



Rochester City School District's Language Development Approach

Empowering Learners to Leaders – ELLs

The Rochester City School District's Language Development Approach seeks to give students opportunities to develop core content area knowledge, analytical practices, and discipline-specific academic uses of language simultaneously. In an environment that uses: grade-level standards, is relevant, challenging, engages, empowers, and inspires learning every day.

The approach ensures that rigorous grade-level instructional expectations are supported with research-informed strategies, such as deliberate and appropriate scaffolds, growth mindset, and formative assessments. Instruction builds on students' cultural and linguistic assets and connects their prior knowledge to new learning.

The approach develops students' autonomy by affording students multiple and varied opportunities to engage in academic discourse regularly and comprehend and use language for a variety of purposes.

The approach requires that students learn and express understanding of academic content and academic concepts. Learning should be interactive and collaborative for a variety of purposes.

The approach demands that students actively use and apply complex language in extended, purposeful oral and written exchanges around meaningful ideas *in every classroom, every day*. This means that students—including ELLs at all English language proficiency levels—must have opportunities to participate in discussions with each other, using discipline-specific language, where they engage in analytical practices of different academic disciplines such as describing, explaining, problem-solving, arguing, and drawing inferences. ELLs' learning of English is embedded in these academic interactions, rather than separate; language learning and content learning happen simultaneously.



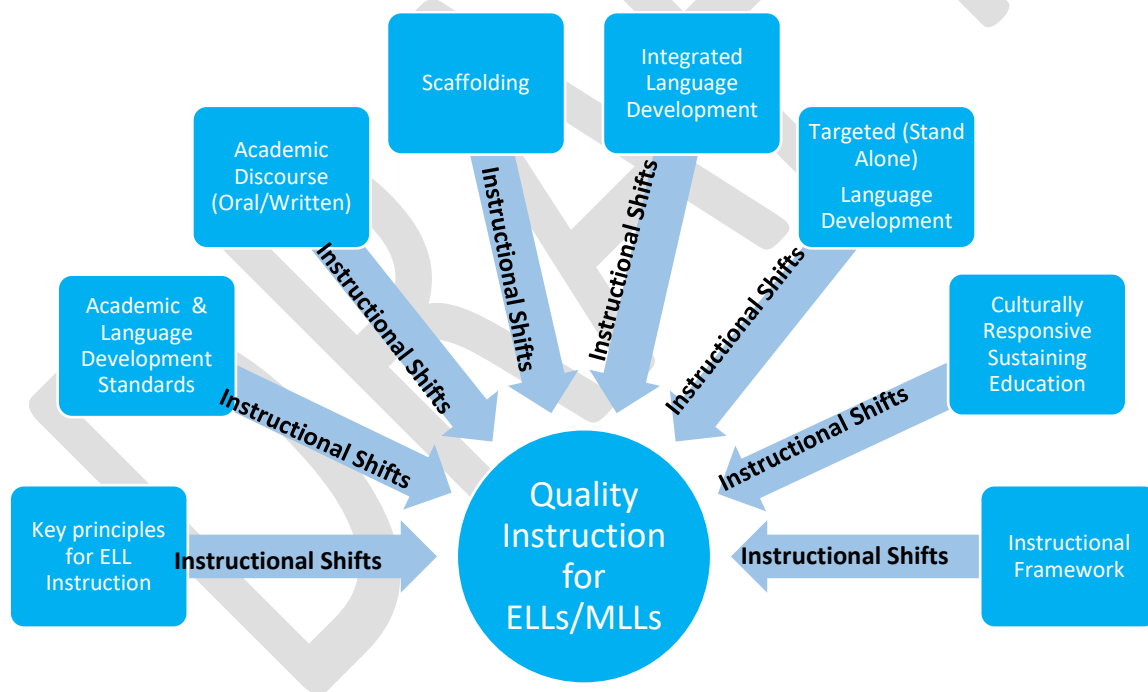
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Introduction

What is a Language Development Approach?

A Language Development Approach seeks to give students opportunities to develop core content area knowledge, analytical practices, and discipline-specific academic uses of language in an environment that uses: grade-level standards, is relevant, challenging, engages, empowers, and inspires learning every day.

What are the components of the Language Development Approach for our district?



A. Principles

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR ELL INSTRUCTION

1. Asset Orientation

- Instruction leverages ELLs' home language(s), cultural assets, and prior knowledge
- Instruction moves ELLs forward, taking into account their English proficiency level(s) and prior schooling experiences

To this end, teachers must:

Know their learners: With the help of the Language Placement Center, teachers gain information about their students' linguistic and educational backgrounds to determine the correct placement for students, and they seek to learn about students' cultural and geographic background as a resource for classroom learning.

Embrace and leverage the resources that learners bring to the classroom to enhance learning.

Teachers tap into their learners' prior knowledge purposefully in their teaching. They work to determine what gifts and talents students bring to the classroom, what interests motivate them, what life experiences they have had that are curriculum-related, and what else in their backgrounds has influenced their personalities and beliefs.

2. Opportunities to Learn

- Instruction provides ELLs with opportunities to engage in discipline-specific practices and to build conceptual understanding, analytical practices and English language competence, simultaneously.
- Standards-aligned instruction for ELLs is rigorous, grade-level appropriate, and provides deliberate and useful scaffolds.

To this end, teachers must:

Create Conditions for Language Learning. Teachers must demonstrate expectation of success for all learners. Student achievement is affected by teacher expectations of success. Teachers must hold high expectations and communicate them clearly to all their students – English learners and other classmates, which will motivate them to perform at a high level. Teachers must plan instruction to enhance and support students' motivation for language learning. Language learning is difficult and takes a very long time. Learners may not see the benefits of spending time and energy in learning English if the effort does not have an early payoff or it feels outside their own comfort zone. However, we know that motivation is an important condition for language learning, so teachers need to engage their learners and motivate them to work at learning the new language.

Design High-Quality Lessons. Teachers use comprehensible input to convey information, both written and oral, to students. Teachers scaffold the language input in multiple ways to aid the learner's perception and promote understanding. Scaffolding of lessons ensures students' comprehension. Some examples of scaffolding include previewing of topic using visual, gesturing and using facial expressions, embedding definitions and explanations, providing or asking for L1 translation. Teachers also must communicate clear instructions to carry out the learning task. Teachers use and teach consistent classroom management practices and routines throughout the school

year in an effort to help students understand what is expected of them in a classroom and throughout a lesson. Teachers use simple directions with patterned language that they repeat each time.

Engage and Collaborate within a Community of Practice. Exemplary teachers collaborate with others in the profession to provide the best possible support for their learners. They must meet with colleagues to co-plan and share their expertise about second language acquisition as well as instructional techniques appropriate for students at different levels of proficiency. Teachers are fully engaged in their profession. Teachers participate in continuous learning and ongoing professional development and they also reflect critically on their own classroom practices. They develop leadership skills so they can be a resource in their school and get involved in designing programs and developing curricula.

3. Developing Autonomy

- Instruction fosters ELLs' autonomy by equipping them with the strategies necessary to comprehend and use English across disciplines and in a variety of academic settings.
- Formative assessment practices are employed to gather and guide (both teacher and students) productive next steps to support learning conceptual understandings, analytical practices and English language development simultaneously.

To this end, teachers must:

Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed. Teachers check student comprehension frequently and adjust instruction according to learners' responses. To teach effectively, teachers need to evaluate what students know and what they do not know, in real time. Teachers can use quick comprehension checks during a lesson to gauge how the class is doing. For example, Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down, or Turn, Talk, Share etc. Teachers adjust their talk, the task, or the materials according to learners' responses. If teachers notice student confusion or misunderstanding during a lesson, they make adjustments so that all learners can meet the learning goals. They may vary their oral language input, use home language or alternative texts, present visual aids, or arrange peer support. They might adapt a task by adding more time, finding supplemental resources, or pulling a small group of students together for re-teaching.

Monitor and Assess Student English Language Development. Teachers monitor student errors. By interacting frequently with students, teachers acquire anecdotal information about their students' progress. Teachers provide ongoing effective feedback strategically. To be constructive, a teacher's feedback in response to a learner's error is delivered strategically and in a timely manner but it must also suit the age and language development level of the student. The feedback can be positive or corrective. It is important that the feedback be specific and related to what learners are doing well in addition to what they can improve.

B. Standards

Standards-aligned Instruction

Instruction for ELLs is aligned to the teaching and learning expectations of New York's Next Generation Standards. ELL students must develop conceptual knowledge in a subject area, engage in subject-specific analytical practices, and gain proficiency-related language uses simultane-

ously. This means that instruction in English language development is not separate from content learning. The standards explicitly focus on using language to engage in academic discourse and communicate the information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in subject-area learning.

Instructional practices need to be in place to support the six principles and to ensure that content and language development standards are addressed simultaneously. Four of these key practices are summarized below.

1. All teachers are teachers of ELLs.

According to the NYS Blue Print for ELL Success “All Teachers are Teachers of ELLs.” Every content area teaches language. Language and content learning cannot be separated. Each content area or discipline has specific ways of using language to reason or develop arguments, to explain ideas and cite evidence, to comprehend and produce texts that communicate conceptual understanding, and to engage in analytical practices. Teachers need to apprentice English learners into these practices by ensuring they are actively engaged in authentic learning opportunities in all content areas.

2. Students engage in academic discourses that require use of language in sustained, content-specific ways.

ELLs need multiple opportunities to participate in interactions with teachers and peers that require sustained uses of language specific to particular disciplines to communicate understanding, negotiate meaning, and collaborate in the development and presentations of meaningful products.

3. Students actively engage in well-scaffolded learning opportunities to simultaneously learn content and language.

Lessons include support for ELLs to engage in rigorous content learning that is beyond what students can accomplish on their own. Teachers provide students with language models for engaging in sustained content-based interactions and co-construction of knowledge. Teachers purposefully select and sequence activities so that ELLs can participate fully in grade-level learning. Lesson activities develop knowledge and practices that can be applied in novel applications and move students toward autonomy through metacognitive development.

4. Teachers empower students to draw on prior knowledge as well as cultural and linguistic assets.

Lessons include support for English learners to use a wealth of resources in rigorous content learning that connects new learning to prior knowledge. Lessons are designed to invite academic discourse, cultural connections, and home language use through collaborations. The classroom environment and lessons provide students with grade-level complex texts and resources in English and their home languages, as well as time to process and engage in productive struggle while learning in disciplinary areas.

Principles for Supporting Development of a New Language

What are the best research-supported ways to help ELLs learn English (their new language) while learning content? How can teachers ensure students know when and how and with whom to use everyday spoken or written English (or the everyday registers of English) versus academic spoken and written English (or the academic registers of English)? Gibbons (2015, pp. 24-31) presents the principles summarized below as a starting point.

Learners need to understand what is said to them and what they read.

ELLs need to hear and read more advanced language than they are currently able to produce, presented with supports that make the language comprehensible without simplifying it.

Learners need to use the new language themselves.

ELLs need to use extended language in pair and group activities for academic purposes such as problem-solving that require interactive, collaborative communication.

Learners need opportunities to use “stretched” language.

ELLs need to speak and write more advanced language than they are currently comfortable with, in situations where they receive support and affirmation for their efforts.

Learners need models of new language, especially the academic registers of school.

ELLs need to hear and read examples of proficient uses of academic language, and have explicit instruction about the structures and processes of creating academic texts, before and during their own production of academic language.

Learners need opportunities to build on the resources of their mother tongue (or home language).

ELLs need opportunities to speak with other students (or the teacher or an aide) in their home language, and (if they have home language literacy) to read and write in their home language. Research shows that use of the home language while learning English does not delay but rather enhances English learners' development of proficiency in English.

Second language learning is facilitated when students are using new language to learn other things, such as subject content.

Humans tend to learn a new language faster and better when it is learned in the context and for the purposes it is most needed. ELLs can best become proficient in academic English by using the language to learn academic subject content.

C. Academic Discourse (Oral and Written)

Definition and Shifts in Practice

Academic discourse is having purposeful interactions about particular content. It is discourse that is co-constructed, student-driven, authentic and content specific. Academic discourse is a critical part of English Language development as well as content understanding. Using academic language frames for a variety of purposes helps students grow their ability to use and comprehend English for different purposes and at different registers.

D. Scaffolding

Definition and Shifts in practice

Scaffolding can be thought of as academic supports that either bolsters content learning or provides modifications of both input (content understandings) and output (products that demonstrate learning) would be difficult for ELLs to understand independently. There are two types of scaffolding that all teachers of ELLs may utilize: those that are *planned* and those that are *just in time*. Planned scaffolds are designed through the collaboration of the content and ENL teachers during the development of learning activities.

Determining specific aspects of the learning activities that may require support begins with looking at learning targets that are embedded in the summative assessment. During the co-planning phase of instruction, teachers identify vocabulary, conceptual understandings, disciplinary skills and other aspects of the learning activity that each English language learner may need based on their English proficiency level and background knowledge.

The intention of scaffolding is that the assistance provided to students is temporary. Therefore, supplementary materials are adapted to a student's ability and target the level of independence a student is expected to work at. Supplementary material can include: sentence frames, content-specific visuals, artifacts, templates, and graphic organizers. Students will rely less on the specific scaffold as they gain proficiency in the skill and content understanding. Demonstrating an understanding of the content should be in line with the standards that all students must achieve. Scaffolding also comprises in-the-moment modifications that may include gestures, facial expressions or even context embedded sentence starters.

E. Integrated English Language Development

As society has grown increasingly diverse, all teachers have become teachers of ELLs. ELL/MLL students need the ability to identify and articulate their own perspectives as well as understand those of others, in order to interact constructively and effectively with others in various academic, social, and civic communities of which they are becoming a part. All the skills mentioned here are part of New York's Next Generation Standards. Content teachers

must develop functional language objectives within their own discipline. These would be linguistic requirements necessary for students to be successful in the specific content. Language acquisition is a process of apprenticeship that can take place in collaborative learning activities.

F. Targeted/Stand-Alone English Language Development

Stand-Alone ENL is a class for Entering, Emerging, and Transitioning ELLs. Stand-Alone ENL is typically held in the ENL classroom with an ENL certified teacher and ELL students. The students receive instruction in order to acquire English language needed for success in the core content classes.

G. Culturally Responsive instruction

State's Adopted Definition: Culturally responsive-sustaining education

Culturally responsive-sustaining (CR-S) education is grounded in a cultural view of learning and human development in which multiple expressions of diversity (e.g., race, social class, gender, language, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, ability) are recognized and regarded as assets for teaching and learning.

CR-S education explores the relationship between historical and contemporary conditions of inequality and ideas that shape access, participation, and outcomes for learners. The goal of the CR-S framework is to help educators design and implement a student-centered learning environment that:

- Affirms cultural identities and fosters positive academic outcomes;
- Fosters and sustains meaningful relationships between schools and communities, with an emphasis on a personal investment in the lives of youth;
- Develops students' ability to connect across cultures;
- Empowers students as agents of positive social change; and
- Contributes to an individual's engagement, learning, growth, and achievement through the cultivation of critical thinking.

"Culturally responsive teaching connects students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles to academic knowledge and intellectual tools in ways that legitimize what students already know. By embracing the sociocultural realities and histories of the students through what is taught and how, culturally responsive teachers negotiate the classrooms cultures with their students that reflect communities where students grow up and develop" (Geneva Gay, 2010).

"Equity means meeting the learning needs of every student in an environment where all students are valued, respected, and see themselves in their curriculum and instructional materials while experiencing academic success without regard to differences in age, gender, SES, religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, native language, national origin, or citizenship status. There can be no educational excellence without educational equity." NYSED