

*A Guide for Pre-Service Teachers in Supporting Middle School English Language Learners
(ELLs) in General Education Classrooms*

By

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CERTIFICATION OF PROJECT WORK

We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled A Guide for Pre-service Teachers in Supporting Middle School English Language Learners (Ells) in General Education Classrooms by Jenna Dewe, Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, TESOL MSED, is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.


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Abstract

The following guide was developed for pre-service and in-service middle school teachers who work with English Language Learners (ELLs). The basic propositions outlined in the paper were derived from the English for Second Language literature and should be used to support classroom teachers in meeting the academic and interpersonal needs of ELLs. This manual highlights many effective strategies for teachers of ELLs and promotes the need for social and academic success among all students. The manual can help to prepare everyone involved in the challenges of teaching ELLs, including students, peers, teachers, schools, and communities. The manual is arranged into the following sections: (a) Introduction, (b) Understand the students, (c) Understand the Friends, (d) Understand the Teacher, (e) Understand the Team, (f) Understand the School, (g) Understand the Community, and (h) Conclusion.

History of Education

The focal point of public education in the United States has been in a constant state of flux over the past few decades. Dramatic demographic changes in our student population, a rapidly expanding curriculum with higher standards for all, and dwindling educational resources pose formidable challenges for all teachers, novice or veteran. Many significant policy changes were made to improve the education of all students. Several important Supreme Court cases (e.g., *Lau versus Nichols*, 1974) and federal legislation (e.g., *No Child Left Behind* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Acts*), for example, have helped to shape U.S. education as we know it today. Court cases have included issues of equality, accessibility to high quality education, desegregation, and working with students with limited English proficiency and special needs (Zirkel, 2001).

Such court cases and federal legislation have literally changed the face of 21st Century American classrooms. They have become increasingly diverse as students from all cultural, ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, and academic backgrounds are included in general education classrooms. The basic premise of common or inclusive educational placements is that all children has the same basic right to a high quality education in settings as close to their norm as possible (e.g., normalization, mainstreaming, and inclusion). Although inclusion of all students in common settings was well-intended, it has not always been beneficial to those who attend these settings. One group in particular, English Language Learners (ELLs), for example, has often struggled in these inclusive settings (LeClair, Doll, Osborn, & Jones, 2009). The U.S. Department of Education described ELLs as those who did not grow up in a primarily English-speaking setting *and* lack the skills necessary to learn in an English-only environment (LeClair, et al., (2009). This definition clearly recognizes the significant challenges of succeeding in

demanding curriculum that is spoken in a language other than the one that students can understand.

Unfortunately, many English Language Learners have often found themselves *physically included* in general education classrooms but *functionally* excluded from learning by significant language barriers. Essentially, these students were expected to master content courses and develop and expand their ability to communicate in English. Quite often they were expected to do so without sufficient instructional support from classroom teachers (Honigsfeld, 2009). It was not that their general education teachers did not want to help them; more often than not, they simply were not prepared to do so linguistically or instructionally. Unfortunately, this “sink or swim” approach to service delivery has produced many instructional casualties (Honigsfeld, 2009).

It was similar excessive failure rates among ELLs in the general education classroom that prompted the 1974 Supreme Court Case of *Lau vs. Nichols*. As Black (2005) stated, in this decision, the court declared that students who were not native English speakers were not learning in an “equal, fair, or developmentally appropriate manner” (p. 38). Additionally, *Lau vs. Nichols* (1974) mandated that students with limited English language proficiency receive a *meaningful education* by incorporating language services and bilingual education programs throughout the country (Zirkel, 2001). Over the next several decades, however, educational policy shifts in some states (e.g., California Proposition 227 and Arizona Proposition 203) actually limited the number of bilingual programs available and mandated English-only instruction (Wright & Choi, 2006). English-only programs required that ELLs be taught English and content-related material as quickly and efficiently as possible (Honigsfeld, 2009). Soon thereafter, the federal government implemented the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. This particular legislation was

designed to close the achievement gap between races and socioeconomic classes. Closing the achievement gap inherently established the same performance standards for all students regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, and/or proficiency in the English language (Honigsfeld, 2009). The law also required that ELLs be included in *high stakes* testing and make *adequate yearly progress* (Wright & Choi, 2006). While this legislation was certainly well-intended, it further limited bilingual education and promoted English-only programs. As such, ELLs are expected to meet the same benchmarks as their English-only peers.

It is critical that the nation understands that general education classrooms no longer look like they used to where the vast majority of students were Caucasian, English-speaking, students from mostly middle-income homes. Today's classrooms include students with special needs, diverse learning styles, and multiple cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. Currently, linguistic minorities are the fastest growing student population in the United States (Craighead & Ramanathan, 2007). According to Black (2005), about 1 in every 6 school-aged students speak languages other than English at home. These demographic changes were not, however, a *direct* result of the influx of immigrants moving to the United States in recent years. Rather, almost two-thirds of all 5–24 year olds who speak languages other than English were *born* in the United States. It is estimated by the year 2020, almost half of all students in the U.S. public schools will come from families who do not speak English at home (as cited by Yoon, 2007). The academic achievement gap between native English speakers and ELLs is a legitimate concern for all educators, parents, administrators, and policy makers (Borba, 2009). Although state and federal governments have struggled to develop educational programs that work best for ELLs, the common goal remains to provide optimal learning opportunities to meet the needs of the fastest growing segment of our school population (Collier, 1995).

The Unprepared Student

Many ELLs and their families face the familiar concept of *culture shock* when arriving in new countries and/or enrolling in new schools. Culture shock was defined as, “A distortion of many of the familiar cues encountered at home and substituted for other cues that are inexplicable” (Zainuddin, Yahya, Morales-Jones & Ariza, 2007). During this time, everything known becomes unknown; this can be seen in different customs, religions, gestures, schools, and even foods. It is quite common for people to experience this initial “shock” when being absorbed into an unfamiliar culture. These experiences may produce feelings of isolation, rejection, and even hopelessness. According to Zainuddin, et al., (2007), there are four distinctive stages of culture shock: (a) the honeymoon stage, (b) the hostile or aggressive stage, (c) the recovery stage, and (d) the adjustment stage. Each stage is coupled with its own distinct feelings and emotions. These emotions often begin with fascination, excitement, and amazement at the newness of everything (i.e., stage 1) and conclude with feelings of comfort and normalcy in the new culture (stage 4). However, the middle two stages (i.e., 2 and 3) often prove to be more difficult for many English Language Learners. They are often frustrated, anxious, and uncertain about their basic existence (Winkelman, 1994). Given the ever-increasing population of ELLs, it is important for educators to recognize and understand how culture shock affects these students academically and socially. There are many ways educators can create positive, supportive, and multicultural classrooms; environments that embrace and celebrate individual differences and help their students make successful transitions through the four stages of culture shock.

Middle school settings are particularly challenging for students because the social aspects of life take on greater importance in addition to increasing academic demands. The need for feelings of belongingness encompasses all aspects of students’ lives. Middle school students, for

example, naturally want to assimilate or fit in with their peers in and out of the classroom. This is particularly important for ELLs since many of them have been ripped from their prior communities and occasionally forced into sometimes unwelcoming, new settings. ELLs may lose their sense of belonging as they begin new lives in new countries where their culture is no longer dominant and not always accepted (Keyes & Kane, 2004).

As ELLs cope with new schools, customs, and the need to belong, they may feel lonely, inferior, nostalgic, and/or even humiliated. These feelings may be intensified if their previous living environments were safe, loving, and familiar. However, many ELLs left homes in desperate measures to search for new beginnings. Although many ELLs immigrated to the U.S. due to dangerous circumstances, they sometimes long for the “normalcy” just as they long to belong in middle school (Keyes & Kane, 2004).

Students may feel further singled out if their language is not welcomed or accepted within the classroom. According to Agirdag (2009), if students were not able to use their first language (L1) in school, then they were consequently leaving behind important pieces of their identities. Agirdag (2009) also stated that language and personal identities were complexly joined together. Therefore, educators must create learning environments in which all students’ native languages are valued and visible. The presence of student’s languages in school environment confirms the students’ identities and closes the language barrier. It also builds a positive bridge from the classroom to parents. Educators often strive for culturally diverse classrooms. One way to enhance the classroom setting is to incorporate the L1 daily activities.

The Unprepared Friend

Middle school is a very social time for adolescents as many transitions are taking place. Typically, students are changing physically, cognitively, and emotionally (Virtue, 2009). For

many young teenagers, this time is challenging and friends become more comforting than parents. ELLs may find this transition even more difficult because they are also learning new languages, cultures, and academics, as well as, the “hidden curriculum” of middle schools in the United States. To be successful in the classroom, English Language Learners must possess good social skills as well as functional language and academic competence (Virtue, 2009).

The well-known psychologist Lev Vygotsky viewed learning as highly social in nature. That is, to reach higher mental functioning, individuals must have an abundance of social interactions (Purdy, 2008). These structured interactions can be directed through peers or teachers. These communicative interactions help ELLs’ social and academic language development. However, it is important to remember that they can develop social language rather quickly compared to academic language. For this reason, many teachers get false impressions of ELLs’ actual linguistic competence, often thinking that their social language is on par with their academic language. In fact, many ELLs resort to “passing” strategies in order to seem more fluent in English. Passing strategies include things such as nodding yes to all questions phrased as, “Do you understand?”; avoiding eye contact with teachers, slouching in their chairs, appearing engaged in other activities, and even making purposeful mistakes to avoid reading aloud (Monzó & Rueda, 2009). Sometimes, students also take it in the opposite direction; that is, they produce less than they are capable of doing in order to receive additional support or make themselves less noticeable (Monzó & Rueda, 2009).

Middle school students who speak languages other than English recognize that their native languages are often perceived as inferior by many of their peers (Monzó & Rueda, 2009). This adds to the growing list of ways that ELLs feel misplaced in the classroom. They may use passing strategies to appear more fluent in English but in all actuality they are striving to become

more Americanized so that they fit in better. Ultimately, ELLs use these strategies to avoid being rejected by their peers.

Comfortable and accepting learning environments, however, are best equipped for enhancing student engagement and achievement (LeClair, et al., 2009). This may also help reduce their feelings of inferiority. Peers are essential contributors to middle school mentality; they socialize as often as possible both in and out of class. ELLs can benefit greatly from these peer social interactions. Normally-developing students can become powerful and versatile instructional tools. They can help English Language Learners to understand main ideas, the importance of asking and answering questions, and relating new material to previous knowledge (Tellez & Waxman, 2010).

Social support among peers can be orchestrated by teachers to accept and celebrate individual differences. By valuing what each student brings to the table, classroom teachers and students can learn to accept cultural and linguistic differences and appreciate the potential benefits they can bring to classrooms. By doing this, general education classrooms will be more productive learning environments for all ELLs (Yoon, 2007). Teachers can also facilitate peer interactions through the use of cooperative learning groups, and peer tutoring and buddy systems. Difficult concepts can be explained by other students with the same linguistic ability. Students often learn better from peers than their teachers (Agirdag, 2009).

Student activity and engagement outside the classroom is also important. Quite often, ELLs limit their social interactions to individuals who share their own cultural and linguistic norms. Furthermore, many ELLs may not attend social gatherings with English-speaking peers because of their perceived and actual language barriers. School, however, can address these issues by sending home multilingual notes or having multilingual web pages showing important

information and upcoming events. Creating an environment in which ELLs feel comfortable and supported may be the most important challenge confronting teachers of contemporary English Language Learners.

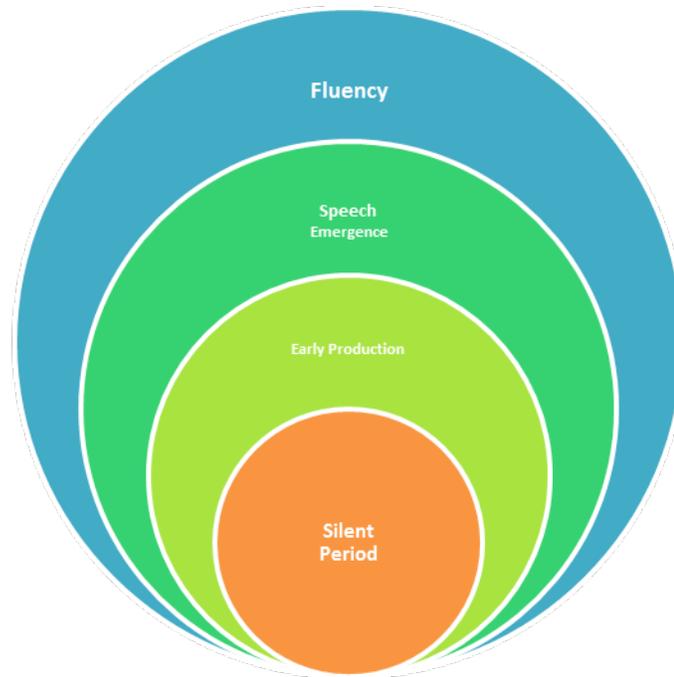
The Unprepared Teacher

Throughout the United States, more and more general education teachers are instructing students who are learning English as a second language; yet, most are not prepared explicitly to do so (Pappamihel, 2007). For example, novice general educators have difficulty enrolling in courses to meet the diverse needs of ELLs because they are often not built into their specified curricula (Daniel, 2007). Forty-five percent of all teachers nationwide indicated that they taught ELLs; however, only 12 percent of those received *any* specialized training (as cited by Karathanos, 2010). Shockingly, some training consisted only of day-long seminars and/or in-service sessions. Such limited professional development activities are unlikely to prepare teachers sufficiently to meet ELLs' academic, linguistic, and social needs. There are more than 5,000,000 ELLs enrolled in our public schools and the numbers are rising consistently. In contrast, only 3% of all teachers are professionally-certified to instruct bilingual or ESL education (Karathanos, 2010). This presents a great challenge not only for classroom teachers but for ELLs as well. While many teachers may lack the knowledge or skills to meet the linguistic, academic, or cultural needs of ELLs, there is still an enormous, un-met need for appropriate professional development to support their instructional efforts.

According to Batt (2008), most general education teachers realized that they were not well-versed in teaching ELLs effectively. As such, they are often quite open to relevant and helpful professional development such as ESL curriculum development, sheltered English instruction, and first and second language literacy methods. General education teachers also felt

that it was beneficial to have more bilingual and/or ESL teachers in the schools. These individuals can function in consulting teacher roles, co-teaching and/or as instructors in a sheltered English academy. As stated by Batt (2008), educational institutions (e.g., schools and colleges of education and public schools) must work collaboratively to provide meaningful teaching opportunities in pre-service teaching programs and ongoing, professional development opportunities to refine instruction of in-service teachers. Most, if not all, teachers would benefit from professional development activities that identify learner's needs and offer guidance in meeting pupils' cultural, linguistic, communicative, academic, and social needs (Kyounghee & Hoover, 2009).

To provide the best possible instruction for ELLs, teachers must understand the process of second-language (Borba, 2009). Understanding how second languages are acquired and maintained can help teachers set reasonable academic and social expectations, design culturally-responsive lessons, and scaffold instruction to meet all pupils' needs. Immediate English proficiency, for example, would be an unreasonable expectation in social and academic language. English Language Learners move through several developmental stages when learning new languages. Each stage varies greatly dependent upon individual and environmental influences. Stages do *not* follow strict timelines, and there is often quite a bit of overlap among stages since second language acquisition is a continual progression.



The first stage of language acquisition is referred to as the *silent period*. During this time, ELLs may not be speaking or writing in English; however, they may be “soaking up” linguistic and communicative information and responding to requests *non-verbally*. The second stage, called *early production*, occurs when individuals provide short, one or two word responses; basic concepts and ideas may be understood but individuals do not have sufficient words to express what they know. The next stage is *speech emergence*; here, individuals’ vocabularies are large enough to produce short sentences (e.g., I am doing fine)! The final stage is *fluency* where mistakes are still made, however, sentences are longer and include more elaborate and complex speech and language patterns (Zainuddin, et al., 2007).

Black (2005) emphasized the importance of time in student learning of second languages. She suggested that pupils should be “eased into English” and that “learning English well takes time”. In contrast, many ELLs may acquire *conversational English* in as little as a year or two. These conversational skills are acquired when talking with friends in school hallways, strategizing on sports fields, and/or speaking directly with teachers and peers about academic

topics (Drucker, 2003). These impressive linguistic strides in ELLs' conversational English should not, however, be confused with the acquisition of *academic English*. Academic language is more abstract, more vocabulary-specific, and not used in everyday conversations. Rather, it is found in our textbooks and on our high stakes state exams (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2010).

Vocabulary deficiencies at the middle school level can make reading, writing, and understanding information in all core classes more difficult. Longitudinal research indicated that it takes about five to seven years for ELLs to reach the English-speaking proficiency levels of their native speaking peers (Collier, 1995). However, if they did not have any kind of language instruction in their L1 (first language), then it can take seven to 10 years to acquire academic language in the L2 (second language) (Batt, 2008). To promote academic vocabulary and language usage students must be exposed to words in multiple contexts, receive plenty of visual supports, and ample time to process new information.

With the continual growth of the ELL population, teachers are confronted with an unavoidable challenge; they must learn to work effectively with groups of students with whom they may have little experience or training. Equally challenging will be the task of establishing effective and culturally responsive relationship with ELLs' cultures and families (Pappamihel, 2007). Coronado and Petró's (2008) article stated, however, that many pre-service and practicing general educators may lack empathy for ELLs' learning challenges. Some might even conclude that "ELLs would learn English quickly if they really wanted to" (Pappamihel, 2007). This statement infers that academic success and English acquisition is primarily a familial or cultural responsibility; as such, it diminishes the important role that teachers play in this process. High stakes test scores has never been more important and teachers must empathize ELLs ability

and motivation to work every day in settings where only English was spoken for seven hours and they only understood some of what was taught that day (Coronado & Petró, 2008).

The Unprepared Team

ELLs are required to receive a certain amount of direct, daily ESL instruction based on their English language proficiency levels. The more English proficient students are, then the less required instructional time with ESL specialists are provided (Honigsfeld, 2009). Currently, the *pull-out* service-delivery option is one of the most popular ESL programs. These programs pullout ELLs from their general education classroom, to receive small group, language-intensive lessons with other ELLs. Although students receive individualized attention that is important to English language development, they also become disconnected from general education instruction. Often times, ESL and classroom teachers are working on *separate* curricula and ELLs are lost when they return to general education classrooms. Quite often, teachers must re-teach important information and/or remediate these learning gaps through peer tutoring or assistance. As such, pull-out service delivery programs are recommended least often by ESL researchers (Fu, Houser, & Huang, 2007). It is also important to recognize that the general education curriculum is built for students who already use the four modalities of English language proficiently (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing). A more beneficial approach may be a “push-in” service delivery model. Here, ESL teachers and services are pushed into general education classrooms, and both teachers work collaboratively to meet all pupils’ needs. Push in models require ELLs to remain in general education settings while their ESL teachers instruct alongside general education teachers. This model allows ELLs to be included in the general education curriculum and receive compensatory instruction to support their efforts (Fu, et al., 2007). Collaboration among content-area and ESL teachers is critical. The expertise of two

teachers increases the likelihood that all students can succeed. Classroom teachers remain content experts, while ESL teachers expand instructional methods to make information more comprehensible for ELLs. For this reason, the collaboration between two teachers is highly recommended (Fu et al., 2007).

Although students can reap benefits from teacher collaborations, several problems may arise from push in models. General education teachers, for example, may feel that they are fully capable of teaching ELLs without ESL assistance. On the other hand, ESL teachers are trained specifically to work with this group of students; they are well-versed in best practices and strategies. Tensions may arise if both teacher groups feel more knowledgeable or competent than their collaborators. Teachers may also find themselves blaming each other for unavoidable shortcomings. With dramatic increases in the number of ELLs in our schools and the current paucity of ESL teachers, ESL assistance might be limited in many settings. Moreover, it is quite challenging for ESL teachers to be prepared sufficiently to work in multiple content areas (e.g., math, science, social studies, and English). ESL teachers may not know specific curricula at multiples grades and subject areas (Fu et al., 2007). Disagreements can arise when general education teachers think ELLs are not acquiring language fast enough and they are not given enough content knowledge. On the flip side, ESL teachers find it troubling that ELLs spend most of their day in the general education settings where many teachers may be unable or unwilling to adjust their instruction. As a result, general educators are often blamed for not understanding how to adapt curricular materials for ELLs, teaching above their instructional levels, and/or not using sheltered content instruction (Fu et al., 2007).

Teachers may also be confused about their actual and perceived roles as collaborators. For example, who is responsible for which instructional and non-instructional duties within the

classroom? Who will plan and implement daily instruction, design solid classroom and behavior management systems, and coordinate efforts with other service providers? Simply having two teachers in one classroom will not be effective if there are no action plans or effective instruction. Successful collaboration will require teachers to find the “missing links” among their teaching styles; areas where they can build upon one another’s strengths, while compensating for any perceived shortcomings. When teachers work together effectively, their classrooms are positive and cohesive learning communities where individual differences are accepted and accommodated (Fu et al., 2007). Effective collaboration, however, requires lots of time, hard work and dedication. As the ELL population continues to grow, so too does the importance of effective collaboration among teachers and administrators (Batt, 2008).

The Unprepared School

As the ELL population grows, teachers must prepare to meet their diverse academic, linguistic, and cultural needs. Personal beliefs on inter-culturalism ultimately affect instruction whether the beliefs are positive or negative (Pappamihiel, 2007). Inter-culturalism can be defined as viewing other cultures through your own, and not being able to accept the differences among peoples and culture (Pappamihiel, 2007). More teachers are working with ELLs in new and different geographic locations (e.g., rural and suburban schools) (Karathanos, 2010). As a result, there may be noticeable shortages in ESL teachers in some portions of our country. To work effectively with ELLs, all teachers should examine their personal views on inter-culturalism and its relationship to their teaching practice (Pappamihiel, 2007).

Unfortunately, some teachers still hold negative views toward students (and their parents) who do not speak English and/or who are not Caucasian. This ethnocentric viewpoint often develops among individuals who lack exposure to people of diverse cultural and linguistic

backgrounds. Teachers with ethnocentric views are often unable to accept differences; instead they try to assimilate students quickly into the dominant culture and language. They may also have other misconceptions about the immigration or people from other backgrounds. This perspective can be damaging when it is translated into the use of ineffective teaching practices (Pappamihiel, 2007). A more constructive instructional approach might be derived from an *ethno-relative* perspective on inter-culturalism. This viewpoint accepts, acknowledges, and recognizes the potential benefits from student differences. Ethno-relative teachers are more likely to use a variety of instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students found in the classroom.

Language and personal identity go hand-in-hand with ELLs. To feel valued, ELLs language and culture must be incorporated into the classroom. All languages and cultures should be celebrated. Although ELLs must acquire good English language skills, this is only one piece of their educational puzzle. They should be recognized frequently for their linguistic gains as well as their athletic, artistic, musical, and abilities, as well as their willingness to share their first languages (Agirdag, 2009). By praising the *whole* child, value is placed on schooling and education, not just the importance of the English language.

Acceptance in the classroom is particularly important at the middle school level for several reasons. First, a sense of value reinforces education. The more “important” students feel in school, the more likely they are to enjoy school and work hard to overcome instructional obstacles such as, English-only laws, minimal language supports, and shortages of bilingual and ESL teachers (Sullivan, 2011). Another reason acceptance is crucial because high academic achievement is expected at each subsequent grade level (Newman, Samimy, & Romstedt, 2010). Currently, ELLs have the highest retention and dropout rates of all students in public education

(Newman et al., 2010). This poses a major problem for students, teachers, and policymakers alike.

Sheltered instruction has become another important tool for instructing ELLs. This model makes content and language standards comprehensible and attainable for diverse learners. A well-known sheltered instruction framework is the ***Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol*** (SIOP) (Echevarria & Vogt, 2008). This model concentrates on eight components and 30 key features that help teachers implement effective, research-based instruction. The model includes eight *expansive* components: (a) preparation, (b) building background, (c) comprehensible input, (d) strategies, (e) interaction, (f) practice and application, (g) lesson delivery, and (h) review and assessment. When combined with the 30 detailed key features such as supplementary materials, key vocabulary, scaffolding techniques, group configurations, student engagement, and review of key concepts, this model provides teachers with the tools to teach ELLs successfully in general education classrooms. As Hansen-Thomas (2008) stated, “This type of instruction is intended to give ELLs the same high quality and academically challenging content that native English speakers receive in the classroom” (p. 166).

The Unprepared Community

Community involvement plays an active role in the academic success of students; this is particularly true for ELLs (Tellez & Waxman, 2010). The displacement of families from their proverbial homes to new communities, often located in other countries can bring on feelings of distress. Parents may not know how to help their children succeed in a new language and culture. This may hinder the rate at which ELLs socialize, learn new customs, and acclimate at school (Tellez & Waxman, 2010). For these reasons, community-support programs can be extremely beneficial for ELLs.

Proactive communities impact educational achievement by introducing after-school programs such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brother programs, and sports teams. These community-support programs promote academic achievement and stress the importance of hard work. They can be extremely important for students who do not have adequate resources at home (Tellez & Waxman, 2010). In other words, healthy communities can and should promote learning and positively affect the lives of all diverse learners (Tellez & Waxman, 2010).

Although healthy communities can play an active role in ELLs' success, parent involvement may play an even more important role. Borba (2009) stated, for example, that families strongly influenced the importance of education and most parents were genuinely interested in what happened at school. Research showed further that the more involved parents were in their children's education, the higher they performed academically (Borba, 2009). Parents who were not English language proficient, however, may be apprehensive about helping their children academically. Schools can, however, create positive links among parents, teachers, and administrators even when there are language differences (Borba, 2009).

Teachers with experience working with ELLs have learned the many benefits that can accrue from parent involvement in the classroom. Language differences do not have to be communication barriers; in fact, languages can be utilized for bridging linguistic and cultural differences for learning. Teachers can include parents in culturally-relevant instructional activities; they can also check homework, listen to students read, prepare instructional materials, assist in field trips and pep rallies, and/or monitor hallways and lunchrooms (Borba, 2009).

Although parent involvement holds many potential benefits, the pitfalls must be illuminated as well. One potential impediment to parental involvement is lack of transportation. Many immigrant families also work longer hours than schools are in session. Some immigrant

families work multiple jobs to make ends meet and their limited English proficiency can make some parents feel excluded (Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre, 2008). ELLs and parents will feel more connected with schools when teachers offer opportunities for family involvement and open communication. Many teachers, for example, may find it useful to use students, siblings, or neighbors as translators in order to breach the gap between the school, teachers, ELLs, and their families (Chen et al., 2008).

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Suggestions for Supporting
Middle School
English Language Learners
in the
Mainstream Classroom



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Introduction

American classrooms today are more diverse than ever as teachers are serving students from all over the world. The likelihood of current mainstream teachers not working with English Language Learners (ELLs) is very unlikely as the ELL population skyrockets. Between the years of 1995 – 2005, for example, the ELL population in public schools grew by more than 60%, and is currently approaching 6,000,000. Generally the majority of the ELL population live in larger and southern states such as Texas, Florida, California, New York, and Illinois. In recent years, however, the population has shifted to states in the Midwest. Given the limited professional development opportunities for pre-service and practicing teachers to work with multicultural students, many teachers feel ill-prepared to work with ELLs. Teachers are becoming more cognizant of their limited knowledge bases and there is an obvious need for more professional development opportunities in working with linguistic minorities and/or culturally diverse students. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers develop competence in areas that meets the needs of the *whole* child, not simply their linguistic needs. This guide provides important information for classroom teachers on strategies for improving the linguistic, academic, and cultural performance of English Language Learners at the middle school level. Honigsfeld (2009) stated that, “Of utmost national concern is to provide the best possible program models and educational opportunities to address the diverse needs of this growing group of students” (p. 167). As teachers, we must realize that one size does not fit all. The following guide provides support for classroom teachers who work closely with ELLs at the middle school level. It suggests varied teaching and learning approaches that support the success of ELLs. The guide also provides insights on how to understand students, peers, teachers, instructional teams, schools, and communities when teaching ELLs in middle school. Also, it offers several insights

into the many personal and academic challenges that confront ELLs as they begin their new lives in America. Although many teaching strategies have been offered there is no guarantee that they will be effective for every ELL. As such, pupil performance should be monitored regularly to determine its impact on pupil performance. We must determine what works for each student and adjust our curriculum and instruction as needed. It is highly unlikely that any one ESL curriculum or specific teaching procedures will meet the needs of all ELLs. Instructional changes and modifications are the norm. As long as the effects of these teaching modifications are linked to ongoing measures of pupil performance, then most instructional decisions will be accurate. This guide suggests that practitioners can improve their practice with English Language Learners by understanding the students, their peers, themselves and their colleagues, families and the community at large. Practical suggestions are provided in understanding each of these important domains of influence.

Understand the Students

Culture Shock

The transitions students face during the middle school years are difficult enough with the onset of puberty, as physical, cognitive, and emotional changes rapidly take place in the body. Couple these changes with the thought of moving to entirely new countries that do not speak the language you know, the idea of leaving all your friends and family behind, and enrolling in a school where you are labeled “different”. This is a rather limited picture of the challenges that ELLs face daily; as such, the onset of *culture shock* comes as no surprise. Culture shock develops as feelings of unfamiliarity and anxiety sets in. ELLs are surrounded by different languages, unfamiliar cultures and customs, new schools, unusual foods, foreign text, strange gestures, and no friends. For this reason, ELLs may quickly pass over the first stage of culture shock identified as the *honeymoon stage*. Typically at this stage students are enchanted by the excitement of a new, unfamiliar culture. ELLs may jump straight into the second stage of culture shock depending upon the reasons for moving to the United States. The *hostile stage* occurs when feelings of frustration, anger, and disappointment replace the euphoric feelings of the previous stage. Life seems extremely difficult and does not make a lot of sense. After the hostile stage is the *stage of recovery* where negative feelings start to regress and one begins to accept the new culture. The final stage of culture shock is the *adjustment phase*. At this time existing lifestyles are accepted as adaptations to having positive life experiences in their new environments. It is important to note that the stages of culture shock do not have definite timelines. Although they happen in a specific order, the length of each stage can vary greatly from one individual to another. It is highly unlikely, however, that all stages will be achieved within a single school

year. The following tips may help to make the transition through culture shock more manageable for ELLs.

1. Understand the characteristics, phases, and causes of culture shock; recognize their culture shock stages and support their academic and interpersonal needs.
2. Familiarize yourself with all languages represented in the classroom. Learn basic words for communicating with students such as hello, goodbye, thank you; these words promote a welcoming and supportive learning environment.
3. Be careful when using gestures. Many gestures are not universal and some can be rude to ELLs and their parents. For instance, the “OK” symbol used in the U.S. by making a circle with our fingers has several different meanings, some of which may be lewd and/or otherwise offensive.
4. Create a positive multicultural classroom environment that includes multicultural books, food, lesson plans, and culturally-relevant posters. More importantly, encourage student use of their first language (L1) in the classroom.
5. Make ELLs feel socially accepted in school. Organize cooperative learning and other group activities both in and out of the classroom to provide feelings of interdependence and mutual support.

The Importance of the First Language (L1)

Since many students face multiple challenges during the beginning stages of culture shock they may seem withdrawn and introverted. They don't know how to speak the new language and have no one with whom to use their first language. This time period is known as the *silent period* and it can last for many months. During this time ELLs are trying to make sense of the world around them and their brains are soaking up knowledge like a sponge. It is

important to remember that everything is *foreign* to these students; it can be overwhelming and frightening for ELLs. Their absence of using English does not mean, however, that they are disinterested or inattentive in school. They are processing an unfamiliar language and learning new academic content. They will begin to speak when they feel comfortable in their new environments.

During the silent period, the L1 is very important for ELLs. They should be encouraged by teachers and peers to use all four language modalities in order to communicate. Promoting pupils' use of their first language (L1) in the class can benefit students in several ways. First, they will have more access to content using both languages; they can use their prior knowledge and build background to new information and skills; first language usage also promotes feelings of self-worth. Using the native language in class does not hinder students' abilities to learn the English language. In fact, it can be used as a learning tool since ELLs can use their L1 to help another understand what they are learning in English. Cárdenas-Hagan and Pollard-Durodola (2007), state that ELLs who have proficient skills in their L1 acquire the L2 (second language) without great difficulty and maintain their L1 skills. ELLs adeptness in the L1 at the time of schooling in the United States is the greatest predictor of English language academic success.

Classroom teachers do not have to be fluent in languages other than English in order for students to use different languages in the classroom. Teachers can encourage students to use their L1 in their own learning and to “teach” their English-speaking peers. They can also provide supportive multicultural environments by creating classroom libraries in multiple languages, accepting pupil responses in both languages, having resources available in the L1, and allowing the use of L1 in social and academic conversation. First language acceptance in middle school may have a greater academic affect since content is more difficult and the standards are higher

than in elementary school. For example, most middle school students read *The Diary of Anne Frank* which is translated into numerous languages. It would be advantageous for ELLs to read the novel in their L1 in order to fully comprehend the main ideas throughout the story. This will enable them to participate more frequently in classroom discussions and perform better on curriculum-specific tests since they can transfer knowledge between both languages. Several tips are provided to promote the use of native languages in the classroom.

1. Give students adequate time to start speaking in either their native language or English. The length of the silent period will vary from student to student.
2. Students learn most willingly and effortlessly in the languages that they know best; their first or native language. Do not reprimand students for using their first language.
3. Find ways to incorporate the L1 into lessons in all four language modalities (reading, writing, speaking, listening).
4. Group or pair students with the same first language if possible; it is also preferable to group pupils with different levels of English proficiency.
5. ELLs speaking in their L1 are about as likely as non-ELLs to be off-task during class discussions. Generally they are negotiating meaning, getting help, or trying to understand the content.
6. Integrate L1 resources into the classroom such as novels or printouts that can aid in the comprehension of content material.

The Need to Belong

Culture shock increases feelings of grief, dejection, and isolation among many ELLs and their families. The need to belong increases as difficulties are encountered in the community and at school. This is especially important as middle school students want nothing more than to fit in

and have a special niche in the school community. Teachers play a vital role in ELLs' acceptance in the classroom. They can ask ELLs to share their cultural experiences, customs, and ideas in class; perhaps initially through the use of visual referents with gradually increasing amounts of linguistic input. By actively including ELLs in class discussions and activities teachers show mainstream students how important ELLs are to the classroom. This type of classroom values the linguistic and cultural differences between ELLs and English dominant students. The following tips can make ELLs feel like they belong and are valued in the classroom.

1. Build a strong classroom community by pairing ELLs with native-speaking peers who will be helpful with classroom activities.
2. Encourage multiculturalism and linguistic differences by asking ELLs to share their life experiences and language. Celebrate each language represented in the classroom with cultural events such as making food, clothes, and/or participating in custom-specific events and activities.
3. Give awards to students who excel in their native language especially if they are not commonly studied.
4. Level the playing field. If your classroom is predominately two languages such as English and Spanish, after an activity ask questions in Spanish. ELLs will be excited to answer and speak confidently. The English dominant students will better relate to the feelings of ELLs and look for guidance from their peers.

Understand the Friends

Social Relationships

Social relationships play a significant role at school for middle school students. This age group looks to friends for comfort and support in a relatively difficult time in life as many

changes occur. ELLs are challenged by learning a new language, customs, and academics content, while simultaneously figuring out how to *fit in* socially with their American peers. ELLs sometimes resort to *passing strategies* in order to blend in with their mainstream peers. Passing strategies include any activity that makes ELLs less noticeable; such as saying they understand with a head nod even though they don't understand, not making eye contact with teachers, and/or acting engaged in other activities. Again, ELLs use these strategies to avoid the possibility of being ridiculed by peers. For this reason, multicultural themes that value all cultures should be used.

Positive social relationships among ELLs, their peers and teachers can also improve English language acquisition. Social interactions involve direct communication usage of English. However, the rate at which social and academic language acquisition occurs will vary greatly. Positive peer interactions can be used to familiarize ELLs with classroom routines and activities, clarify rules and directions and promote understanding of academic content. The following tips promote positive social relationships between ELLs and English dominant students in mainstream classrooms.

1. Embrace differences and highlight similarities among ELLs and English dominant students. This may break down barriers between and among different groups of students.
2. Recognize passing strategies and group students who need extra help with caring and helpful classmates.
3. Promote multi-cultural acceptance by including ELLs in all classroom discussions and activities.
4. Do not tolerate teasing, bullying and/or any other inappropriate behavior that is based on cultural, racial, or linguistic differences.

Productive Learning Environment

The relationships built among teachers, students, and peers is critical to a productive learning environment. Strong learning environments promote student learning and success in school. ELLs will progress when solid relationships are formed and they feel at ease in their learning environments. Peer relationships are particularly important for ELLs because many of them learn best when their classmates teach them. This overcomes feelings of inferiority and promotes successful learning. A productive learning environment is also established when students feel valued in the classroom; an environment that reflects their own cultural and linguistic background. Teacher-led activities that promote positive peer interactions can play a significant role in the development of social and academic skills. The following suggestions promote positive peer interactions in a productive learning environment.

1. Encourage students to share their native languages and cultures.
2. Set up peer groupings with other ELLs or native English speakers to act as tutors or even translators for one another.
3. Organize opportunities for students to work with each other during hands on activities and projects in the classroom.
4. Use cooperative learning and other peer teaching methods that promote interdependence among all pupils and encourage positive social interactions.

Understand the Teacher

The Lack of ESL Training

As the ELL population continues to rise sharply, general education teachers are faced with the challenge of instructing non-English speaking students with minimal ESL training. Teacher education programs leave little room for additional courses not specified in educational

curricula. Therefore, many teacher candidates have limited opportunities to enroll in courses specific to ESL or other forms of diversity (e.g., socio-economic, gender, and/or disability). Moreover, given the increased importance of high stakes state testing, it is imperative that teachers become adequately-trained in teaching these diverse learning groups. Pre-service and practicing teachers must be aware of best practices in teaching ELLs. They must also understand the silent period, culture shock, second language acquisition, positive and negative language transfer, and appropriate forms of assessment. The following suggestions can increase your knowledge of linguistic and cultural differences found in ELL populations.

1. If ESL and cultural diversity courses are not integrated into your program, enroll in summer and online courses to gain knowledge about ELLs and how to help them succeed in school.
2. Assist and observe as much as possible in an ESL classroom.
3. Volunteer to work in after-school programs in urban settings if possible; there is greater representation of ELLs in such settings.
4. Register to become trained in the SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) model.
5. Read books, online journals, and articles that advocate for ELLs.
6. Attend community- and school-based professional development activities that promote multiculturalism.

Conversational versus Academic English

There are several linguistic stages that ELLs surpass as they gain second language acquisition. Each stage progresses at different rates given individual differences; however the order remains the same. Classroom teachers should familiarize themselves with each stage and

develop strategies for responding effectively to pupils' linguistic needs. The first linguistic stage is known as the *silent period* where students rarely speak but rather absorb an abundance of information. The second stage is when *early production* takes place. Most information is understood at this point but not every single word. The *speech emergence* stage develops when ELLs have a large enough vocabulary to produce short sentences. The final linguistic stage is *fluency* where ELLs are able to speak quickly and with longer speech patterns and fewer mistakes. As students advance through these stages they develop and master conversational and academic English.

English Language Learners can master *conversational* English in as little as one or two years. Conversational language is found in dialogues with friends, in the hallways, and on the sports field. Because ELLs can acquire conversational English at such a rapid pace it can be difficult for teachers to assess ELLs' "true" understanding of academic content and classroom discussions. Many ELLs may seem relatively fluent only using conversational English. However *academic* English is very different from conversational English; and it takes much longer to acquire. Language used in textbooks, on exams, and during instructional time is known as academic language since many more abstract and divergent concepts are presented. Although ELLs can acquire conversational English rapidly teachers should not assume that they fully understand language used in textbooks because they engage in positive social conversations. It was estimated that it takes between five to 10 years to acquire academic English; with differences based primarily on ELLs' prior educational experiences.

Classroom teachers must be proactive in making sure students understand information that is being presented during lessons. A reasonable way to check ELLs' understanding is to have them explain in words or show written answers. If ELLs can perform these tasks then they

are on their way to obtaining academic language. If difficulties persist, ELLs must work on academic language-learning activities. While conversational English is important for social relationships, academic English is essential for scholarly success. Middle school students must master extensive vocabularies across varied content areas (e.g., English, math, science, and social studies) as well as a litany of facts, concepts, and principles. Several tips may strengthen ELLs' academic English language skills.

1. ELLs pass through four linguistic stages before acquiring conversational and academic English. The stages are predictable in order but vary in length.
2. Conversational English can developed in one to two years while academic English may take from five to 10 years.
3. Create word walls for difficult but important academic vocabulary that ELLs can reference during class instruction.
4. Check ELLs for understanding by having them *show and/or tell* you their responses.
5. Learning academic English well takes time and requires academic and social support.

Empathy for ELLs

Most middle school ELLs have had some type of formal or informal linguistic experiences in their L1. These students *at minimum* can speak and listen in their native language and many are able to read and write. However, ELLs sit in English-only classrooms for hours a day unable to fully comprehend academic information. Because teachers may have little experience working with ELLs they are often unaware of the challenges confronting them and as such may not feel empathy for them at school. Some teachers even believe that ELLs would learn English if they “really wanted to”. Several tips are provided on how to be more empathetic toward ELL students.

1. Walk in their shoes for a couple of days. Listen exclusively to “foreign” audio and see how much of the language you comprehend. Now imagine sitting in a classroom for seven hours a day listening to the foreign audio comprehending nothing more than a few words a day.
2. Read an article in a Spanish science textbook and try to summarize what you read. Even if you are familiar with the Spanish language this activity may be difficult as the specific science vocabulary is not used in conversational language.
3. Interview several ELLs and ask them about their experience in school.

Understand the Team

Two Heads are Better than One

In today’s educational world the importance of students meeting academic standards has never been greater. Teachers nationwide are feeling the pressure to provide high quality education for all students as the importance of high stakes testing continues to rise. This can be frustrating for many mainstream teachers who lack the foundational knowledge to serve ELLs effectively. Fortunately, classroom teachers can work in partnership with ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers to meet the needs of ELLs. While mainstream teachers are experts in their content area, ESL teachers are masters in second language acquisition and understand how to make content knowledge more comprehensible. ESL teachers should be seen as collaborators rather than supplemental resources to classroom teachers. ESL teachers can offer new insights, activities, materials, and sheltered instruction for differentiating instruction for all pupils.

Unfortunately, more often than not mainstream and ESL teachers do not work together in the classroom. ELLs are frequently “pulled out” for ESL instruction to later return to the mainstream classroom. This teaching approach is less desirable as typically both teachers are

instructing different curricula. As a general education teacher it is important to take advantage of the time that the ESL teacher “pushes into” the classroom. Together they can lower the number of students per teacher and provide more effective instruction that is not always possible for one teacher; as the saying goes, two heads are better than one. The following tips will aide in working with another teacher:

1. Be open to working professionally with another teacher as s/he may have numerous insights that you did not possess.
2. Share ideas and resources; build upon one another’s strengths and compensate for the others’ limitations.
3. Realize the benefits and instructional power that can be derived from two teachers in one classroom; an opportunity to change all students’ lives.
4. Remember that you are both working toward the same goal: you want students to succeed academically and interpersonally.

Successful Collaboration

Successful collaboration requires much more than two teachers working together in the same classroom. Effective co-teaching requires a strong relationship between two teachers who build upon one another’s competence. Simply putting two teachers in the same classroom, however, does not ensure that effective teaching and learning will occur. Teachers must learn to work collaboratively and sometimes it is not easy to do so. Difficulties may arise, for example, when teachers received separate and sometimes incompatible teacher preparation. Each professional will have their own ideas and consider themselves instructional experts to varying degrees. To minimize unproductive feelings, educators must discuss in detail, their expected roles and responsibilities for daily lessons. Initially, this will require additional time and effort

since both must be present for planning and occasionally implementation. Although more work is required for successful collaboration, it contributes positively to the learning experiences of ELLs. A good working environment can lower the teacher-to-student ratio, combine the talents of two teachers, and provide effective instruction for all students. Some suggestions of successful collaboration include:

1. Clearly define teacher roles and responsibilities for lesson planning, delivery, and evaluation. Decide which roles will be shared and which will be handled separately. Clarifying daily roles and responsibilities minimized the possibility of “surprises” and unwarranted feelings of insecurity and/or animosity.
2. Maintain open and positive communications about the classroom, students, lessons, and curriculum. Both teachers have important contributions to make.
3. Develop content and linguistic objectives collaboratively, preferably during common planning time.
4. Co-teach lessons and expand your instructional roles on an as needed basis.
5. Treat one another as equally skilled professionals who can make positive contributions to all students’ learning.
6. Create the best learning environment by providing challenging, interesting, and engaging lessons that are delivered collaboratively. Show pupils how to be good team players.

The Pull-Out Model

Although the pull out model is not the most successful form of instructing ELLs, it is still widely-used throughout American schools. This model requires ELLs to be “pulled out” of the mainstream classroom to receive ESL instruction with certified ESL teachers. ELLs are instructed in small groups and learn content knowledge along with specific language instruction.

Although this model sounds ideal since ELLs are working in small groups and receiving direct instruction from ESL teachers, it is often two-fold. That is, ELLs leave the classroom several times a day depending on their level of English acquisition. With the constant absence of the mainstream teacher ELLs feel disconnected from the classroom community. ELLs also miss out on the same learning experiences as mainstream peers. Their curriculum is unintentionally fragmented. Typically, ESL and classroom teachers do not plan together collaboratively, since they are teaching different lessons. This breaks the connection (i.e., fragments) between the two settings and makes it more difficult for ESL students to “catch up” when they return to the mainstream class. Despite the disadvantages associated with pull out models, they are still used commonly across the nation. The following tips can enhance pull-out service delivery models for ELLs.

1. If pull out models are the only available option, then schedule common planning times for classroom and ESL teachers whenever possible. Common instructional objectives should be stressed.
2. Invite ESL teachers into your classrooms whenever possible.
3. If ELLs miss important information, designate English-dominant peers who can provide friendly, helpful assistance.
4. Communicate regularly with ESL teachers and monitor ELLs’ progress in both pull out and general education settings.

Understand the School

Beliefs on Inter-culturalism

In the past ELLs and their families lived predominantly in coastal areas such as Florida, California, and New York. However, contemporary ELLs are migrating more inland and settling

in states located in the Midwest. Teachers in these states often reported being ill-prepared to work with ELLs and cited a general lack of instructional knowledge about meeting their individual needs. The importance of student culture may also diminish if classroom teachers are unaware of its importance for academic success. Nevertheless, teachers' personal beliefs on what is deemed inter-culturalism will have an effect on teacher instruction and the student's learning.

Teachers who are not fully value the cultural backgrounds of all students have *ethnocentric* viewpoints. This point of view can be destructive to student welfare if they are cast as inadequate due to cultural, racial, and/or linguistic differences. Teachers may even try to change ELLs to mirror the dominant culture. Ethnocentric feelings toward multicultural students are derived from inexperience in working with students with diverse backgrounds.

Understanding and appreciating student differences is known as having an *ethno-relative* viewpoint. This style of teaching encourages and supports students for displaying their differences; differences are seen as benefits rather than limitations. Appreciating ELLs for their individuality reinforces their feelings of self-worth and encourage them to do their best work. Teachers with ethno-relative teaching styles are more willing to incorporate students' differences into daily lesson plans and take pride in meeting all pupils' needs. The following suggestions are provided to help teachers become more ethno-relative in their instruction.

1. Assess your personal and school beliefs on inter-culturalism; maintain honest communication about the goals and progress in this area.
2. Encourage your school to celebrate cultural and linguistic differences found throughout the school building.
3. Design lessons that incorporate multicultural activities
4. Create class posters that promote positive feelings and interactions among all students.

Acceptance in the Classroom

Some recent policy changes in education have not been overly positive or welcoming to ELLs. With the increase of English-only laws, the constant pressure of NCLB, and minimal language supports found throughout school districts, ELLs are being expected to mold into monolingual English-speaking students. When ELLs are forced to leave their native language behind, they lose a piece of their personal identity. At the middle school level, this can be especially troubling since so many pupils are searching for belonging. A favorable learning environment accepts everyone's language and culture.

The ultimate goal of ESL and mainstream teachers is for ELLs to become proficient in social and academic language in order to achieve academic success. Yet, ELLs should not only be praised for English language acquisition but in other areas as well. In order for ELLs to feel fully-accepted, classroom teachers must take into account the *whole* child.

Feelings of acceptance for ELLs promote school attendance and reduce dropout rates. Academic and linguistic concepts become more challenging at each subsequent grade level throughout secondary grades. As a whole, middle school students are very impressionable and if their learning environment feels safe and encouraging teachers have a great chance of helping them to succeed in school and life. Several ideas that can help students feel more accepted in the classroom are provided.

1. Accept and celebrate all languages in the classroom by allowing ELLs to use their first language.
2. Create projects where ELLs can share their languages with English-speaking peers.
3. Commend students with strong talents in music, art, and/or sports.

4. Provide safe and productive learning environments where all students succeed and are valued.

Sheltered Instruction

ESL and classroom teachers can implement sheltered instruction in their teaching approach to make learning new material more comprehensible for ELLs. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) is a well-known sheltered instruction model used by ESL and mainstream teachers across the country. This sheltered instruction model is designed to help instructors create thorough lesson plans and incorporate activities that foster content and language objectives for ELLs. The SIOP model guides teachers step-by-step on how to plan for effective lessons, execute them, and then assess student comprehension and learning throughout the process. This is done by putting the eight distinctive components of the SIOP model into practice; the process focuses on content as well as language objectives and, it can be utilized with students in grades K-12. Along with the eight SIOP components there are 30 strategic features that enhance teacher effectiveness. Several features include supplementary materials, key vocabulary, group configurations, student engagement, and teacher feedback systems. Again, the SIOP model is designed to give ELLs the same, challenging, academic content as non-ELLs but at levels that are purposeful and comprehensible. Several tips to help make the SIOP model more accessible in your classroom are offered.

1. Become formally trained in using the SIOP model.
2. Apply the eight components of the SIOP model as much as possible in all lessons.
3. Utilize the teaching guide, *99 Ideas and Activities for Teaching English Learners with the SIOP Model* as they provide a framework for creating lesson plans that incorporate the eight components and 30 features of the SIOP model.

4. Create content and language objectives that are obtainable and comprehensible for ELLs and provide instruction using a variety of research-based teaching strategies.
5. Build background by engaging students' prior knowledge and providing activities that require students to apply newly-acquired content.
6. Provide multiple opportunities for students to talk in small cooperative learning groups and/or whole class discussions. Speak minimally throughout lessons and promote student-oriented learning outcomes.
7. Assess student learning throughout before, during, and after lessons and provide positive and corrective academic feedback as appropriate.

Understand the Community

Community Involvement

Families immigrating to the United States have many hurdles to cross when coming to new countries. Simple daily activities are much more difficult when there are significant linguistic and cultural differences in the community. The involvement of the community can alleviate some difficulties by establishing social networks among families who are ELLs. Community members can help with the transition of ELLs and their families by introducing them to important locations such as shopping centers, government buildings, and doctors' offices. Public transportation may also be an unfamiliar concept for families immigrating into the United States. It would be important to familiarize them with bus routes, train stations, or subway systems if it applies to the community in which they live.

Community involvement is an essential building block for ELLs who have recently arrived in the United States. It can help acclimate immigrating families into their new homes and promote academic success. Parents of ELLs may be unaware of learning opportunities for their

children because of language barriers. As such, their children may miss the benefits that community programs offer. Programs such as the Boys and Girls club, Big Brother and Sister, and even sports teams provide valuable opportunities for team work, education, and personal development. These community programs provide resources and a positive learning environment for ELLs who otherwise may not be exposed to such positive learning opportunities. To better support ELLs and their families, the following tips are provided.

1. Become a mentor for a family who moved recently to the United States. Show them frequently-visited community places such as the grocery store, post office, doctor's office, and government buildings.
2. Introduce families to other community members who speak the same language to help build a support system.
3. Utilize translators' expertise for non-English speaking families to receive assistance.
4. Inform parents about after-school programs as well as sports teams and help them to enroll in programs.
5. Familiarize families with transportation options within the communities including bus routes, train stations, subways, and/or carpools.

Parent Involvement

While community involvement plays an active role in students' overall success, parent involvement holds more influence on classroom success rates. There is a direct relationship between parent involvement and positive pupil outcomes. ELLs' parents, however, may be reluctant to get involved in school-related activities because of limited English proficiency. The parents are, however, interested in their children's learning experiences. It is important to use the language differences as a bridge to learning in the classroom and invite parents into the

classroom routinely to help with daily activities. Students of all linguistic backgrounds reap benefits when positive connections are made between student education and parent involvement.

The following tips are offered for improving parental involvement in the classroom.

1. Invite parents into the classroom to listen to students read, check homework, assist with activities such as arts and crafts, monitor hallways, and share cultural ideas and celebrations.
2. Send home-school newsletters, calendars, and classroom reminders in multiple languages.
3. Ask ELLs' parents to teach the class about their culture and language by bringing in pictures and/or giving demonstrations.
4. Send out automated phone calls biweekly stating how important parent involvement is in education and welcome them into the classroom.
5. Office staff should offer assistance and warmly greet parents.
6. Utilize bilingual personnel when available.

Summary and Conclusions

Contemporary American classrooms are very different than they were 10, 20, or 30 years ago. They are now a salad bowl where many cultures and languages are mixed yet individual distinctions remain. It is inevitable that 21st Century teachers will instruct students from all over the world as the ELL population rises exponentially. To date, many teachers are not prepared to work with ELLs because their teacher preparation programs do not routinely mandate courses in ESL. With the lack of professional training in multicultural programs as well as sporadic professional development seminars, classroom teachers must find ways to meet the linguistic and multicultural needs of all students. This guide provided suggestions and strategies for the

classroom teachers to work more effectively with ELLs at the middle school level. It offered details on how to understand students, peers, teachers, instructional teams, schools, and communities when teaching ELLs. The guide also provided some insights into the enormous learning challenges that confront ELLs daily as they start their new lives in America. While the strategies and approaches found throughout this guide are researched-based and proven to be effective, it is still imperative to monitor individual student progress as often as possible. If progress is not being made then there is a need to adjust lessons and teaching practices to maximize all pupils' academic and interpersonal success.