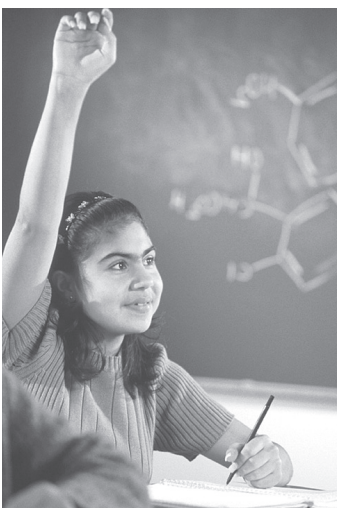
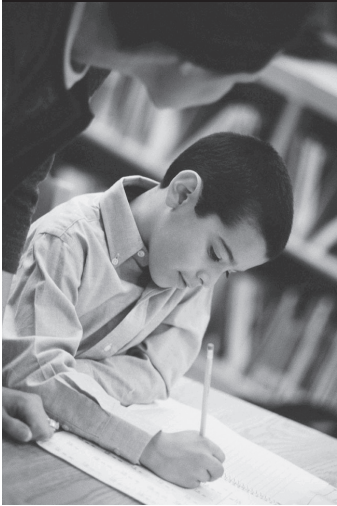


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Providing Language Instruction

*Based on a presentation by Susana Dutro
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Academic success depends on learning to read well. We talk a lot about the achievement gap, but it's really a language gap. Learning to read well depends on rich, precise vocabulary knowledge and the ability to use that vocabulary fluidly in increasingly complex sentence structures. This presents unique challenges for English Learners and native-born students who do not have the varied oral language base needed to support academic success.

There is a common belief that all English Learners have similar instructional needs, but that's not the case. English Learners bring with them a wide range of skills, educational and personal experiences, as well as unique talents that can distinguish these students as highly capable individuals.

In order to understand **what to teach these diverse students about English**, we need to examine how they use language in both oral and written tasks that require a high level of academic proficiency. For example, three-year-old native English speakers can use the conditional tenses required to negotiate with their parents. A non-native speaker needs to be explicitly taught these complex verb tenses. Listening to the verbs that students use provides a lot of insight into how much they have internalized grammatical structures.

For many English Learners, achievement declines as they progress through the grades because their language proficiency has stalled at the intermediate

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level. There are several reasons for this “plateau effect:”

- Students may appear to be fluent English speakers, but lack academic language proficiency.
- Teachers may not realize there is a gap between the language a student knows and the language that is required to succeed academically.
- In sheltered instruction, content learning may have taken precedence over language learning.
- Explicit English language instruction may not have extended beyond the intermediate level.

Districts and schools have a dual obligation in the instruction of English Learners. They must provide English Language Development (ELD) at each child’s level of English proficiency *and* they must ensure meaningful access to grade-level academic content. As administrators and teachers, we must have a framework for developing both English language proficiency and content knowledge.

A focused approach to instruction for English Learners

The blueprint for teaching English Learners (see chart below) takes a comprehensive view of instruction.

It suggests a model that maximizes learning by ensuring that EL students are taught appropriately *throughout the day*. The blueprint addresses language and content instruction in three areas:

- ① Instruction in English as a second language is taught during **dedicated English Language Development time**. Instruction is driven by the proficiency level of each student and is systematic in its design and delivery.
- ② Additionally, English is taught in the context of each subject area through **frontloading language to support content instruction**. This language instruction is driven by the needs of the content—that is, instruction focuses on the language that will enable students to think, discuss, read, and write about the topic at hand.
- ③ Finally, content must be taught using instructional **strategies and techniques that make grade-level content accessible** to English Learners. Comprehensible delivery of content ensures that content instruction is clear, sequential, and scaffolded.

All three of these approaches are essential to a well-designed program for English Learners. This

instruction must be provided within an inclusive, culturally responsive learning environment that recognizes and builds upon the value of the language, culture, and experiences of each student.

Blueprint for teaching English throughout the day						
<i>English Language Development (ELD)</i>	<i>English Language Arts</i>	<i>Math</i>	<i>History Social Science</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>PE</i>	<i>Art</i>
<p>Dedicate time for ELD</p> <p>The purpose of ELD is to teach English as a second language and develop a solid language foundation. The content ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is determined by student ELD proficiency levels, ■ Follows the scope and sequence of language skills, and ■ Is taught in functional contexts. 	<p>Frontload language across the content areas</p> <p>The purpose of frontloading is to provide additional language instruction prior to a lesson to equip English Learners with the language structures and vocabulary needed to comprehend, talk, and write about the content. The content of this instruction is determined by the language purposes and designed to teach students the sentence structures and vocabulary they need to engage in learning content-area skills and concepts.</p> <p>Provide comprehensible content instruction (SDAIE, Sheltered)</p> <p>The purpose here is to teach content using instructional strategies and techniques that make grade-level content comprehensible to English Learners. This includes addressing unanticipated language needs as they arise. The content is determined by grade-level content standards.</p>					

Systematic English Language Development (ELD) instruction

Systematic ELD is a vertical slice of the curriculum—a content area with the purpose of developing a solid foundation in the English language and increasing students’ communicative competence in speaking, listening, reading, writing, and thinking. ELD is taught at a regularly scheduled time that’s specifically dedicated to teaching English. Instruction targets each student’s level of English proficiency. Instruction may occur in large- or small-group settings within a single class or through groupings across grade levels that pull students together based on their level of proficiency.

Systematic ELD uses an organized method that does not leave the development of vocabulary, forms, or fluency to random experiences and chance encounters. It follows a developmental scope and

We talk a lot about the achievement gap, but it’s really a language gap.

sequence of language skills and includes substantive practice to ensure that students develop fluency and accuracy. Systematic English language instruction:

- Lays out a scope and sequence of grammatical forms and functions;
- Teaches basic and general utility vocabulary;
- Is engaging and explicit and provides ample varied practice so that students can apply newly learned language in meaningful ways;
- Groups students by level of proficiency for this portion of the instructional day;
- Draws students’ attention to a variety of aspects of language formation, including rules of discourse and tuning the ear to cadence, oral articulation, and colloquial expressions;
- Includes ongoing assessment of language mastery and the ability to apply language in different contexts. This information drives instructional planning to assure that learning is on track.

CDE recommendations

To implement a program of effective English Language Development (ELD) instruction, the California Department of Education recommends that schools:

- Designate a special time for daily ELD instruction, allowing at least 30-45 minutes for this purpose
- Group students for instruction by proficiency levels, including no more than two proficiency levels in a group (i.e., beginning/early intermediate or early advanced/advanced)
- Assess English Language Proficiency (ELP) progress on an ongoing basis
- Align ELD instruction to key ELD standards
- Ensure that appropriately credentialed teachers provide ELD instruction

Lessons can be based on literature, content, or activities, but must provide focus on the forms of the language. Note that systematic ELD, by itself, is not sufficient to guarantee that English Learners have full access to a curriculum. Systematic ELD paired with frontloading and comprehensible content instruction is needed to ensure student success.

Developing academic language proficiency

The chart on the following page summarizes the relationships between language function, form, and fluency. In this chart, the *functions* are the actions we want students to be able to do: participate in discussions, classify and compare, summarize, etc. These functions drive us to connect thought and language. Functions can be applied in either formal or informal settings for the purposes of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The tasks related to the functions range from simple to complex.

Academic language includes syntax, sentence structure, grammar, and academic vocabulary. These are the *forms* of language that students need in order to

complete functional tasks. Proficiency—or *fluency*—is acquired through accurate and fluent use of language.

Of course, language is not used in a vacuum, so interesting everyday and content-related topics should be used to engage students in an ELD lesson. Here are some examples of what students might be learning at different proficiency levels:

- *Beginning*: Pronoun + basic school vocabulary. “My book. Your marker.”
- *Early intermediate*: Simple sentences. “I have + number + object.”
- *Intermediate*: Past-tense verbs to retell a sequence of events. “The bear escaped and ran through the woods. Next, ...”
- *Early advanced*: Use of the conditional to discuss cause and effect. “If we are careful with the seedlings, they will grow into...”

While the objective of a science lesson might be to teach students about adaptations of tree frogs, an ELD lesson would use students’ interest in frogs to teach basic adjectives and various ways to use them in simple sentences. For example:

The frog is *green*. His feet are *sticky*.

The *green* frog has *sticky* feet.

The *tiny green* frog has *powerful* legs.

The language learned during ELD instruction may be applied during science—and new words may be learned during the course of the science lesson—but the goals of each lesson are distinct. Content learning is often a by-product of ELD instruction, just as language learning can occur during content instruction. However, when determining what to teach, the scope and sequence of language skills and competencies must drive teachers’ ELD lesson planning.

Connecting functions and forms with vocabulary

How do we link forms and functions to obtain fluency? To use a construction metaphor, we can think of the topic-specific vocabulary students need as the “bricks” they use to generate language about what they’re studying. The “mortar” is the functional language needed to express their thinking.

One key to successful ELD instruction is structured language practice. The goal of structured language

Functions	Forms	Fluency
<p>Tasks: What are the communicative purposes English Learners must be able to navigate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Express social courtesies ■ Participate in discussions ■ Give and follow directions ■ Express needs, likes, and feelings ■ Ask and answer questions ■ Describe people and things ■ Describe places and locations ■ Relate observable events ■ Express time and duration ■ Classify and compare ■ Express cause and effect ■ Predict ■ Summarize ■ Draw conclusions ■ Make generalizations 	<p>Tools: What are the discourse and grammatical tools needed to communicate for different purposes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Syntax – word order ■ Subject/verb agreement ■ Conventions for formal and informal use ■ General and specific nouns ■ Verb tenses ■ Auxiliary verbs ■ Conjunctions ■ Pronouns and articles ■ Adjectives ■ Adverbial phrases ■ Prepositional phrases ■ Sentence variation and complexity 	<p>Trying it out: What do English Learners need in order to develop accurate and fluent language?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clear modeling of how to purposefully use a range of vocabulary and language patterns ■ Structured peer practice using taught language ■ Practice using learned language in various ways to develop flexibility ■ Frequent and varied opportunities to communicate ideas orally ■ Frequent and varied opportunities to apply learned language in different ways, both orally and in writing

practice is to ensure that students have an opportunity to actively use target language and vocabulary. One method for providing structured practice is to use sentence frames to scaffold student understanding of how the topic-specific vocabulary (bricks) and functional structures of language (mortar) work together to build complete sentences.

The chart below shows an example of how “bricks and mortar” are used to build sentences across the proficiency levels. At each proficiency level, the process begins with topic-specific examples. The words and sentences can then be generalized into sentence frames that can be applied across the curriculum to explicitly teach students the language structures they’ll need to communicate their thinking.

Using the sentence frames, teachers can vary the content. For example, mice and elephants, cities and towns, or similar geometric shapes can be compared using the same sentence frames. Students can use the frames to scaffold their practice in all content areas.

Finally, when providing systematic ELD instruction, teachers should follow a sequence of instruction that supports students’ acquisition of English. Here is one sequence that could be followed:

- ① **Build background knowledge.** Link students’ previous learning and experience to new learning and experience.
- ② **Teach and practice vocabulary.** Teach topic-related “brick” vocabulary.
- ③ **Structure practice** to give students opportunities to internalize vocabulary. Teach and practice language patterns.
- ④ **Teach grammatical forms** related to the target functions (compare/contrast, describe, etc.).
- ⑤ **Take language to application.** Provide opportunities to apply and practice new vocabulary and structures.

It is important to realize that many teachers are being asked to provide explicit, systematic English Language Development (ELD) instruction for the very first time. Using these tools, teachers can begin to provide instruction that will enable students to expertly use language in a variety of ways—from the simple, concrete, and conversational to the complex, abstract, and academic. This is our goal for all English Learners. ♦

Bricks and Mortar: The Function of Comparing

	Beginning	Early Intermediate	Intermediate	Early Advanced	Advanced
Expectation	Single words	Short sentences	Simple comparative sentences	Comparative sentences of increasing complexity and detail	Approximating native-like use of a wide variety of complex structures
Topic-specific example	Big Ocean Small Lake	An ocean is big. A lake is small.	An ocean is larger than a lake. <i>Note use of “-er than” as a comparative structure</i>	An ocean is enormous compared to a lake. <i>Note varied comparative vocabulary</i>	An ocean is vast. Even the largest lake is small by comparison. <i>Note varied vocabulary and “-est” as comparative structure</i>
Generalized sentence frame		A ___ is ____. A ___ is ____.	A ___ is _____er than a ____.	A _____ is _____ compared to a _____.	A _____ is _____. Even the _____-est is _____ by comparison.

Local example: Foss Creek Elementary

Dedicating time to academic language development

Foss Creek Elementary School in Healdsburg recently initiated an English Language Development (ELD) program that's specifically focused on accelerating the progress of English Learners through the language proficiency levels. They call the program **Academic Language Development Time**—time specifically devoted to meeting students' academic language needs. This is a schoolwide effort to provide instruction for *all* of the school's students, whether they are at the beginning level of proficiency or the most advanced.

Students are grouped according to their scores on the 2005 California English Language Development Test (CELDT)—and the school hand-scored the CELDT in order to access the data more efficiently. English Only and Fluent English Proficient students are also included in the program. They're grouped based on results from California Standards Tests (CST) and the embedded oral language assessments from *Open Court Reading*.

Academic Language Development Time takes place during the first 40 minutes of every instructional day. For students at the beginning level of proficiency, instruction is provided in a multi-age setting across grades 2-6. Students receive explicit instruction in basic English. Instructional strategies include Total Physical Response (TPR), use of sentence frames to structure and scaffold instruction, and varied student response modes (group response, individual response, responding by writing words, responding by drawing pictures, etc.). Instruction is fast-paced and engaging. Topics include greetings, prepositions, and more.

Early intermediate through advanced students are grouped in like-proficiency groups. *Moving Into English*, from Santillana USA Publishing, is used to guide instruction. Teachers augment this instruction with Thinking Maps. For example, in one classroom, early intermediate students are learning about places in their community. They use a Brace Map to list the parks, playgrounds, and stores they've visited in and around Healdsburg.

Foss Creek principal Aracely Romo-Flores says that one of the most critical steps in starting up this schoolwide program was ensuring that the entire staff was committed to it and understood the benefits it would yield for English Learners. Now that the program is up and running, teachers need time to collaborate. Language assessments are being administered every eight weeks and the goal is for teachers to work collaboratively to review student progress, adjust student placement, and design lessons that meet identified student needs.

Teachers at Foss Creek say that Academic Language Development Time has given their students a new level of support and the tools to succeed. All of the school's English Learners are actively engaged because they feel safe in the like-groupings and are more willing to take risks as they journey toward English language proficiency. ♦



A STELLAR coach

Foss Creek Elementary has an additional resource that's supporting teachers as they refine their techniques for teaching English Language Development.

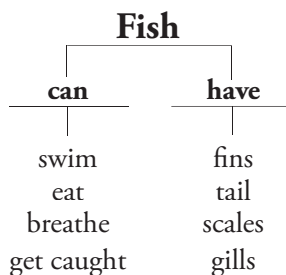
Silvia Ramirez, the district's EL mentor, is providing in-class coaching for teachers. Ramirez attended the STELLAR training at SCOE in October—STELLAR stands for Supporting Teachers of English Language Learners with Accessible Resources. At this training, Ramirez explored and practiced peer coaching and adult learning strategies, then learned about what a lesson needs in order to be accessible to English Learners.

When Ramirez works with teachers at Foss Creek, she first asks them to identify an area they would like to improve—preparation of the lesson, building student background, using direct teaching methods, providing active student practice, or assessing/monitoring student

Thinking Maps: Seeing and saying

“I can see what I want to say.” This was the comment of a fourth-grade student at Bellevue School who was using a Thinking Map. Thinking Maps provide organization, common language, and a safe place for English Learners to chronicle and refine their ideas. The iconic nature of the maps cues students into the type of thinking required and the language they’ll need to communicate their understanding.

Because Thinking Maps are visual tools, students at all levels of proficiency can benefit from their use. Students can draw pictures, write words, jot phrases, or use complete sentences within the maps. As one Kawana School teacher says, “Thinking Maps provide a strong foundation for EL students to work from. The maps are tools for both understanding the curriculum and participating in critical thinking.”



A Tree Map

Teachers can use Thinking Maps to structure student response and accelerate student growth across the CELDT proficiency levels. For example, students at the beginning level of English proficiency can explore building sentences with a Tree Map by selecting a topic (fish), identifying verbs related to the topic (can, have), and categorizing what they know about the topic. Then, they can use the map to build sentences that tell about the topic: *Fish have fins. Fish can swim. Fish can breathe. Fish have gills.*

Intermediate students can use the Tree Map to guide their work in combining sentences: *Fish have fins and a tail so they can swim. Fish have gills so they can breathe.* Advanced students can use the map to practice condensing ideas into academic structures: *Gills allow fish to breathe, while fins and tails enable swimming.* ♦

Note: At both the intermediate and advanced levels, teachers would need to focus on the use of signal and transition words to assist students in combining and condensing sentences.

progress. She meets individually with the teacher before the lesson to discuss their plans, then observes the lesson and takes notes using the STELLAR observation tool. Ramirez provides feedback to her peer and suggests strategies and adjustments that would amplify student response. She and the teacher repeat this cycle three times during the school year. Teachers say that the collaboration that happens during the coaching sessions is helping them develop new ideas, build professionalism, and improve instruction for EL students. ♦

For information about STELLAR, contact Jane Escobedo, (707) 522-3305 or jescobedo@scoe.org.

Barrier games get students talking

Barrier games can be an effective way to get EL students talking. These games can be structured so that students use target academic vocabulary and language structures. Here’s how barrier games work:

A barrier—for example, a folder—is set up between two students so that they can’t see each other’s work. One student is the sender and the other is the receiver. The sender builds a design with blocks, tangrams, or manipulatives, then describes his/her design or arrangement. The receiver arranges blocks in accordance with the directions given by the sender. When the receiver has completed the design, the barrier is lifted and the two compare their work. Both students review how the communication could have been improved.

Teachers can vary the activity with these suggestions:

- Use objects—pictures of fruits and vegetables, different types of rocks, objects in the classroom—to focus on the vocabulary that’s being studied.
- Use two pictures that are identical except for specific differences that will require students to use target language structures and vocabulary. For example, you can take a photograph, then add, subtract, or move objects

... continued next page

Characteristics	Needs
<p><i>Strong educational background in first language and limited English proficiency</i></p> <p>Near grade-level literacy and content knowledge in first language Uninterrupted schooling in home country</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1-2 hours daily of intensive ELD ■ 2-3 hours daily of literacy instruction that highlights similarities and differences between first language and English ■ Content-area instruction that builds on existing knowledge ■ Orientation to American culture
<p><i>Limited educational background in first language and limited English proficiency</i></p> <p>Limited literacy and content-area knowledge in first language Interrupted or limited schooling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 1-2 hours daily of intensive ELD ■ 2-3 hours daily of accelerated English literacy development ■ Accelerated content-area development ■ Orientation to American culture <p><i>Note: Attention to literacy and conceptual learning in first language may accelerate progress</i></p>
<p><i>Strong educational background in first language and strong oral English</i></p> <p>Has lived in the U.S. for several years, with some schooling in first language in home country or U.S. schools</p> <p>Proficient in everyday social communicative language, but needs to develop fluency with precise, varied vocabulary and complex grammatical structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 30-60 minutes daily of focused ELD, preferably through instruction that's parallel to literacy and/or content instruction ■ Content-area instruction that highlights more precise, academic vocabulary ■ Literacy instruction that explicitly develops fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, phonics, and word analysis ■ If possible, literacy instruction that highlights similarities and differences between first language and English
<p><i>Limited literacy skill and strong oral English</i></p> <p>Persistent English Learner Limited literacy skills and content-area knowledge Interrupted or inconsistent instruction in literacy, content, and ELD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 30-60 minutes of daily ELD instruction focused on academic English ■ Content-area instruction that requires interaction with and use of increasingly complex vocabulary ■ Literacy instruction based on student data that targets areas of weakness in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension

Barrier Games, continued from page 7

This publication was developed by the Sonoma County Office of Education in support of Aiming High, a county-wide initiative supported by 28 local districts and the Sonoma County Association of School Administrators (SCASA). For information, contact Jane Escobedo, (707) 522-3305.



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and take another photograph. Or, find a coloring-book picture of a selected topic, make a copy of the original, and white-out, add, or color objects.

- To assist students, provide and practice structured questions and responses. Post the examples on the wall. *Question:* Does your ___ have ___? *Response:* My ___ has ___. *Question:* Where is the ___? *Response:* The ___ is ___.

Barrier games work with students because there is an information gap that requires authentic communication in order to complete the task successfully. They are an effective way for students to practice language while having fun. ♦