

# Considerations for Supporting English Language Learners within Remote Learning, Part 2

By Veronica Vasquez | Categories: ELL, Implementation, Remote Learning

In Part One of this blog series, we examined the importance of providing explicit instruction of complete, precise, and rich academic language for English language learners during remote instruction. We explored how Collaborative Literacy instruction supports this work.

In this blog, we will explore three instructional techniques that will get students using academic language during remote learning and beyond. Consider how you might embed these techniques or modify them to meet the needs of your English language learners. You may decide to utilize these in whole class as you differentiate instruction for the various language proficiency levels of your students. You may also decide to use these techniques to pre-teach content to small groups of students.

## Team Share Activity

- Provide students with a question or topic via your virtual classroom
- Students brainstorm individually
- Group students (into fours, or the number that works best)
- Open a Google document for each group
- Groups discuss the question or topic and write down their conclusions on the shared document

Collaborative Literacy connections:

For this activity, consider the language objectives established for your English language learners as they engage in this work. Students might explore various options for writing an opening sentence, discuss character change in a text, or share what they are reading during IDR (Individualized Daily Reading).

## QSSSA (Question, Signal, Stem, Share, Assess) Activity <sup>1</sup>

- Pose an open-ended question to the students via your virtual classroom
- Students signal when they have a response in their mind (they might do this by using the raise hand feature in the online platform)
- Provide students with a sentence stem and ask them to practice it aloud with you
- Students use the sentence stem to answer the question
- Students share in small groups or whole class

Collaborative Literacy connections:

This technique offers structured conversation, promotes academic language, encourages 100 percent participation, and embeds wait time. You might use it to preview read-aloud selections with your students as you stop to discuss vocabulary and check for understanding. You can also use it for open-ended questions during shared reading (K-1). For example:

- Question: *What do you think the chick will say? Why do you think that?*
- Frame (stem provided in ELL Note in the *Teacher's Manual*): I think the chick will say\_\_\_\_ because\_\_\_\_.

This technique also works to strengthen writing with sensory details:

- Question: *What did you imagine seeing as you read what you wrote? What did you feel? Smell? Taste?*
- Frame: I smelled\_\_\_\_. I felt\_\_\_\_. It tasted like\_\_\_\_.

#### Barrier Game

- Pair students up and have them sit across from each other using a barrier between them, such as a book or folder
- Each student holds a vocabulary word or image in front of them and provides hints to what they are holding without saying the name of the item
- The partner identifies the word or image
- The same process can be used to have one partner read aloud a set of steps while the other follows the directions

Collaborative Literacy connections:

As you transition to in-person instruction and have to maintain social distancing, this game engages students while they practice social distancing. It's also easy to adapt to remote learning situations.

This game can be used during students' independent literacy rotations. Students might quiz one another around literacy topics (with sentence stems provided as needed). For example, if the target concept is Text Features, a student might say to their partner: *"These help us understand information on the pages of text. There are many kinds such as headings and bold words."*

Other options:

- Students can cut lines of poems apart and have their partner replace them in the correct order (K-1, shared reading)
- Students can sort words together by topics they choose (grade 2, open sorting)

These three techniques work best with explicit modeling and explanation of the routines. Try one and if it does not work as planned, don't give up! With practice and repetition, the students' ability to engage in these activities will improve.

These are challenging times and educators are working hard to try to meet the needs of all students. What we know about English language learners is that they need to make greater gains in academic language in order to become successful in school and beyond. The key is to offer them continuous opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations that include academic language at the core.

[1] From John Seidlitz and Bill Perryman, *7 Steps to a Language-Rich Interactive Classroom*, (Seidlitz Education, 2011)