facility with the type of support and even implement similar scaffolds across content areas and throughout the day. Here is a list of a few of these categories of support, with an example for each:

- Language charts (“feeling words" chart, prompts chart)
- Individualized Daily Reading (IDR) supports (choosing "just right" books)
- Cultural sensitivity and celebrating diversity (recognizing and building on the assets ELLs bring to the learning and the classroom)
- Home-language support (students literate in home language can discuss their IDR books with home-language partners)
- Question rephrasing (rephrasing potentially confusing questions or separating complex sentences into multiple questions that are more easily understood)

Extensions

Another enhanced feature is the extension activities that are particularly beneficial to ELLs, called out in the Teacher’s Manual with a globe icon. These extensions generally occur once a week, take about 15-20 minutes, and are intended to be taught by the classroom teacher or ELD/ESL teacher to a small group of students. They give students the opportunity to continue working with the week’s text and allow them to review or deepen their understanding of a strategy, concept, or language in the text. Some extensions provide further practice with vocabulary words or independent word-learning strategies that the students then apply in their speaking and writing.

Let’s take a closer look at a few these extensions from Grade 1.
In Unit 3, an extension in Week 1 gives students an opportunity to engage in additional practice with retelling *The Stray Dog*, a text that they listened to in previous instruction. The students share their thinking about which events happened in the beginning, middle, and end of the story. This is a great opportunity for ELL students to engage in oral rehearsal and utilize the language support anchor chart they co-created with the teacher (see Pre-teaching Support in that unit’s Week 1 Overview).

Explicit instruction and opportunities for practicing word-learning strategies give students tools for independently determining the meanings of unfamiliar words that they may encounter in their reading. An example of this can be found in the Unit 3, Week 2 extension, in which students review antonyms. After engaging in a vocabulary lesson that introduces the words *ordinary* and *extraordinary*, the students imagine and discuss eating an “ordinary lunch” vs. an “extraordinary lunch.” The students then have multiple opportunities to share their thinking with a partner and with the class.

The literacy instruction increases in complexity and rigor across the units. In the Unit 5, Week 1 extension, the students explore onomatopoeia in *One Duck Stuck*. They are invited to echo read the examples of onomatopoeia after they have identified them. The students internalize the vocabulary as they discuss and, when possible, act out the words. This paves the way for them to use the words not only orally but in their writing as well.

**Independent Work**

In a collaborative classroom, students have an opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning and behavior (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde 2012.) Independent work gives students choices in what they will read and write, which is an important part of their development. It is also an excellent time to provide ELLs with targeted differentiated literacy support. As you observe your students during instruction and begin to collect data, you will determine where your students might need additional independent practice with specific skills. Additionally, the *Teacher’s Manual* provides activities suggestions for independent work in the Independent Work Connections section of the Week Overview. Here are some examples of what ELL-focused independent work might look like within *Being a Reader’s* recommended rotations of reading, word work, and writing:

- **Reading**

  Collect copies of the week's text and make them available for students to read independently. Consider having ELL students take turns reading to one another, or, if possible, listen to the audiobooks of the texts they engage with during whole group instruction.

- **Word Work**

  Post the vocabulary cards from the previous week of instruction for the class. Have the students choose one of the words, draw a picture to show the word, and write a sentence about their drawing. Consider incorporating a sentence frame and/or a specific language focus for your ELL students as needed.

- **Writing**

  After teaching the Handwriting lesson, you may consider posting copies of the “letter practice” reproducibles for additional practice. You also may choose to post the vocabulary cards and have the students use them in their writing. Providing your modeled writing for reference is a great support for your ELL students.

**How to Support ELLs in Accessing Grade-Level Content**

In addition to the supports listed above, there are many other instructional decisions you can make to help your ELL students access the lesson content.

- **Scaffold questions appropriately.** Even though ELLs benefit from the opportunity to consider the open-ended questions used
Throughout *Being a Reader*, you might scaffold the students’ ability to respond to complex questions by providing examples and language frames as needed.

- **Provide access to picture or video dictionaries and online translation tools.** Make available print or online resources ELLs can use to support their comprehension and fluency. Invite them to maintain a personal dictionary of new words.

- **Use journals.** Ask the students to draw or draw and label their ideas in a reading journal. Have them share with a partner to rehearse before they share with the class.

- **Modify cooperative structures.** Provide question prompts for verbal ELLs to use in partner conversations and allow nonverbal ELLs to gesture, draw, act out, or write their ideas for their partner.

- **Speak clearly and articulately.** ELLs, especially beginning speakers, may miss a great deal when the language goes by too quickly. Adjusting your rate of speech can make a big difference in helping them understand you. Speak naturally and avoid altering your speech in unauthentic ways.

The goal of *Being a Reader* is that all students become fluent, thoughtful, and independent readers. The reimagined second edition's improvements and enhancements ensure that ELL students are given the opportunity to excel academically, linguistically, and socially. A valuable resource in support of these goals is the *Implementation Handbook*, a new component to the second edition of *Being a Reader*. It provides information about the program and pedagogy and resources to support instruction, planning, and assessment. As you consider extending your learning beyond this blog series, I invite you to consider beginning with the *Implementation Handbook*’s Support for English Language Learners section.

**Reference**