



Every Teacher is a Language Teacher:

Supporting English Learners in Any Classroom

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Introductions

"Good morning, my name is [_____], and I am a [Job Title] with [____] years in education. One thing I am hoping to take away from today's presentation is [_____]."

Strategy Spotlight: *Sentence Frames; Wait Time*



speaking



listening



Supporting ELs in Content Classes

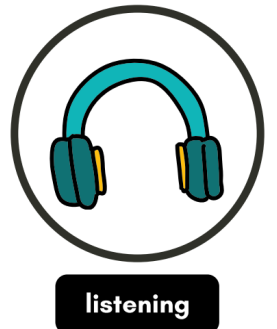
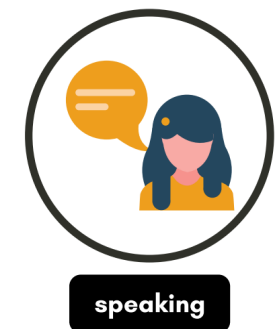
How would you describe yourself today?

- ☐ 1 I feel very confident supporting English learners
- ☐ 2 I have some strategies, but I'd like more ideas.
- ☐ 3 I know the basics but need practical classroom examples.
- ☐ 4 I'm just getting started supporting English learners.



What's one challenge you experience when supporting English learners?

Strategy Spotlight: *Activating Prior Knowledge; Turn & Talk*



Learning Objectives

Content Objective

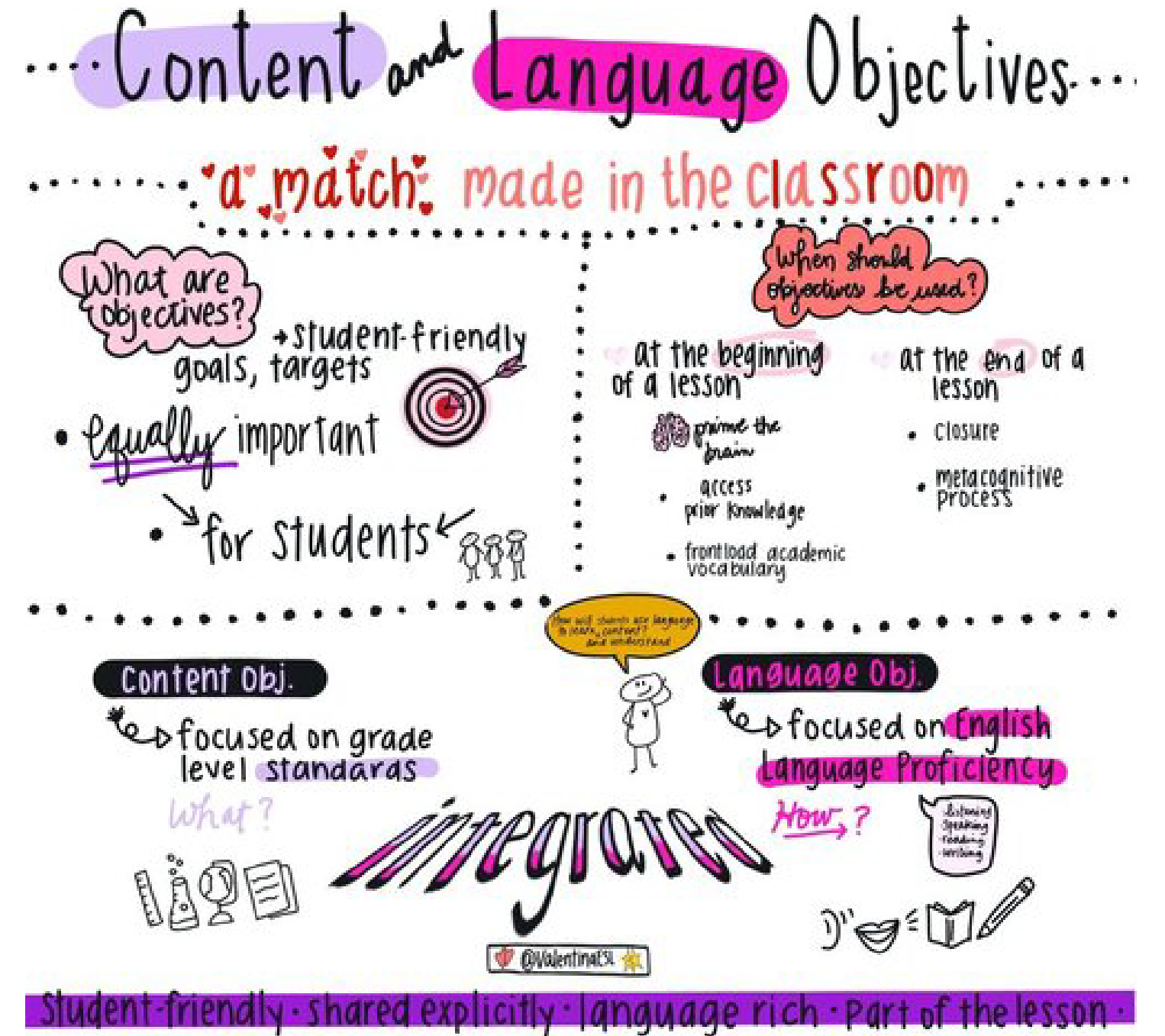
(What we are learning)

Participants will understand key second-language acquisition principles and instructional strategies for effectively supporting English learners in accessing grade-level content.

Language Objective

(How we will use language to learn)

We will **identify and discuss** best practices and instructional strategies for supporting English learners.



Strategy Spotlight: Content and Language Objectives



Agenda

Setting the Stage

- Who are English Learners/Multilingual Learners?
- Key Terminology

Centering Language in All Content Areas

- Stages of Language Acquisition
- Types of Communication
- Social vs. Academic Language

What ML Students Need in EVERY Classroom

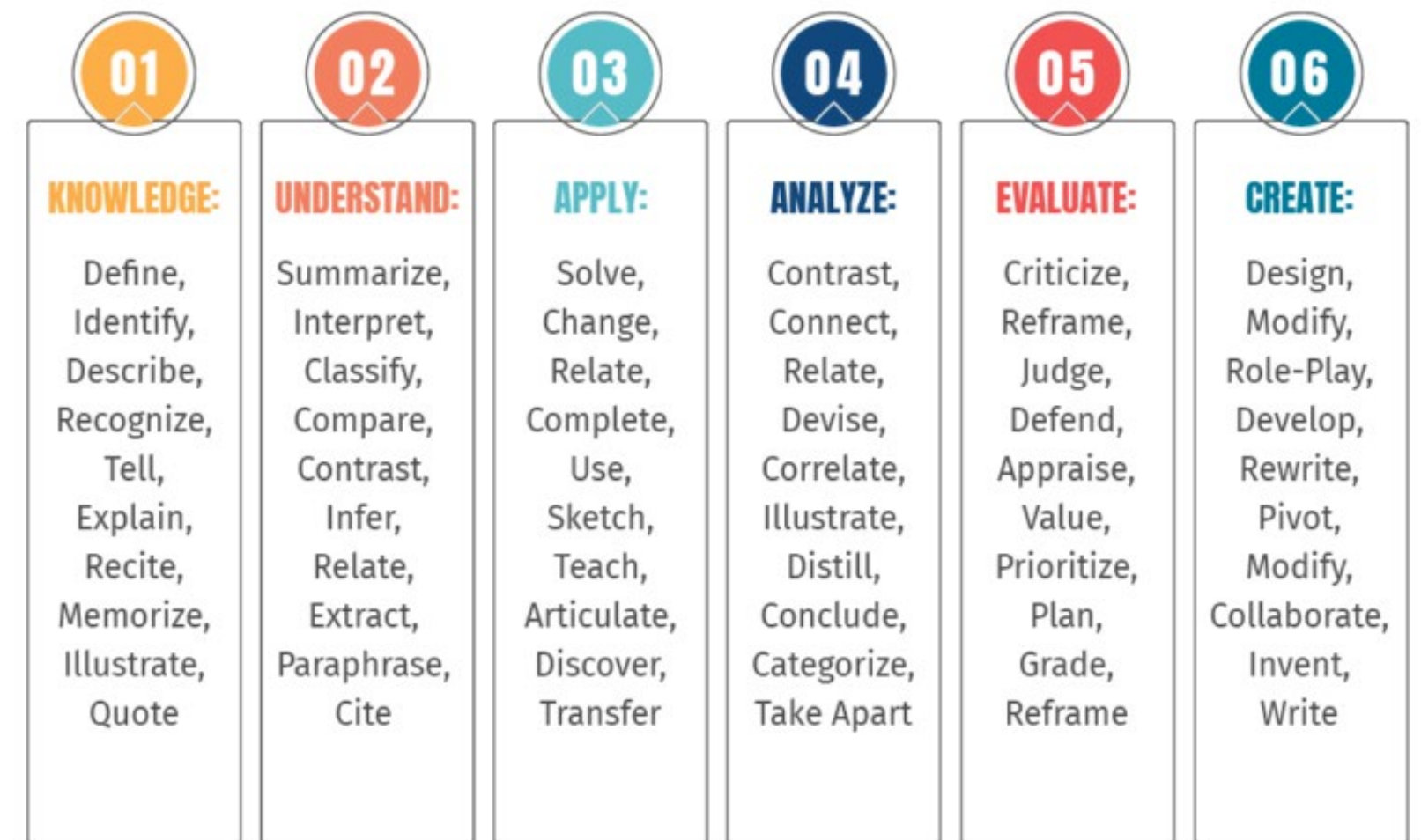
- ILPs and KELPA Score Reports
- Scaffolds and strategies
- Key Takeaways for Teachers
- Resources

Strategy Spotlight: *Lesson Preview and Lesson Pacing*



Success Criteria *(How we know we've learned it!)*

- ❑ I can *recognize* key principles of second language acquisition.
- ❑ I can *summarize* at least three strategies that support ELs.
- ❑ I can *evaluate* how I might use this learning to inform my practice and support EL students.



Strategy Spotlight: *Visible Learning; Metacognition*





Setting the Stage

Strategy Spotlight: *Lesson Pacing*

Federal Definition

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) defines an English learner (EL) as a student (age 3-21, enrolled or preparing to enroll in school) who meets language-related criteria and whose English proficiency may limit their ability to meet academic standards or fully participate in instruction in English.

- ESSA Section 8101(20) (codified at 20 U.S.C. § 7801(20)) — [*Definition of English Learner*](#).

Strategy Spotlight: *Building Background*



Important to Remember

- A student **may be born in the United States** and still qualify as an English learner if their language environment affects English proficiency.
- Students may come from environments where a **language other than English is dominant**, which can affect their English proficiency in school.
- The definition focuses on **English proficiency and access to academic content**, not immigration status or where a student was born.

Strategy Spotlight: *Building Background*



Acronyms Galore!

Term	Definition
L1	Student's first/home language (innate and subconscious)
L2	Second language (explicitly taught)
Newcomer	A student that is classified as an English learner and is new to the country
SLIFE	"Student with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education"
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESL	English as a Second Language
ELD	English Language Development
ELL	English Language Learner
EL	English Learner
ML	Multilingual Learner

Strategy Spotlight: *Pre-teaching Vocabulary*

[Click here](#) for additional terminology.





Myths vs. Realities

Myth or Reality?

Once English learners are able to speak reasonably fluently, their problems are likely to be over in school.



Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Strategy Spotlight: *Activating Prior Knowledge; Turn and Talk*



Myth or Reality?

Younger children are more effective language learners than older learners.



Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Strategy Spotlight: *Building Background*



Myth or Reality?

Learning academic English is equally challenging for all English learners.



Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Strategy Spotlight: *Building Background; Student Assets*



Myth or Reality?

If we focus on teaching English language, learning in all areas will occur faster.



Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Strategy Spotlight: *Language Across Content Areas*



Which of these assumptions have you seen most often in schools or classrooms?

How might that assumption impact instruction or expectations?



Strategy Spotlight: *Collaborative Learning*





Centering Language in All Content Areas

Stages of Language Acquisition

STAGES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION		
Stage	Characteristics	Approximate Time Frame in Each Stage*
Silent/Receptive/Pre-production Stage	They have very few oral skills and may only respond nonverbally by pointing, gesturing, nodding, or drawing.	0-6+ months
Early Production Stage	They listen with greater understanding and can produce a limited number of words, phrases, and simple sentences.	6 months-1+ year
Speech Emergence Stage	They have better comprehension and produce simple sentence and make common pronunciation errors.	1-3+ years
Intermediate Fluency Stage	They demonstrate increased levels of accuracy and correctness and are able to express thoughts and feelings.	3-5+ years
Advanced Fluency Stage	They produce language utilizing varied grammatical structures and vocabulary, comparable to native speakers of the same age.	5-7+ years
*Students advancing through these stages is a highly individualized process and timeline because acquiring an additional language is a very complex undertaking. ELs are tremendously heterogeneous and diverse. Progress in acquiring English has individual variability depending on factors such as: • A school's program type • Age at which the student entered the program • Initial proficiency level • Native language literacy • Linguistic and cultural background • Life and educational experiences • Additional needs (e.g. health, disability)		

2018, p. 11



KS Standard For English Learners

Classroom Supports for Beginning and Emerging Students	
These supports may be appropriate for English learners at all levels of English proficiency but are particularly useful for beginning and emerging students just beginning to develop English skills (see description above). Students at this level may need more supports than students at higher levels of proficiency. Generally, supports should be determined on an individual basis and should be removed when no longer needed by the student.	
Beginning and emerging students will need support to build <u>VOCABULARY</u> knowledge and skills: • Pre-teach vocabulary using non-linguistic representations. • Provide a bilingual list of cognates. • Have student identify cognates within the lesson. • Provide bilingual dictionaries. • Provide an anchor chart with processes • Provide word lists/charts with definitions and illustrations. • Provide a word bank or word wall with pictures.	Beginning and emerging students will need purposeful <u>SCAFFOLDS</u> to access grade-level content: • Provide short video clips of demonstration. • Provide formulas. • Provide manipulatives and visuals. • Provide sentence frames or sentence starters. Provide a list of steps and teacher modeling. • Provide a graphic organizer. • Use color coding to identify steps and/or words. • Provide calculators/teach calculator skills. • Provide skeleton/simplified notes. • Use online resources to chunk/adjust teaching and build background knowledge. • Provide extended time for guided practice. • Support student use of a formula chart or interactive notebook. • Provide examples with something familiar before moving on to the abstract. • Provide bilingual support when available. • Use realia. • Pair student with a peer throughout entire activity (if possible with a student who has the same native language).
Beginning and emerging students will need support to promote <u>DISCOURSE and ACADEMIC TALK</u>: • Ask students questions to guide thinking and engage them in discourse (Ex. "What do you know?" "Can you show me?"). • Allow for sufficient wait time for student to respond in English. • Provide sentence frames to help students communicate thinking. • Provide multiple opportunities to practice academic language: ◦ Call backs ◦ Pairs/small groups ◦ Exit tickets ◦ Cooperative learning activities (Ex. Numbered heads together, inside-outside circle, etc.) • Have student prepare and practice response in writing before sharing out.	
Beginning and emerging students may need the opportunity to <u>DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING</u> in different ways: • Demonstrate knowledge using multiple representations. • Have student respond with non-verbal cues (thumbs up/thumbs down). • In partner work, have student respond through paraphrasing or revoicing. • Modify assessments or assignments (Ex. Reduce the number of tasks). • Provide extra time to practice and complete assignments.	

2018, p. 18



Receptive and Productive Domains

Receptive	Productive (Expressive)
• “Input” • Understanding spoken words, gestures, and context • Learners can often understand complex stories or instructions before they can speak, focusing on comprehension first. • Children often acquire elements of receptive language faster than expressive language.	• “Output” • Speaking and producing language to communicate needs, thoughts, or stories. • Grammar – choosing the right grammar forms, such as using past tense to reflect something that happened yesterday • Sentence structure – putting words in the right order to make sense

[Source](#)



Social vs. Academic Language

Social	Academic
Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) • Building connections, expressing needs, casual conversation • Everyday vocabulary, casual, small talk • Immediate and contextual • Can come from direct instruction • Develops quickly, ~1 to 2 years	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) • Specialized language used in classroom settings (e.g. comparing or synthesizing information) • Abstract and constructed • Requires direct instruction • Longer to develop, ~5-7 years

Source



Where do you see students demonstrating social language (BICS) versus academic language (CALP) in your classroom?



How does that impact your expectations or supports?

Strategy Spotlight: *Collaborative Learning*





High-Impact Strategies and Supports

What MLs Need in EVERY Classroom

- A welcoming environment and shared responsibility among the adults in the building
- Intentional opportunities to access language
- Appropriate scaffolding to understand in different ways
- Focus on vocabulary
- Planning and curriculum that focuses on developing academic writing and discourse
- Visuals
- Different modalities to show understanding



Ideas for Creating a Welcoming Environment

Display multilingual signage and student work.

Post key vocabulary, classroom rules, and content visuals in multiple languages. When students see their home languages represented on the walls, it signals that their linguistic identity is valued, not something to leave at the door.

Learn and use students' correct names.

Take time to learn the accurate pronunciation of every student's name and use it consistently. Never anglicize or shorten a name without the student's explicit invitation.

Build in low-stakes opportunities to talk.

Structured partner talk, think-pair-share, and small group discussion give MLs chances to practice language in a lower-anxiety setting before sharing with the whole class. Cold-calling should be avoided.



Welcoming Environment, Continued...

Incorporate students' cultures and experiences into curriculum.

Use mentor texts, examples, and discussion topics that reflect diverse backgrounds by including your students' home countries, traditions, and lived experiences. When students see themselves in the curriculum, engagement and trust increase.

Communicate proactively with families in their home language.

Use translation tools, bilingual staff, or community liaisons to reach families in a language they're comfortable with. Welcoming families into the school community — not just students — builds the trust that supports student success.

Strategy Spotlight: *Lowering Students' Affective Filter; Parent & Family Engagement*



Individual Learning Plans

- An individual learning plan (ILP) is a document that describes the academic and language needs of, and goals for, an English learner (EL).
- Details the strategies, accommodations, and goals to be implemented daily in the classroom to help ELs be successful.
- Not just for auditing – it is a powerful communication tool between the EL teacher and content-area teachers.

Strategy Spotlight: *Teacher Collaboration*



Understanding KELPA Reports to Enhance Collaboration

- Focus on domain scores to set goals and determine which strategies/scaffolds a student might benefit from.

STUDENT REPORT: Lastname, Firstname

GRADE: # / STATE ID: xxxxxxxxxx

SCHOOL: Meadowlark School

DISTRICT: Sunflower District / #D1001



This report shows and explains the student's performance on the Kansas English Language Proficiency Assessment (KELPA). The KELPA measures growth in English language proficiency to ensure all English learners (ELs) are prepared for academic success. This report provides performance levels on each domain tested: speaking, writing, listening, and reading, as well as an overall proficiency determination. These results are used by the teachers, the school, and the school district in planning the student's level of support and participation in the EL program.

When interpreting student progress toward proficiency on the KELPA, please take into consideration how the conditions for learning, which may have been disrupted by the pandemic, may influence performance.

Overall Proficiency: Level 2



1-Not proficient: Students who are not yet proficient have not attained a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate on grade-level, content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated by attaining performance levels of Beginning and Early Intermediate in all four domains. Students who are not proficient are eligible for ongoing program support.

2-Nearly Proficient: Students are nearly proficient when they approach a level of English language skill necessary to produce, interpret, and collaborate on grade-level, content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated by attaining performance levels with above Early Intermediate that does not meet the requirements to be proficient. Nearly proficient students are eligible for ongoing program support.

3-Proficient: Students are proficient when they attain a level of English language skill necessary to independently produce, interpret, collaborate on, and succeed in grade-level, content-related academic tasks in English. This is indicated by attaining performance level of Early Advanced in all domains.

Domain Performance Levels

Year	Domain Score				Progress Toward Proficiency
	Speaking	Writing	Listening	Reading	
2021	4	3	4	4	Satisfactory Progress
2022	4	2	3	1	

- 4-Early Advanced** - Demonstrates English language skills required for engagement with grade-level academic content instruction at a level comparable to non-ELs
- 3-Intermediate** - Applies some grade-level English language skills and will benefit from EL program support
- 2-Early Intermediate** - Presents evidence of developing grade-level English language skills and will benefit from EL program support
- 1-Beginning** - Displays few grade-level English language skills and will benefit from EL program support

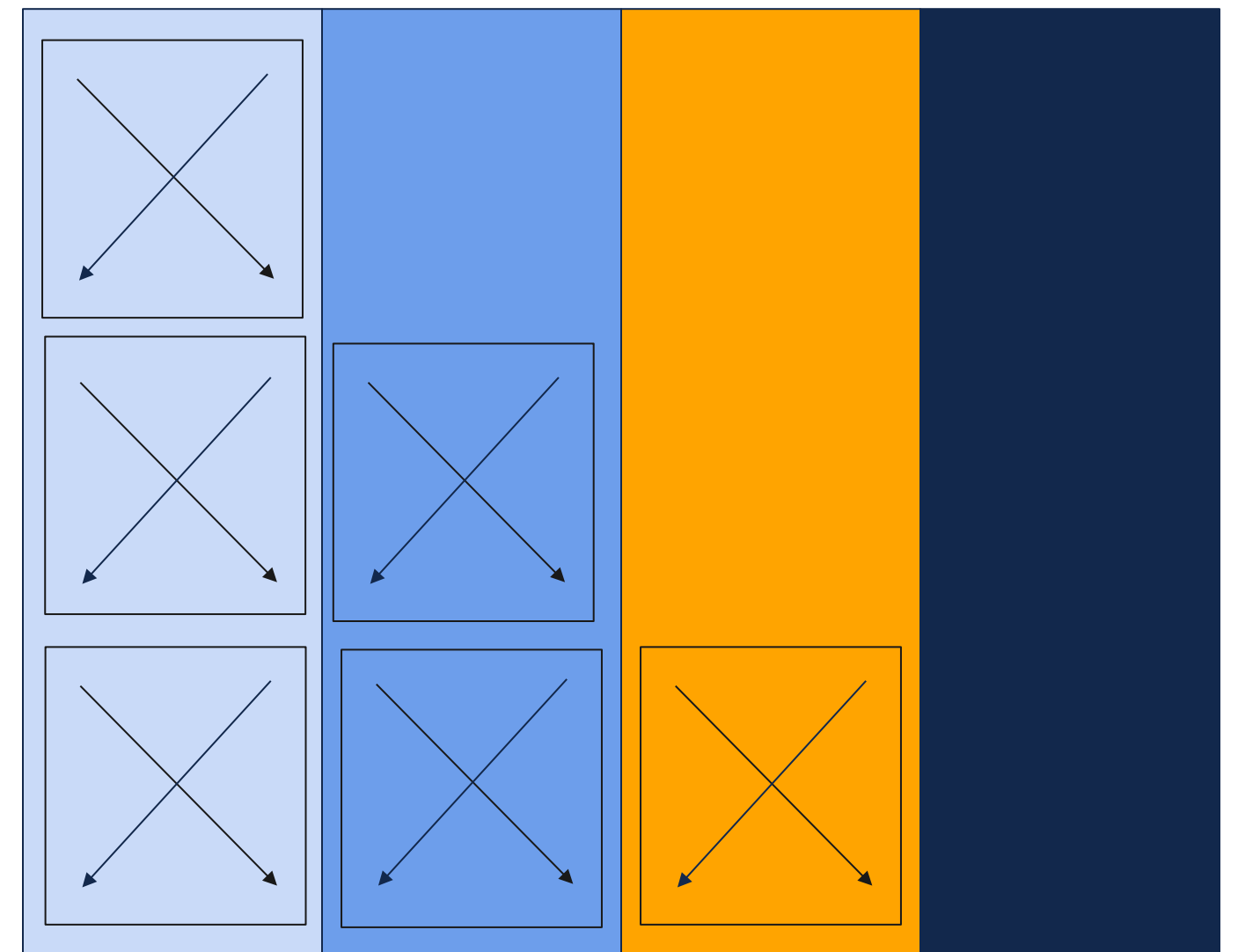
Additional Resources
For more information about the Kansas Standards, visit ksde.org. To learn more about the Kansas Assessment Program, visit ksassessments.org.

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Scaffolding

- Scaffolds should be **temporary** and **intentionally removed**.
- The goal of a scaffold is to make a task accessible *now* while building toward independence.
- If the same support is provided indefinitely without gradual release, it becomes a crutch rather than a bridge.
- Plan from the start how and when you'll fade each support.



Ensuring Access to Grade-Level Content

Visual and graphic scaffolds work across proficiency levels.

Anchor charts, graphic organizers, sentence frames, word banks, and visual representations of content reduce cognitive load without reducing rigor. They allow students to focus mental energy on the academic concept rather than the language barrier, and they benefit many non-EL students too.

Language scaffolds are not the same as academic simplification.

Lowering language demands (shorter sentences, clearer vocabulary, sentence starters) is not the same as lowering expectations. Students can engage with grade-level concepts and complex thinking when the *language* is made accessible — watering down content is never the goal.

Use sentence frames and word banks to support participation.

Provide language structures that let students engage with the same rigorous content as peers — the scaffold is in the how they access and express their learning, not in reducing *what they're expected to understand*.



Access to Grade-Level Content, Continued...

Pre-teach key academic vocabulary before the lesson, not during.

Frontloading 3–5 critical content words with visuals, examples, and student-friendly definitions means MLs can access the concept when instruction begins rather than spending the lesson decoding unfamiliar terms.

Pair visual representations with every new concept.

Charts, diagrams, realia, images, and graphic organizers give meaning to language-heavy content. If a student can't yet decode the text, the visual keeps them connected to the grade-level idea.

Allow students to demonstrate understanding in multiple ways. A student who can't yet write a paragraph in English may be able to draw, label, sort, gesture, or explain in their home language. Grading only English language production can mask genuine content mastery.



Review: Evidence-Based Practices

- Provide MLs with opportunities to build content knowledge and language competence in tandem.
- Leverage MLs' home language(s), prior knowledge, and cultural assets.
- Engage MLs in productive interactions with peers.
- Provide direct and explicit instruction focusing on key aspects of literacy.
- Regularly incorporate opportunities to develop written language skills.

Source: [USDE Newcomer Toolkit](#), pg. 55-56



Strategies Matrix



“Go To” Strategies for Teachers of English Language Learners

	LEVEL ONE: ENTERING	LEVEL TWO: EMERGING	LEVEL THREE: DEVELOPING	LEVEL FOUR: EXPANDING	LEVEL FIVE: BRIDGING
LISTENING	- Use physical gestures or pictures when giving oral directions - Modify Teacher Talk* - Label visuals and objects with target vocabulary - Use cognates (if possible)	- Use Patterned Oral Language* routines - Model using academic language - Give simple, two-step directions - Use adequate wait time	- Provide graphics or objects to sequence steps in a process - Use Anticipation Guides* to preview content - Model using academic language - Model note-taking	- Require students to restate and rephrase auditory input using a Paraphrase Passport* - Model using academic language - Use graphic organizers to structure listening activities	- Use Video Observation Guides* - Provide multiple examples and non-examples of content vocabulary and topics - Model using academic language
SPEAKING	- Use charts with illustrated academic vocabulary - Ask “Yes or No” and “Who, What, When, Where” questions - Use Choral Response* - Use chants, poems, songs	- Have students describe personal experiences - Use sentence frames in partner discussions - Ask questions requiring simple comparisons or sequencing	- Ask “How” and “Why” questions - Provide graphic organizers or notes to scaffold retelling - Use Think-Pair-Share - Encourage use of basic content area words	- Ask questions that require students to analyze, synthesize, etc. - Use Reader’s Theater* - Structure group discussions - Encourage use of basic and technical content area words	- Encourage students to lead discussions and teach - Require the use of basic and technical content area words - Use oral presentations - Structure debates using graphic organizers or outlines
READING	- Preview content using pictures, video, charts, etc. - Pre-teach key vocabulary terms - Use props and realia during instruction - Determine student’s prior knowledge - Use Teacher Read Alouds - Pair readers to read text with each other	- Use word sorts - Preview content using pictures, video, charts, etc. - Pre-teach key vocabulary terms - Use props and realia during instruction - Provide a list of important concepts and/or terms on a graphic organizer - Use K-W-L prior to reading	- Explain text features (e.g., headings, charts, etc.) - Preview content using pictures, video, charts, etc. - Pre-teach key vocabulary terms - Use Directed Reading-Thinking (DRT)* activities - Provide graphic organizers to scaffold reading - Model prediction for a text	- Use Jigsaw Reading* to scaffold independent reading - Use Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)* to structure more independent reading - Preview content using pictures, video, charts, etc. - Pre-teach key vocabulary terms - Provide graphic organizers	- Ask students to analyze text structure by choosing an appropriate graphic organizer - Preview content using pictures, video, charts, etc. - Pre-teach key vocabulary terms - Teach note-taking skills for text (e.g., Skimming, Scanning, Cornell Notes) - Provide graphic organizers
WRITING	- Require students to label visuals - Ask questions that have students create a list of words - Use Sentence Frames* - Encourage students to translate words into their first language - Have students create pictures, symbols, and non-linguistic representations for vocabulary	- Use Cloze* sentences with a word bank - Teach note-taking on a graphic organizer - Provide practice of key grammatical structures in context of the lesson - Use student-created books - Use Sentence Frames* - Have students create pictures, symbols, and non-linguistic representations for vocabulary	- Teach and use signal words - Provide practice for irregular grammatical structures in context of the lesson - Use Text to Graphics and Back Again* - Use Cloze passages with a word bank - Require Learning Logs* for basic summaries of learning - Require use of basic academic vocabulary	- Provide rubrics and examples to scaffold writing assignments - Expand grammar instruction in context of the lesson - Provide Report Frames* for independent, structured, content writing - Model and use the writing process - Require basic and technical academic vocabulary	- Publish student works - Continue grammar instruction in context of the lesson - Use Report Frames* to teach the process of writing a research paper - Require basic and technical academic vocabulary - Hold writing conferences with teacher and peers - Require students to write expanded summaries

*Starred strategies are described on the following page

Adapted from: Levine, L. N., Lukens, L. & Smallwood, B. A., (2012). *The GO TO Strategies: Scaffolding Options for Teachers of English Language Learners, K-12*. For Project EXCELL, a partnership between the University of Missouri-Kansas City and North Kansas City Schools, funded by the US Department of Education, Project ID T195N070316.



Partnering with EL Teachers

- Our EL teachers are your valuable partners in supporting language development.
 - Planning for students
 - Help identify exactly where language demands are highest and what targeted supports would make the content accessible — without lowering expectations or reducing the rigor of grade-level content.
 - Analyzing data
 - Can help a classroom teacher read a student's proficiency scores across the four domains — listening, speaking, reading, and writing — and translate that data into concrete, actionable adjustments for daily instruction.
 - Developing and using Individual Language plans



Key Takeaways

MLs are not “one-size-fits-all.”

Your ML students come with vastly different backgrounds, proficiency levels, and experiences. Knowing each student’s story is the first step in supporting them.

Language Acquisition takes time – and that is not a deficit!

Academic language proficiency develops over 5-7 years. A student who seems conversationally fluent may still need significant support accessing grade-level content.

Your content classroom is a language classroom, too.

Every teacher is a language teacher. Vocabulary instruction, academic discourse, and structured speaking and writing opportunities are not just the EL teacher’s job – they belong in every subject, every day.



Key Takeaways, Continued...

Scaffolds protect rigor — they don't replace it.

High-impact supports like sentence frames, graphic organizers, and pre-taught vocabulary allow MLs to access the *same* challenging standards as their peers. The goal is never to lower the bar — it is to build the bridge.

Collaboration is not a luxury — it is a strategy. Partnering with your colleagues, interpreting proficiency data together, and co-planning even occasionally will make your instruction more effective and your students more successful.



Individual Reflection

Think about a strategy that you saw here today or one that you use often in your own classroom. How could language be more explicit through using this strategy?



Resources

U.S. Department of Education

- [English Learner Toolkit](#) (2017)
- [Newcomer Toolkit](#) (2023)
- [Family Toolkit](#) (2023)

Kansas Department of Education

- [KS Standards for English Learners](#) (2018)
- [English Learner Framework](#) (2026-2027)
- [EL Connections Monthly Webinars](#)



Resources, Continued...

- Domain Icons: [TPT](#)
- Levine, L. N., Lukens, L., & Smallwood, B. A. (2013). The GO TO strategies: Scaffolding options for teachers of English language learners, K-12. For Project EXCELL, a partnership between the University of Missouri- Kansas City and North Kansas City Schools, funded by the US Department of Education, PR Number T195N070316. Available online at <https://www.cal.org/projects/project-excell/>.



PD Opportunities Coming Soon!!



In-Person and
Virtual Options

Developing Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) - Learn how to create meaningful, compliant Individual Learning Plans that drive instruction and support language growth.

Supporting Dually Identified Students - Discover practical strategies for identifying, evaluating, and meeting the unique needs of students who are both multilingual learners and receiving special education services.

New Teacher Modules - Engage with self-paced modules that provide the essential knowledge, strategies, and resources to successfully support multilingual learners from day one.

Empowering English Learner Paraprofessionals - Explore classroom-ready strategies, tips, and tools to help paraprofessionals make a meaningful impact every day.





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