

# Working with English Language Learners (ELLs)

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## **SUMMARY**

This sheet describes five simple yet effective strategies for delivering content so that all students, especially ELLs, can understand and internalize subject matter.

## **AUDIENCE**

All educators

## **WHY LEARN THESE STRATEGIES?**

These strategies help teachers facilitate an equitable learning experience for their students, especially English language learners.

## **USE DIRECT AND EXPLICIT TEACHING OF VOCABULARY**

Encourage correct and frequent use of content-specific vocabulary. Students can best master pronunciation and understand meaning of vocabulary words with frequent opportunities to practice word usage.

## **USE EXPLICIT MODELING**

Explicitly modeling allows teachers to demonstrate how one can think through a problem and correctly perform specific tasks and procedures using relevant vocabulary.

## **MAXIMIZE SOCIAL INTERACTION**

All students require ample opportunities to engage each other and communicate learned information. Remember, ELL students are trying to master the content and the language in which it is presented. They need lots of practice reading, writing, and speaking!

## **TEACH METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES**

All students benefit from explicit instruction on learning style assessments using graphic organizers. Graphic organizers such as Venn diagrams, KWL charts, and outlines serve as effective pre-writing/pre-reading tools. As an example, T-charts can be used to compare and contrast characters from a story.

## **LINK CONTENT TO STUDENTS' BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE**

There is perhaps no better way to engage students than to relate content to a part of their world. For example, one student (ELL or native speaker) might have an affinity for doodling. The doodling can be a powerful link between the student and the content. Have the student draw his or her notes on cell biology or the War of 1812! Students perceive the world through their own cultural lens and it is best to use it to maximize engagement. The students will see their talents, opinions, and background as having meaning in the class and you, as the facilitator of learning, will be showing cultural sensitivity, an important teaching attribute in today's diverse classroom.