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Supporting ELLs Literacy Outcomes by Using Tools

by  
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December 2019

A capstone project submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of  
The College at Brockport, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

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### **Abstract**

Many general education teachers feel confused and overwhelmed when working with ELLs because they may not have the proper training or knowledge to support this population of students. This is a problem because most ELLs academic achievement scores in reading are lower than their non-ELL peers. ELLs face three overarching challenges including, linguistic, sociocultural and assessment challenges, which impact their learning. To remediate these challenges and address the problem educators will learn through two professional development sessions how to implement various tools including graphic supports and sensory supports to enhance instruction for ELLs. After these two professional develop session, educators will know how to evaluate and choose graphic supports to use with lesson materials and tests or assessments. They will also know how to how to select appropriate graphic organizers and modify them using graphic supports.

*Keywords:* English Language Learner, graphic supports, graphic organizer, modifications, literacy

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## Chapter 1

### Problem Statement

No matter where you go, you will notice that the diversity of our population has been rapidly increasing over the past few decades. The term diverse can mean many different things when used in reference to people. It can include, but is not limited to diversity in educational background, socioeconomic diversity, and cultural diversity. Despite these varied applications of the term, I would like to define diversity when dealing with the differences in language backgrounds. The vast increase in cultural diversity has resulted in an increase of students who are English Language Learners (ELLs) within schools all over the country. The percentage of ELLs in public school was 9.6% in the Fall 2016 compared to the 8.1% present in Fall 2000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019, para. 1). The result of this increase, has caused many teachers to feel confused and overwhelmed when working with these learners because they are untrained in how to support this population of students (Sanchez, 2017). This is a problematic because most ELLs academic achievement scores are lower than their non-ELL peers in reading (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, para. 1). To remediate this issue general education teachers need to be provided with Professional Development, geared towards supporting ELLs literacy. Therefore, the learning goals I am presenting in this Capstone Project will address identifying the three overarching challenges that ELLs face by reviewing literature and the case study being able to evaluate and choose graphic supports to use with lesson materials, tests or assessments, and being able to select appropriate graphic organizers and modify them using graphic supports.

### Significance of the Problem

ELLs have a lower graduation rate than their native English speaking peers. Only 63% of

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ELLs graduate from high school, compared with the overall national rate of 82% (Sanchez, 2017). This is due to the ongoing problem that most ELLs are not performing well on grade level tests. In 2017, the average reading score for ELL students in 4th-grade was 37 points lower than the average score for their non-ELL peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, para. 11). These statistics indicate that there is learning gap that must be remediated. Comprehending the content and readings that are assigned play a major role in student success. Low reading scores for ELLs can be due to linguistic issues.

Basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) develop inside and outside of the classroom and can be attained in one to three years (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017). However, academic language proficiency (CALP), the language that is critical for education success, is more complex and develops more slowly and systematically in academic settings (Eschevarria et al., 2017). Schools and programs that do not accommodate the time and implement the tools needed for acquisition of academic language are providing ELLs a disservice.

Sociocultural factors can also impact ELLs success. Blakely, Ford and Casey (2015) found that anxiety related to learning a second language can have debilitating effects on an individual's self-concept. An ELL may be able to express themselves effortlessly within their own culture and language. However, in an unfamiliar language and culture an ELL may not be able to accurately represent themselves through social interactions which may challenge their self-concept and perception leading to self-consciousness and anxiety (Blakely et al., (2015). Teachers need to have the tools and knowledge to create a cultural responsive learning environment for ELLs because if the sociocultural factors are not addressed, they can have negative impacts on students learning (Piazza, Rao, & Protacio, 2015).

Low reading scores can be a result of the type assessments used to assess students. Under

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*No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) many schools have been labeled as “low performing” as a result of their ELLs not attaining testing achievement targets which were set for native English speakers on tests that have not been designed or normed for ELLs (Eschevarria et al., 2017). This is problematic because students are being assessed with English normed tests before they are proficient in English. In order for students to be successful assessments need to be made with ELLs in mind and teachers need to incorporate tools within these tests to scaffold learners.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Capstone Project is to determine how teachers can improve ELA literacy outcomes when working with ELLs in a monolingual classroom. In order to provide educators with tools they need to address this, I will be using the guiding question, what strategies improve ELLs reading comprehension, in order to help determine a solution to this problem.

### **Rationale**

Having started my career as a teacher in a culturally diverse school I admittedly felt like I was not properly equipped with the knowledge or tools needed to support ELLs. No educator should have to feel this way when working with this population. General educators must be provided with pertinent information needed to support these learners. As a caring educator, I feel that teachers in general have a sense of responsibility to ensure that we are providing all students with a quality education that builds and values diverse languages and backgrounds.

### **Summary**

Overall, the fact that ELLs are underperforming their non-ELL peers in reading is a problem because it is resulting in lower graduation rates for these learners. In order to remediate this problem, research will be done on best practices that can be used to help support ELLs

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literacy in order to promote academic and social success in the classroom. Additionally, non ENL teachers should be aware that there are additional factors that affect learning aside from linguistic barriers, which include sociocultural challenges and assessment challenges.

The following chapter offers insight and solutions to mitigate this problem. Chapter two examines the literature to untangle issues around literacy comprehension. The following chapter, chapter three, presents a professional development designed for general education teachers of ways they can improve ELA literacy outcomes of ELLs while addressing their linguistic, socio-cultural, and assessment challenges. The final chapter, chapter four, is a conclusion which addresses the implications for teaching ELLs and discusses what was learned as well as what further research needs to be done.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Many schools all over the country are becoming more diverse than they were in the past. Students of all ages are entering schools where the primary language is English, however many of these students speak languages other than English as their primary or home languages (Eschevarria, Vogt & Short, 2017). Educators are now faced with the challenge of providing quality education to English Language Learners (ELLs), but may not have the proper training or knowledge to develop implement and assess instruction for this population. When educating ELLs, there are three major issues that educators should keep in mind. These issues include linguistic challenges, socio-cultural challenges, as well as assessment and evaluation challenges. These issues impact ELLs literacy comprehension in ELA. Therefore, the following literature review addresses ways to mitigate issues around literacy comprehension.

### **Linguistic Challenges**

Linguistic development has been studied over many years allowing us to have a firm understanding of how a person develops within a language. However, when English Language Learners (ELLs) are acquiring English, there are many linguistic challenges that arise and need to be overcome.

The first of these challenges include learner characteristics. Lightbown and Spada (2013) assert that although prior knowledge of one language can be an advantage in the sense that the learner would already have an idea of how languages work, this knowledge can lead learners to make incorrect assumptions about how the second language works, which can result in errors. The difference in language patterns between two languages can result in ELLs not properly

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understanding what is said to them and what they are reading. This discrepancy can lead to a decrease in reading and grammar comprehension.

Age is also another learner characteristic that can cause linguistic challenges. Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that older language learners have more metalinguistic awareness than younger learners do and this knowledge contributes to their ability to solve problems and engage in discussions about language, which is important especially if they have had limited time in contact with the language. This is important to keep in mind when supporting ELLs because some ELLs may not have the metalinguistic ability in the L2 that is needed to effectively participate in some tasks. Since most younger ELLs do not have the metalinguistic awareness that most older ELLs do, this can negatively impact their performance in school because they will be unable to effectively express themselves in conversations.

Peregoy and Boyle (2013) believe that the language used to ask and answer questions also challenges ELLs students. This linguistic format might be confusing for some students resulting in a reluctance to participate. These researchers suggest that teachers should reflect on their own questioning practices and provide brief explanations to students of what they're trying to accomplish and why they want to accomplish it through these question types. This explanation will help students become more accustomed to these linguistic question types and result in better participation.

Linguistic interactions in the classroom setting can also be an obstacle that a second language learner has to overcome. Linguistic interactions are important because teaching and learning depend upon communication, the communicative success of teacher-student interaction is crucial (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013). Cultural values affecting language may impede teacher-student communication. Language use differences can be confusing. Research has shown that

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teachers do not allow much wait time and that what is considered enough wait time can vary across cultures as well as the number of people who may speak at once (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013). This impacts ELLs because it can cause confusion due to the discrepancy in norms amongst languages and cultures.

Pereira and de Oliveira (2015) assert that a majority of language acquisition occurs informally. However, learning academic language presents a challenge for second language learners in addition to having to learn a second language for communication purposes. It is important to keep in mind that although students may seem to be proficient in English, their academic success may be hindered due to their lack of academic proficiency. This lack of academic proficiency can negatively impact an ELLs ability to comprehend what they read and what is being taught. However, when reading academic texts which include related pictures, both verbal and nonverbal data is processed which leads to better retention of data and enhanced learning (Majidi & Aydinlu, 2014).

Research has shown that proficiency in oral English takes about 3 to 5 years but academic proficiency in English can take about 4 to 7 years (Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015). Ellis (2015) states that grammatical areas can be an obstacle that second language learners need to overcome because they differ from the rules of their first language. Some of these challenges include negative placement, preposition stranding and pied piping in formal or academic grammatical constructions. Accurate grammar use in academic or social settings is important because it makes communication clear and precise and ensures that the information a person wants to convey is correctly understood. Communication is an integral part of daily lives and grammar lays the groundwork for effective communication, which is why grammar instruction is important. ELLs may struggle with specific content areas if they have not acquired basic

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interpersonal communication skills (Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015). Teachers can support ELLs by implementing linguistic and graphic scaffolding tools such as visuals and sentence stems (Wright, McTigue, & Eslami, 2014).

ELLs may also need scaffolding to help promote language learning which can be done through the use of multimodal materials and various written texts, employing different collaborative learning activities, and using extra linguistic supports. Pereira and de Oliveira acknowledges that students proficiency levels can help inform teachers how to plan instruction for ELLs. Graphic supports provide a visual dictionary for ELLs, allowing them to infer word meaning without breaking their engagement from the reading activity at hand (Wright et al., 2014). Additionally, well-designed visuals can provide additional opportunities for ELL students to develop vocabulary (Wright et al., 2014). Providing scaffolding tools is imperative for the success of ELLs. Incorporating and implementing scaffolding tools during lesson planning, instruction, and assessment is important when supporting language acquisition and overall understanding of content for ELLs.

Learning a new language is difficult, in addition there are many more challenges faced by ELLs than just language acquisition. Many teachers do not feel prepared to effectively address the learning needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Socio-cultural contexts can be challenging for ELLs especially when their beliefs, traditions, and habits differ from the people they are surrounded with on a daily basis. Learning in a school setting can present many socio cultural challenges.

### **Sociocultural Challenges**

Piazza, Rao and Protacio (2015) assert that literacy is a social practice and that all interactions are mediated by language and symbols which are influenced by social, cultural, and

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historical contexts. Adding that, when an ELLs culture does not make up the initial learning population, they become marginalized because their home literacy practices are different.

Educators need to be aware of sociocultural differences because it impacts how a student learns and effects their overall success in the classroom. In order to remediate this issue, Piazza et al. (2015) believe that culturally responsive teaching will help ratify this issue because this will ensure that students are provided with the opportunity to connect their own worlds of language and communication to the curriculum they are presented with in school. Piazza et al. (2015) recommend implementing dialogue, collaboration, visual representation, explicit instruction, and inquiry in order to promote more culturally responsive literacy practices. These strategies help support ELLs comprehensions. Collaborative conversations allow students to extend their understanding and will help them improve their comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking (Piazza et al., 2015). Visual representations promote different modalities of knowing information and enables students to bridge their home literacy practices with school. Graphics can perform many functions, including providing comprehensible input and making complex ideas more accessible and language more memorable (Wright et al., 2014).

Explicit instruction ensures that students are receiving quality instruction that gives them access to pertinent information, content, and skills that are needed to be successful (Piazza et al., 2015). Explicit instruction and inquiry based learning go hand in hand because inquiry-based learning provides the contextualized and content-based learning which students find to be engaging and more motivating to do (Piazza et al., 2015). These instructional strategies provide ELLs with various forms of comprehensible input. This can positively impact the students overall comprehension because they are being exposed to the content through multiple modalities and experiences.

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Similarly Eun (2016) conducted research in which Vygotsky's theory of social human development was the driving force behind implications for linguistic and cultural teaching practices. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory identifies mediation as the central mechanism of human development and learning. According to Eun (2016) this theory is why teachers need to understand that inclusive education is an ideal instructional approach for ELLs. "The process of mediation serves as the mechanism of development which proceeds from the intermental (social) plane to the intramental (individual) plane" (Eun, 2016, p. 8). Keeping Vygotsky's socio cultural theory in mind, various instructional practices such as mixed ability grouping, relying on two-way bilingual education, and the use of drama as a psychological tool to mediate the development of literacy can be effective in enhancing conceptual and linguistic development (Eun, 2016). Ensuring that inclusive education is present when instructing ELLs, will provide ELLs with equal access to the curriculum and will set them up for success in the area of comprehension.

Similarly, Blakely, Ford and Casey (2015) examined how socio cultural differences can negatively impact an ELL. Blakely et al. (2015) found that anxiety related to learning a second language can have debilitating effects on an individual's self-concept. In one's own culture they may be able to express themselves freely and without concern of others judging them. However, when unfamiliarity of a dominant culture and nondominant language come into play, the inability to accurately represent oneself in social interactions in the second language may challenge an individual's self-concept and perception leading to self-consciousness and anxiety (Blakely et al., 2015). Teachers need to be aware that this is a reality for many students. It is important to create a learning environment where students feel safe and are willing to take risks. An example is students using their L2 to ask and answer questions. So although Eun (2016) and

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Piazza et al. (2015) both support culturally responsive teaching practices, without the proper learning environment, ELLs may still be apprehensive to participate. This will cause their affective filters to be high which will prevent learning.

Self-consciousness and anxiety within the student due to sociocultural differences can carry over to their testing performance. An ELL may feel more pressure or anxiety within their new cultural settings education system. These feelings can negatively impact students' achievement and overall demeanor while testing. In addition to socio culturally challenges ELLs may face during testing and evaluations, their lack of language acquisition can also play a factor in test-measured success.

### **Assessment and Evaluation Challenges**

Mislevy and Duran (2014) acknowledge that “Standards-based educational reform in the United States and worldwide presents both challenges and opportunities for assessing the subject matter competence of second language (L2) learners in large-scale and formative assessments” (p. 561). Mislevy and Duran, explains that understanding students subject domain capabilities and language capabilities is not easy especially when a diverse population of ELL students is included in assessment systems. Some of the challenges of assessing English language learners include each students native language and background, command of varieties and registers in their L1, and their socialization in English (Mislevy & Duran, 2014). These authors go on to say that it is important to understand how socio-cognitive and language socialization factors influence how English language learners perform on assessment tasks. A sociocognitive view of learning takes into account individual's capabilities in social contexts such as recurring linguistic, cultural, and substantive patterns (Mislevy & Duran, 2014). Sociocognitive perspective provides insight into the importance of contextualization of assessments for students.

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Assessment tasks can be a great way to measure students success. The English language development standards correspond to this theory and further establish that English is learned socially, through rich scaffolded interactions that help students develop analytic thinking in all four language modalities (Mislevy & Duran, 2014). This is important because it informs educators of factors that affect ELLs testing performance and provides best practices that can be used in order to obtain quality data from students assessments. This can then be used to drive instruction. Through using assessment tasks ELLs are able to show what they know in a format that is more accessible to them.

Clark-Gareca (2014) asserts that formal classroom assessment is a primary way that English language learners academic achievement is evaluated and has looked into the use of accommodation implementation for ELLs. It has been suggested that providing ELLs with the standard accommodations such as bilingual dictionaries, translated tests, or additional time can be a beneficial practice. The research conducted shows that some teachers were more resistant to implementing accommodations based off of ELLs proficiency levels because they felt that the use of these accommodations, such as dictionaries, might be too hard for ELLs (Clark-Gareca, 2014). Although there is concern that accommodations may be too difficult for ELLs to use, it is still important for ELLs to be presented with the opportunity to use them. It is important because accommodations such as extra time and the use of dictionaries provide ELLs with the ability to take their time to process and to comprehend through the translation of unfamiliar words what they are reading. Educators allowing ELLs to use accommodations can positively impact their comprehension, which can result in greater academic achievement.

Additionally, Solano-Flores (2014) addresses validity and fairness in the testing of English language learners. Since a test of academic achievement also essentially addresses

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language proficiency it is important to keep in mind students who are developing English as their second language. Markos and Himmel (2016) state that to mitigate the influence of low English proficiency when assessing content knowledge, teachers need to adapt the assessments they use. In order to support ELLs in gaining access to test content approaches have been made to examine and modify linguistic features on tests such as the vocabulary used, syntax, the overall format, and language (Solano-Flores, 2014). Examples of these approaches are translating tests into a student's primary language as well as simplifying the vocabulary used on a test. Markos and Himmel (2016) also suggest incorporating multiple forms of input such as, posters, diagrams, and other visuals to make the test content more comprehensible. However, multiple factors limit proper implementation of these approaches such as a state's ability to properly translate and adapt academic achievement tests. Test translation is an aspect of the probabilistic nature of language because it is a well-known fact that translation does not always preserve the constructs of tests or their factor structures (Solano-Flores, 2014). If ELLs are not provided with the proper accommodations needed in order to provide them with the same opportunity as their native language speaking peers on a test, then their scores may be lower due to lack of comprehension. Lower test scores may limit ELLs educational opportunities in the future.

Jimenez, Nixon, and Zepeda (2017) suggest that structural accommodations such as visual graphics, can be implemented during the construction phases of standardized examinations. Graphic supports that are well designed should allow the reader to make connections between the words in the text and the visual beside it (Wright et al., 2014). The continuing growth and testing is a difficult issue for English language learners because many tests do not take into account language barriers. Current analysis of test scores between non-English language learners and English language learners have shown that without

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accommodations ELLs do not perform as well as their non-ELL peers (Jimenez et al., 2017). As mentioned in prior research completed by Solano-Flores (2014) and Clark-Gareca (2014), Jimenez et al. (2017) also argues that language can prevent English language learners from displaying their full knowledge due to difficulty of understanding the linguistic structure of items.

In efforts to remediate this problem in which ELLs are facing with testing and language barrier, accommodations such as extra time or the use of dictionaries should be put into place. Graphical aids can also serve as an accommodation on tests to support ELLs (Jimenez et al., 2017). It has been shown that children generally begin to interpret and understand visual cues before becoming verbally literate and that regardless of language spoken these cues provide important information (Jimenez et al., 2017). English language learners rely heavily on these graphic images to develop meaning and to understand the task more fully which is why structural accommodations such as graphic images needs to be added onto tests in order to level the playing field for English language learners (Jimenez et al., 2017). If more educators and test makers were aware of the positive impact that incorporating graphical aids into tests have on an ELLs comprehension, then perhaps they would begin formatting their tests to include them. Graphical aids increase ELLs understanding which will allow them to accurately interpret the information presented and to then provide their answer.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, these three overarching issues can have a negative impact on an ELLs educational experiences. The differences in language patterns between a student's L1 and L2 can result in an ELLs inability to comprehend while reading. Educators need to be aware of sociocultural differences as they impact how a student learns and interacts with their peers.

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Educators also need to understand that ELLs face assessment challenges due to language barriers. These young students need to have testing accommodations to help support their ability to accurately display their learning.

The following chapter discusses solutions to the problem regarding how most ELLs academic achievement scores are lower than their non-ELL peers in reading ("Reading Performance", 2018). This problem exists because many teachers are not properly trained to work with ELLs. The purpose of this chapter is to inform general education teachers of ways they can improve ELA literacy outcomes of ELLs while addressing their linguistic, socio-cultural, and assessment challenges. Incorporating and implementing scaffolding tools during lesson planning, instruction, and assessment will help support language acquisition and overall understanding of content for ELLs. The strategies addressed include the use of various tools such as language supports and graphic supports. These strategies enable teachers to modify materials, assessments and tests.

### **Chapter 3: Professional Development**

The professional development created is based on the problem that general education teachers do not receive enough ongoing training to work with and meet the needs of ELLs. As a result, ELLs literacy outcomes are significantly lower than their non-ELL peers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, para. 1). In order to remediate this issue general education teachers need professional development, geared towards supporting ELLs literacy. The professional development will occur over two separate sessions. Each session will have a different focus which will help the participants gain a better understanding of the tools they can use to remediate the factors that affect ELLs academic success. The tools discussed will help to scaffold instruction for ELLs, making the content more comprehensible.

During the first session, participants will learn to evaluate and choose graphic supports to use with lesson materials and tests or assessments. According to Markos and Himmel (2016) incorporating input such as posters, diagrams, and other visuals make content more comprehensible. ELLs rely on these graphic supports to develop meaning and to understand the task more fully which is these structural accommodations need to be made (Jimenez et al., 2017). Throughout this session participants will learn how to use graphic supports as a visual tool to enhance their instruction and to support ELLs comprehension.

Participants will receive a handout of the PowerPoint used during this session, which they can employ to participate in the professional development and later when planning for ELLs in their classes. Participants should also have their laptops and a reading passage, test, or assessment that they use within their classroom. These items will enable the participants to actively engage in the activities that will take place throughout this session. One activity that will take place during the first session is Turn and Talks which will enable participants to collaborate

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and reflect on the content presented. Another activity is the creation of a modified reading passage, test, or assessment by incorporating graphic supports. Markos and Himmel (2016) state that to mitigate the influence of low English proficiency when assessing content knowledge, teachers need to adapt the assessments they use. This activity was chosen because graphic supports provide a visual dictionary for ELLs, which enables them to infer word meaning and it enhances their overall understanding (Wright et al., 2014). By the end of this session participants will understand how to incorporate visuals as a tool that can be used to support and enhance instruction when teaching ELLs.

During the second session, participants will learn how to select appropriate graphic organizers and modify them using graphic supports. The purpose of this is to provide participants with another tool they can use with ELLs to scaffold their instruction. Participants will receive a handout of the PowerPoint which they can use to take notes on the content during the presentation and to use for future reference. Participants should bring their laptops, any graphic organizers they use, as well as bring any modified materials, assessments, or tests that they may have done. This will enable the participants to actively engage in the learning activities that will occur.

Participants will take part in Turn and Talks which will provide the opportunity to reflect and collaborate about the content taught. Participants will also create their own modified graphic organizer which will enable them to learn about another visual tool to support ELLs learning. It has been shown that children generally begin to interpret and understand visual cues before becoming verbally literate and these cues provide important information (Jimenez et al., 2017). This is important because Blakely et al. (2015) found that anxiety related to learning a second language can have debilitating effects on an individual's self-concept. This can cause their

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affective filters to be high which will prevent learning. However, by using the tools taught during this session, participants will be able to deliver more effective, comprehensible content and instruction to ELLs, which will help remediate this issue.

### **Day 1 of Professional Development**

The agenda (see Appendix A, Figure 1) of this professional development session will focus on the learning goal of general education teachers being able to evaluate and choose graphic supports to use with lesson materials and tests or assessments. The activities in this session that will support this learning goal are learning how to evaluate and choose graphic supports using a rubric, working in content specific small groups to evaluate and modify materials, assessments, or tests by using the graphic support rubric, and engaging in a Turn and Talk to reflect on the content learned.

To begin, I will explain the importance of choosing quality graphic supports. As displayed by the case study (see Appendix B, p. 59), graphic supports have a positive effect on students reading comprehension which positively impacts their overall ELA achievement. Then I will introduce a rubric (see Appendix A, Figure 3) which I adapted from Yazdanmehr and Shoghi (2014), which provides teachers with a guideline when choosing quality graphic supports to use when working with ELLs. I will hand out a copy of the rubric to teachers so that they can follow along as I model how to use the rubric when evaluating the images (see Appendix A, Figure 4) that are already included on the material, test, or assessment. While I am doing this, participants will be taking notes on the PowerPoint handout of information they deem important. Then I will model how to select quality images to either replace the graphic or to add additional graphics to the materials. After, I will display the finished product with the graphic supports included.

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Teachers will be asked to work in small groups with teachers who teach the same content area as them. Within their small groups participants will have to choose one material, test, or assessment that they want to evaluate and modify using the graphic support rubric in order to make it more accessible to ELLs. As teachers are working on this task, I will be walking around to answer any questions and provide feedback to teachers. Once teachers are done, I will have teachers do a gallery walk so that they can see what their peers have done to their selected item to make it more comprehensible and understandable to an ELL. Teachers can take notes on their PowerPoint handout of things that their peers did that they liked.

Then I will have teachers Turn and Talk to reflect on the activity from today. I will ask teachers to think about what they found difficult or easy about using the rubric and how they will use the information they learned today going forward. Then I will have teachers share out what they discussed. This will enable participants to gain insight and collaborate with their peers as well as gain clarification and feedback on anything they may have found difficult. I will close out by stating that the next session will be about selecting appropriate graphic organizers and how to modify them using graphic supports. I will ask teachers to bring their laptops, any graphic organizers that they use, as well as bring any modified materials, assessments, or tests that they may have done.

### **Day 2 of Professional Development**

The agenda (see Appendix A, Figure 5) of this professional development session will focus on the learning goal of for general education teachers being able to select appropriate graphic organizers and modify them using graphic supports. The activities in this session that will support this learning goal are learning how to choose a graphic organizer that is aligned to a lesson objective by using guiding questions, learning how to modify the graphic organizer into a

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mini handout by adding in graphic supports, working in small groups to choose a graphic organizer and add in graphic supports, and reflecting on the two sessions by using an exit ticket and sharing what they wrote with their elbow partner.

To begin, I will have participants share with the person behind them any modified materials, assessments, or tests that they made and were able to bring. I will ask them to discuss and share out how it has effected the ELLs in their class. Participants will then be provided with a hand out of the PowerPoint (see Appendix A, Figure 6) so that they can take notes.

I will then go on to explain the importance of choosing a graphic organizer which is aligned specifically to a lesson objective. I will reinforce the importance of using graphic organizers when working with ELLs by referencing the results from the case study (see Appendix B, p. 62). I will also state that the number of visuals and graphic organizers used does not vary by content area. Despite the fact that graphic organizer are beneficial, I will inform teachers that they should limit the number of used to two during a lesson. I will also inform participants that the number of visuals, such as pictures, is up to their discretion but to ensure the pictures are meaningful and purposeful. Then I will introduce the guiding questions handout (see Appendix A, Figure 7) which supports teachers in choosing appropriate graphic organizers to use when working with ELLs. I will then hand out to teacher the guiding questions and model how to use the guiding questions. I will model how to align a graphic organizer to a sample lessons objectives (see Appendix A, Figure 8 and 9). Then I will model using the guiding questions to ensure the graphic organizer is appropriate for the lesson objective. Once this is accomplished, I will model how to include additional graphic supports on the graphic organizer by creating a mini anchor chart (see Appendix A, Figure 10) of it for ELLs to use as a reference when working either independently or collaboratively in groups. While I am modeling, participants will be able

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to take notes using the handout.

I will hand out a graphic support rubric to each teacher along with a sample lesson plan (see Appendix A Figure 11). Teachers will be asked to work in small groups with teachers in the same content area to evaluate and decide upon the graphic organizer to use with this lesson as well as discuss how to modify it using graphic supports for ELLs. As teachers are working on this task, I will be walking around to answer any questions and provide feedback to teachers. Once teachers are done, I will ask the groups to present the type of graphic organizer they chose as well as what types of graphic supports they used. I will ask other groups to provide the presenting group with feedback pertaining to their graphic organizer choice as well as their graphic supports choice. Once teachers are finished presenting and receiving their feedback I will have them do a final reflection by giving them an Exit Ticket (see Appendix A, Figure 12) and having them reflect on their biggest take away out of the three sessions. I will then ask for some volunteers to share out their responses and collect the Exit Tickets once they are done.

Through the development of this Professional Development and by having to constantly reflect on what was learned from the literature as well as the case study I was able to identify implications for teaching ELLs. The following chapter will address implications for ENL teachers, general education teacher, and student learning as well as identify areas where further research could be done in order to further mitigate the problem.

### Chapter 4

#### **Actions and Learnings**

In order to mitigate the problem of teachers being untrained to work with ELLs which can result in low achievement, linguistic delays and socio-cultural isolation in schools I implemented the use of different tools during my instruction in order to support the students learning. I measured the success of these tools through both formal and informal assessments such as tests and observations. Some of the tools I implemented included graphic supports such as graphic organizers, photographs, and illustrations to support ELLs ELA literacy outcomes. I then compared the results before the implementation of these tools and after the implication of these tools.

I was able to learn a great deal from the data collected during the case study. As a result of the information collected in the case study, I was able to determine implications for teaching. The implications for using graphic organizers as a visual support include the ability to use them in small group settings to support language issues and sociocultural issues. As illustrated in the case study (see Appendix B, p. 62), when graphic organizers are used in small group settings they help support linguistic interactions because the information is organized and concise. A student can easily reference the information, when it is presented in this format. Additionally, the graphic supports can also help facilitate discussions in small and whole group participation. A graphic organizer can improve understanding of content reducing students' fear of being wrong. Simultaneously, it could minimize sociocultural obstacles mentioned in chapter 2.

#### **Implications for ENL Teachers**

Implications for ENL teachers include understanding how language learning works, knowing what strategies exist to help diverse language learners, and reflecting on the success of

## TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

the strategy used with diverse language learners. Strategies that can be used include various tools, such as sensory supports, which include visuals, as well as graphic supports, which include graphic organizers. These strategies help to make the content presented more comprehensible for ELLs. It is up to ENL teachers to incorporate effective strategies in the curriculum in order to enhance comprehension and learning. In addition to improved academic performance ELLs educational experience can affect socio-cultural outcomes.

### **Implications for non ENL Teachers**

An implication for non ENL teachers include taking into account the importance of using graphic and sensory supports when teaching ELLs in order to support their vocabulary acquisition and overall comprehension when reading. Graphic and sensory supports can also be utilized to modify tests and assessments, which can improve ELLs overall achievement because they are mitigated by the graphic tools. Additionally, non ENL teachers should be aware that there are additional factors that affect learning aside from linguistic barriers, which include sociocultural challenges and assessment challenges. All of these factors need to be addressed in order to ensure that ELLs are being provided with an equitable opportunity to learn like their native English speaking peers. If ELLs sociocultural needs are not being met, then their affective filters will be high which will prohibit them from learning to their full potential. Non ENL teachers need to know how to create a cultural responsive teaching environment in order to ensure ELLs sociocultural needs are being met.

### **Implications for Student Learning**

All students learn differently. An implication for student learning is for students to be aware how they take in and process information best. Some students learn better when collaborating with others, when performing hands-on activities or tasks, or through visuals and

## TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

hand-gestures. Students can express their specific learning style to their teachers, who can then incorporate it into their instruction. In the case study, the student was able to comprehend the content better when there were visuals and graphic organizers used to teach the content. If students were able to express their preferred learning style, then there would be a more positive learning outcome for students.

### **Further Research**

Further research can be done to examine ELLs perceptions of using graphic and sensory supports. This can be done through observations and surveys. It is important for students to be actively engaged with the materials that they use. If ELLs are feeling apprehensive about using materials that differ from their peers, then they may be more resilient to using them effectively. Understanding ELLs feelings towards having modified materials will provide educators with information on how they can better support or mitigate this problem.

Additional research can also be done on the development of ELA curriculums and the types of resources and accommodations that are included in them for ELLs. This research should look at whether or not supports are being consistently imbedded in curriculums. This research will help better inform school districts and administrators about the various types of curriculums available and whether or not they would be a good fit for their school's student demographic. It will also enable curriculum creators to notice discrepancies in the types of supports and resources that they provide.

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Appendix A

Figure 1- Agenda for Session 1

**Agenda: Session 1**

- Review objective: General education teachers to be able to evaluate and choose graphic supports to use with lesson materials, tests or assessments.
- Opening: share out of Quick Writes from prior session
- Receive note catcher: hand out of PowerPoint
- Explanation of using quality graphic supports: Reference to Case Study
- Introduce adapted graphic support rubric (Yazdanmehr and Shoghi, 2014)
- Presenter: Model choosing graphic supports using the rubric
- Receive: Teachers will receive the graphic support rubric
- Activity: Teachers will work in small groups and choose one material, test, or assessment that they want to evaluate and modify using the graphic support rubric in order to makes it more accessible to ELLs
- Teachers will do a gallery walk to see what their peers have done
- Final Reflection: Turn and Talk

# TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Figure 2- Session 1 PowerPoint Handout

Objective: Session 1

General education teachers to be able to evaluate and choose graphic supports to use with lesson materials, tests or assessments.

### Case Study

<b>Test</b>	<b>Score</b>
Without Graphic Supports	1/8 (12.5%)
With Graphic Supports	5/8 (62.5%)

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
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TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Criteria	Ratings			
	Not At All (1)	A Little (2)	Adequately (3)	To a Great Extent (4)
<p><b>Function &amp; Relevance</b> Do the visuals have the reinforcing and elaborative function to help convey the topic of the text? Are they relevant to the subject they follow, precede or are part of?</p>				
<p><b>Authenticity</b> Are the photographs prioritized over drawings (wherever possible) to create better authentic and life-like learning environment?</p>				
<p><b>Size</b> Are the visuals of proper size to create the desirable mood and to touch the viewer's involvement and attraction to the subject?</p>				
<p><b>Location</b> Are the illustrations close enough to the text they refer to? Are they at the same page, producing no difficult for the reader to identify which text or activity they belong to?</p>				
<p><b>Clarity</b> Is the graphic representational? (directly shows what was in the text?)</p>				
<p><b>Quantity</b> Are there too few or too many images?</p>				
<p><b>Value and Hue Contrast</b> Is the relative lightness and darkness of the colors adjusted in a way to maximize naturalness? Are at least half of the graphics in color?</p>				

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## TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Criteria	Ratings			
	Not At All (1)	A Little (2)	Adequately (3)	To a Great Extent (4)
<b>Function &amp; Relevance</b> Do the visuals have the reinforcing and elaborative function to help convey the topic of the text? Are they relevant to the subject they follow, precede or are part of?				
<b>Authenticity</b> Are the photographs prioritized over drawings (wherever possible) to create better authentic and life-like learning environment?				
<b>Size</b> Are the visuals of proper size to create the desirable mood and to touch the viewer's involvement and attraction to the subject?				
<b>Location</b> Are the illustrations close enough to the text they refer to? Are they at the same page, producing no difficult for the reader to identify which text or activity they belong to?				
<b>Clarity</b> Is the graphic representational? (directly shows what was in the text?)				
<b>Quantity</b> Are there too few or too many images?				
<b>Value and Hue Contrast</b> Is the relative lightness and darkness of the colors adjusted in a way to maximize naturalness? Are at least half of the graphics in color?				



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## TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Criteria	Ratings			
	Not At All (1)	A Little (2)	Adequately (3)	To a Great Extent (4)
<b>Function &amp; Relevance</b> Do the visuals have the reinforcing and elaborative function to help convey the topic of the text? Are they relevant to the subject they follow, precede or are part of?				
<b>Authenticity</b> Are the photographs prioritized over drawings (wherever possible) to create better authentic and life-like learning environment?				
<b>Size</b> Are the visuals of proper size to create the desirable mood and to touch the viewer's involvement and attraction to the subject?				
<b>Location</b> Are the illustrations close enough to the text they refer to? Are they at the same page, producing no difficult for the reader to identify which text or activity they belong to?				
<b>Clarity</b> Is the graphic representational? (directly shows what was in the text?)				
<b>Quantity</b> Are there too few or too many images?				
<b>Value and Hue Contrast</b> Is the relative lightness and darkness of the colors adjusted in a way to maximize naturalness? Are at least half of the graphics in color?				



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TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Criteria	Ratings			
	Not At All (1)	A Little (2)	Adequately (3)	To a Great Extent (4)
<b>Function &amp; Relevance</b> Do the visuals have the reinforcing and elaborative function to help convey the topic of the text? Are they relevant to the subject they follow, precede or are part of?				
<b>Authenticity</b> Are the photographs prioritized over drawings (wherever possible) to create better authentic and life-like learning environment?				
<b>Size</b> Are the visuals of proper size to create the desirable mood and to touch the viewer's involvement and attraction to the subject?				
<b>Location</b> Are the illustrations close enough to the text they refer to? Are they at the same page, producing no difficult for the reader to identify which text or activity they belong to?				
<b>Clarity</b> Is the graphic representational? (directly shows what was in the text?)				
<b>Quantity</b> Are there too few or too many images?				
<b>Value and Hue Contrast</b> Is the relative lightness and darkness of the colors adjusted in a way to maximize naturalness? Are at least half of the graphics in color?				



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TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Your Turn!

- ▶ Get into a small group with same subject teachers (no more than 4 people)
- ▶ Decide what you want to modify using graphic supports
- ▶ Use the rubric to evaluate and choose graphics

Present & Share: Gallery Walk



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# TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

## Reflection

### Turn and Talk

- ▶ What did you find easy?
- ▶ What did you find difficult?
- ▶ How will you use the information you learned going forward?



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Reminder: To the next session please bring:

- Laptop
- any graphic organizers that you use
- bring any modified materials, assessments, or tests that you may have done

## TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Figure 3– Graphic Support Rubric

### **Rubric for Evaluating Graphic Supports**

Criteria	Ratings			
	Not At All (1)	A Little (2)	Adequately (3)	To a Great Extent (4)
<b>Function &amp; Relevance</b> Do the visuals have the reinforcing and elaborative function to help convey the topic of the text? Are they relevant to the subject they follow, precede or are part of?				
<b>Authenticity</b> Are the photographs prioritized over drawings (wherever possible) to create better authentic and life-like learning environment?				
<b>Size</b> Are the visuals of proper size to create the desirable mood and to touch the viewer’s involvement and attraction to the subject?				
<b>Location</b> Are the illustrations close enough to the text they refer to? Are they at the same page, producing no difficult for the reader to identify which text or activity they belong to?				
<b>Clarity</b> Is the graphic representational? (directly shows what was in the text?)				
<b>Quantity</b> Are there too few or too many images?				
<b>Value and Hue Contrast</b> Is the relative lightness and darkness of the colors adjusted in a way to maximize naturalness? Are at least half of the graphics in color?				

**Totals**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Count the total amount for each criteria and write it in the appropriate column. Then combine the total amounts counted for each criteria and align it to the totals provided at the bottom to determine if the graphics chosen for the lesson/worksheet are quality images.

24-19: High quality    18-13: Moderate Quality

# TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Figure 4- Use to Model How to Choose Graphic Supports



## TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Figure 5- Agenda Session 2

### **Agenda: Session 2**

- State objective for this session: general education teachers being able to select appropriate graphic organizers and modify them using graphic supports.
- Opening: Teachers share modified materials, assessments, or tests that were brought and discuss how it has effects the ELLs in the their class
- Receive note catcher: hand out of PowerPoint
- Review importance of using graphic organizers: Reference Case Study
- Introduce guiding questions for choosing a graphic organizer & model using it
- Model adapting graphic organizer to include graphic supports (mini-handout)
- Receive: guiding questions handout, graphic supports rubric, & sample lesson
- Activity: Teachers will be asked to work in small groups to evaluate and decide upon the graphic organizer to use with this lesson as well as discuss how to modify it using graphic supports for ELLs.
- Teachers will present what they created and their peers will provide them with feedback
- Closing: Teachers will fill out an Exit Ticket
- Volunteers will share out their response

TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Figure 6- Agenda Session 2

Share any modified materials, assessments or tests

- ▶ How have these modified materials effected the ELLs in your class?

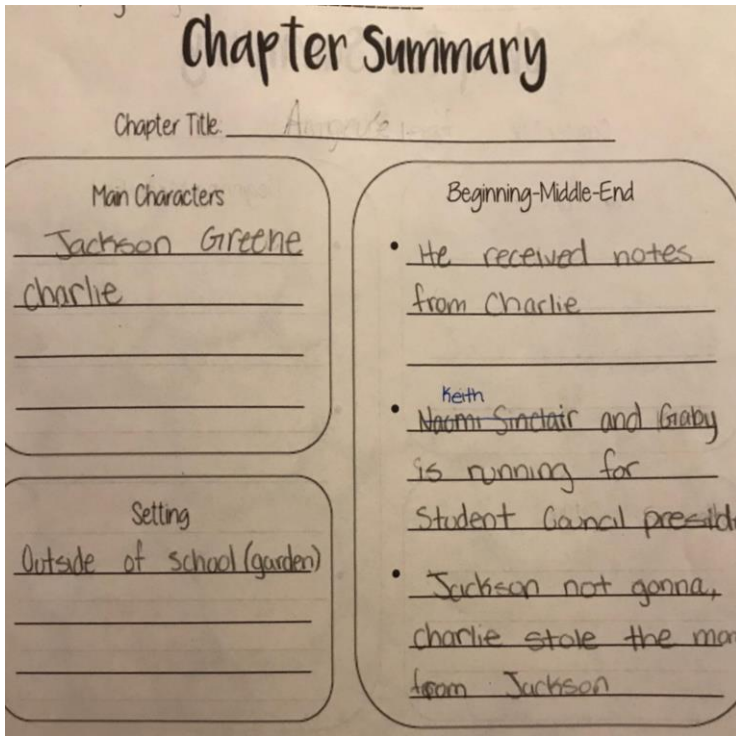
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Objective: Session 2

- ▶ General education teachers to be able to select appropriate graphic organizers and modify them using graphic supports.

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Case Study



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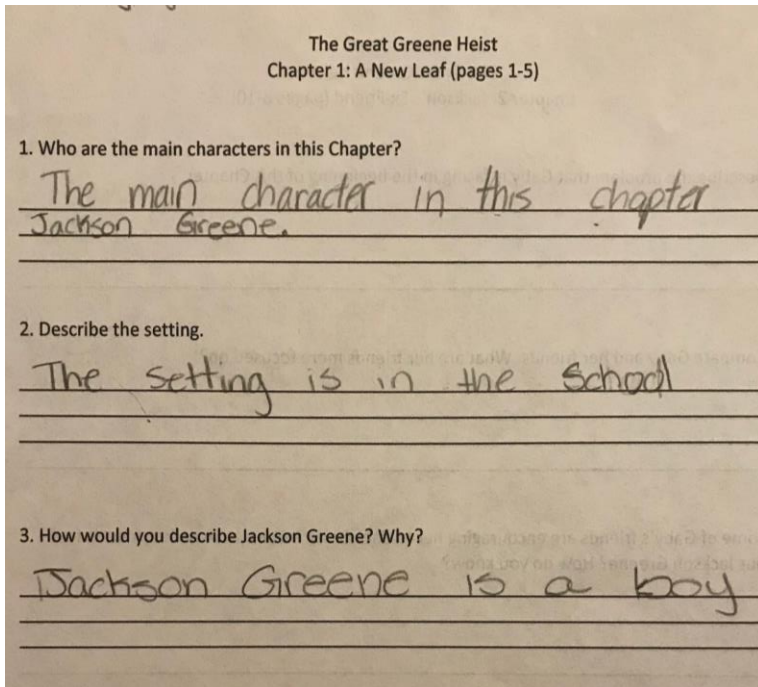
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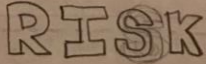
TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Case Study

Vocabulary Diagram

Definition/Description Make secretive plans	Synonyms tricky
Examples I have never been schemed	Picture 
Word Scheming	

Vocabulary Diagram

Definition/Description To put something at risk or in danger of being harmed or lost.	Synonyms Compromise, risk, endanger, threaten
Examples My friend jeopardize my game	Picture 
Word Jeopardize	

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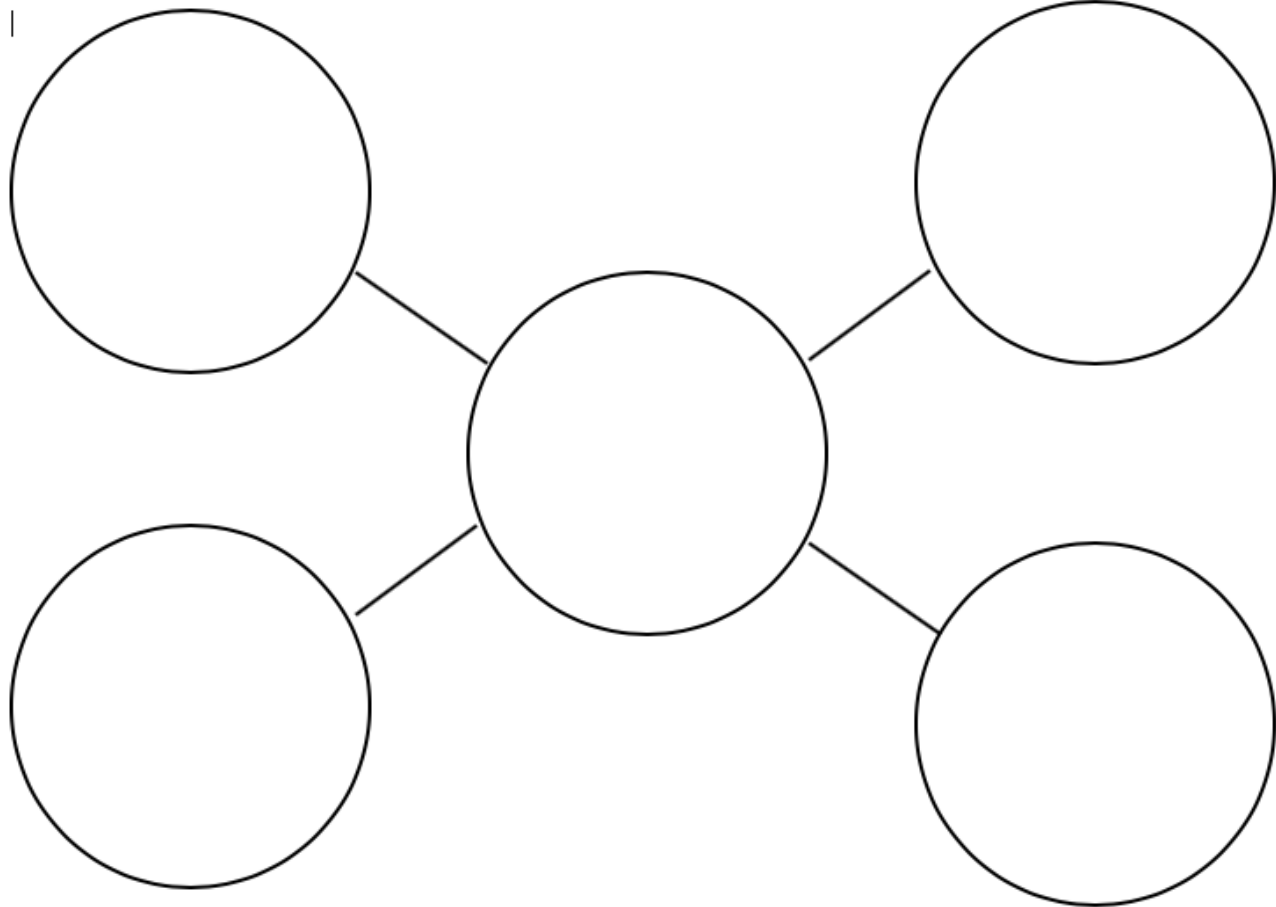
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TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY



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TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

<b>Social Studies</b>	
<b>Material:</b>	<p>-Urban Communities ( 1 copy to display on board)          -Urban community facts web (class set)          - Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities   First and Second Grade Social Studies Lesson by Homeschool Pop  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRxBNQPmj1-8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRxBNQPmj1-8</a></p>
<b>Objective</b>	<p>SWBAT identify and write characteristics of an urban community by using the information from the passage “Urban Community”.</p>
<b>Vocabulary:</b>	<p>Urban community- a big city or town with a large population</p>
<b>Procedure:</b>	<p>Tell students that they will be learning about Urban communities today.</p>
<b>I Do:</b>	<p>Have students turn and talk to discuss what they already know about urban communities. <i>Write their answers on the KWL chart.</i> Tell them that today they will be learning more specific information about what urban communities</p>
	<p>Explain to students that they will be watching a YouTube video about urban communities. Give students the task of writing down information that they learned about urban communities while watching the video. Then have students share out the information they learned filling it out on the KWL chart.</p>
	<p>Next show students the Urban communities passage. Choose some volunteers to read the passage aloud.</p>
<b>We Do:</b>	<p>Then answer the question at the bottom of the passage as a class.</p>
	<p>Ask students questions such as “How do you know?” “where in the passage can you find your evidence to support your answer?” “Would it still be an urban community if everyone moved from it?” “ Why would people want to live in an urban community?”</p>
<b>They Do:</b>	<p>Then show students the Urban Community graphic organizer. Explain to students that in each bubble they will be writing down facts that they learned about an urban community. Remind students that they can use the information from the KWL chart and the passage to help them complete their worksheet.</p>
<b>Closure:</b>	<p>Have students turn and talk to discuss some of the facts they chose to put on their worksheet. Then choose some students to share their answers with the class.</p>

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TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Guiding Questions-Graphic Organizer

Directions: Answer either Yes or No to the following questions. If a question is not applicable, respond with n/a.

- Is it suitable for the amount of topics presented in the lesson? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does the graphic organizer demonstrate an understanding of the topic? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does the graphic organizer demonstrate an understanding of the topics relationships?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Does the graphic organizer present the information in a manner that is easy to follow?  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you answered mostly yes, then the graphic organizer is appropriate

If you answered mostly no, then the graphic organizer is not appropriate

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
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TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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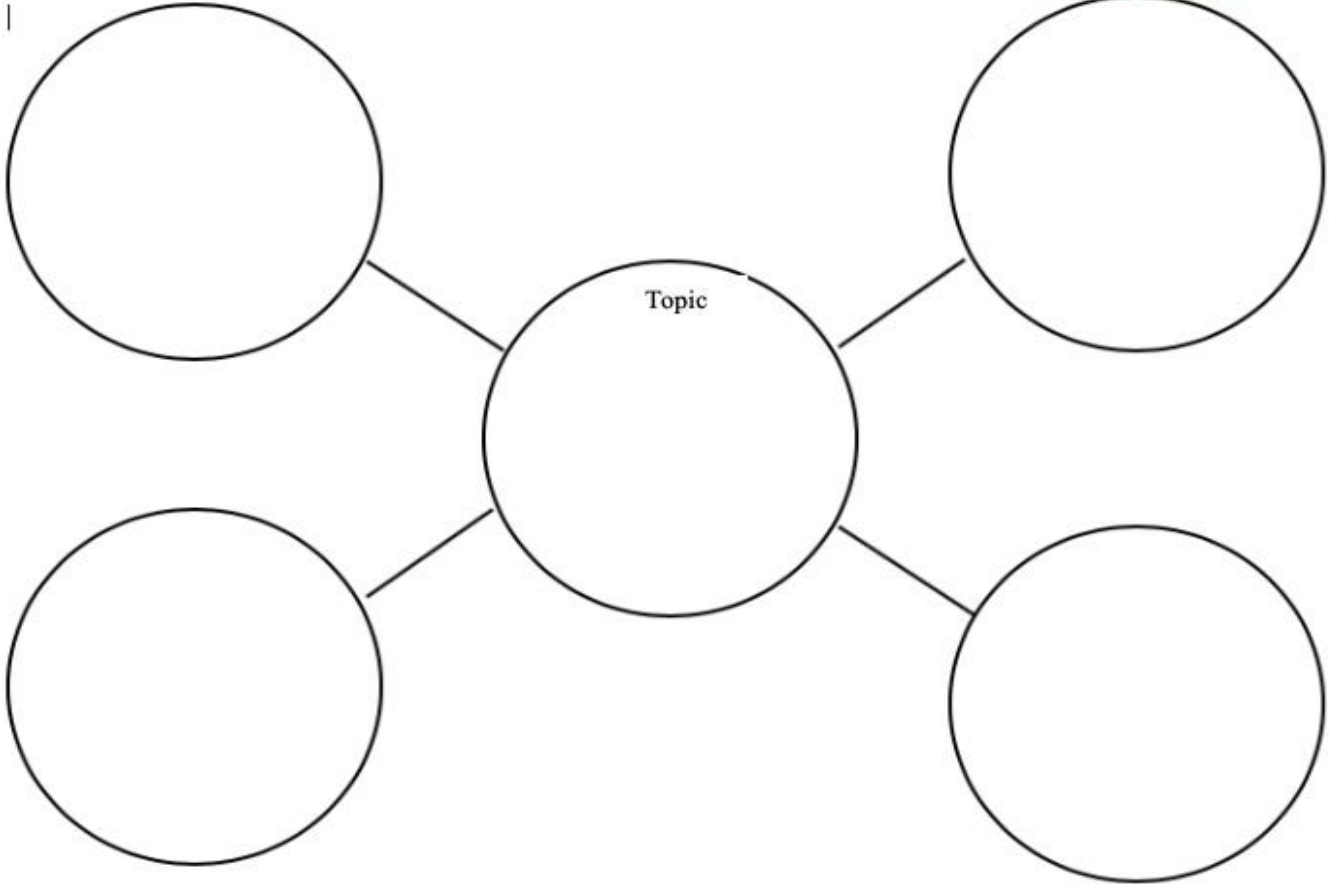
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TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY



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## TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

### Your Turn!

- ▶ Get into a small groups with same content teacher (no more than 4 people)
- ▶ Evaluate and decide upon the graphic organizer to use with this lesson
- ▶ Modify it using graphic supports to create mini-handout

TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

<p><b>Social Studies</b></p>	
<p><b>Material:</b></p>	<p>Urban and suburban community reading passage Graphic organizer</p>
<p></p>	<p><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRxNQPmj1-8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRxNQPmj1-8</a></p>
<p><b>Objective</b></p>	<p>TSWBAT compare and contrast urban and suburban communities by using the two provided passages to obtain their information.</p>
<p><b>Vocabulary:</b></p>	<p><u>Urban community</u>- a big city or town with a large population <u>Suburban community</u>- located in areas that are outside of the city or a large town</p>
<p><b>Procedure:</b></p>	<p>Have students T&amp;T to discuss what they already know about each type of community. Then have some students share out their answers.</p>
<p><b>I Do:</b></p>	<p>Show students the graphic organizer and model how they will be using it. Fill out a fact for the first community, Rural, using a think aloud.</p>
<p><b>We Do:</b></p>	<p>Next, fill out the next type of community, suburban, with the students. Have students T&amp;T to define what a suburban community and identify a fact about them. Then choose some pairs to share their answer. Allow students to fill in that fact on their graphic organizer.</p>
<p><b>They Do:</b></p>	<p>Then have students work in groups to fill out the rest of the graphic organizer together.</p>
<p><b>Closure:</b></p>	<p>Have groups share the identified similarities and differences between the two communities.</p>

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TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Presentations & Feedback

-Do you agree with their graphic organizer choice? Why?

-Are the graphic supports high quality? Why?



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## TOOLS TO SUPPORT ELLS LITERACY

Figure 7- Graphic Organizer Guiding Questions

### **Guiding Questions-Graphic Organizer**

Directions: Answer either Yes or No to the following questions. If a question is not applicable, respond with n/a.

- Is it suitable for the amount of topics presented in the lesson? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does the graphic organizer demonstrate an understanding of the topic? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does the graphic organizer demonstrate an understanding of the topics relationships?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Does the graphic organizer present the information in a manner that is easy to follow?  
\_\_\_\_\_

If you answered mostly yes, then the graphic organizer is appropriate

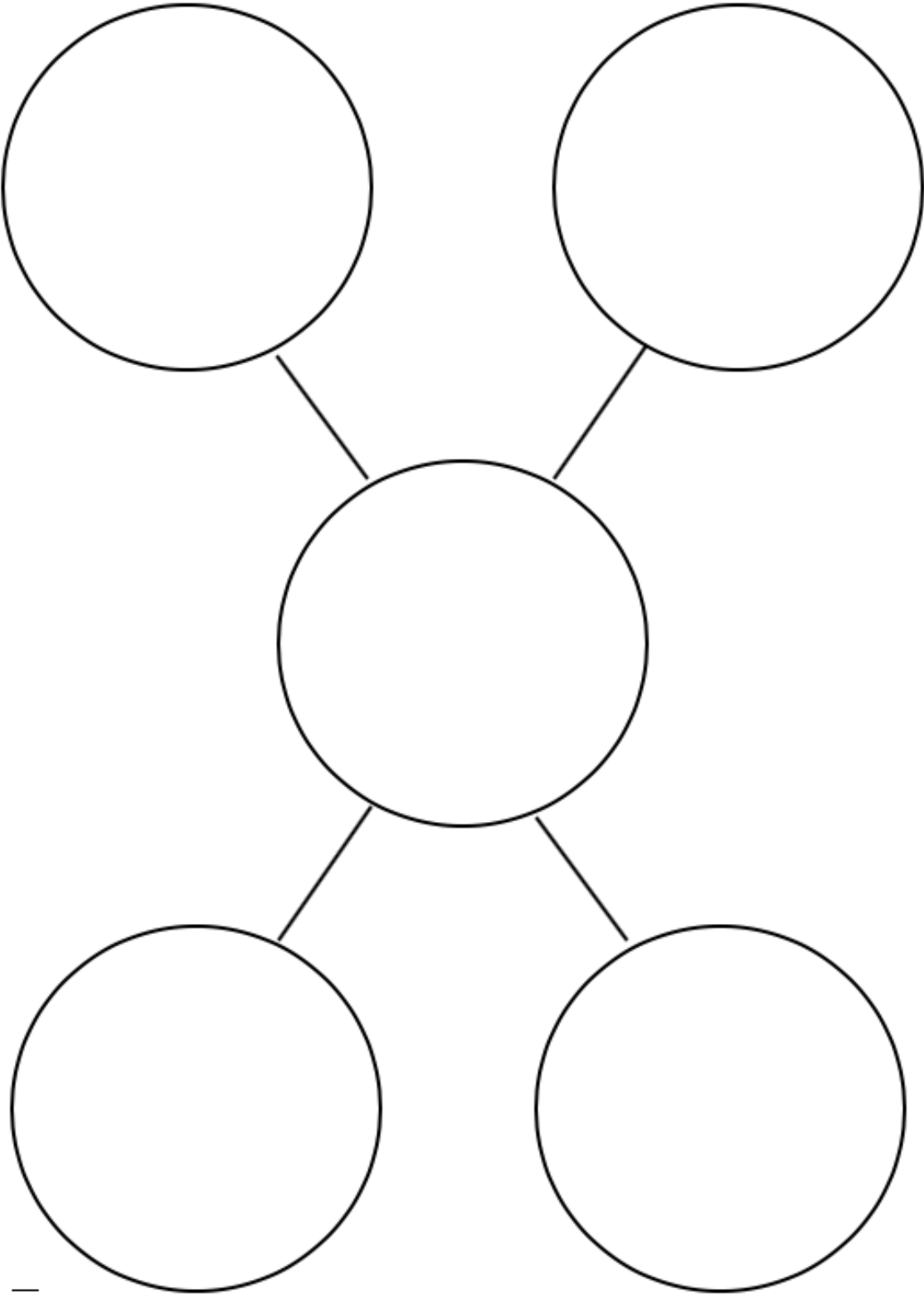
If you answered mostly no, then the graphic organizer is not appropriate

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Figure 8- Sample Lesson Plan to Model

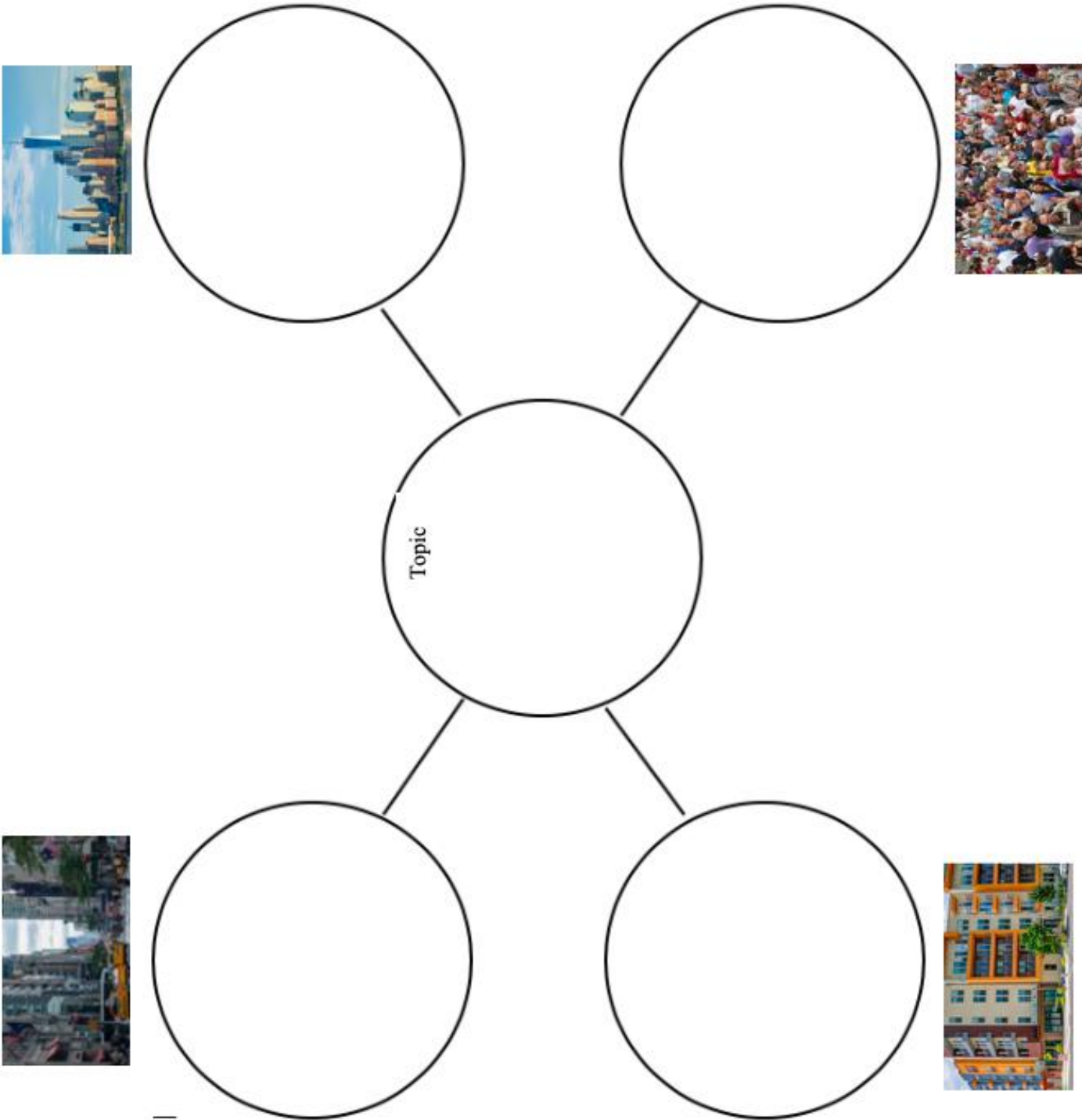
<p><b>Social Studies</b></p>	
<p><b>Material:</b></p> <p><b>Objective</b></p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b></p> <p><b>Procedure:</b></p> <p><b>I Do:</b></p> <p><b>We Do:</b></p> <p><b>They Do:</b></p> <p><b>Closure:</b></p>	<p>-Urban Communities ( 1 copy to display on board)          -Urban community facts web (class set)          - Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities   First and Second Grade Social Studies Lesson by Homeschool Pop  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRxnQPmj1-8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRxnQPmj1-8</a></p> <p>SWBAT identify and write characteristics of an urban community by using the information from the passage “Urban Community”.</p> <p>Urban community- a big city or town with a large population</p> <p>Tell students that they will be learning about Urban communities today. Have students turn and talk to discuss what they already know about urban communities. <i>Write their answers on the KWL chart.</i> Tell them that today they will be learning more specific information about what urban communities</p> <p>Explain to students that they will be watching a YouTube video about urban communities. Give students the task of writing down information that they learned about urban communities while watching the video. Then have students share out the information they learned filling it out on the KWL chart.</p> <p>Next show students the Urban communities passage. Choose some volunteers to read the passage aloud.</p> <p>Then answer the question at the bottom of the passage as a class.</p> <p>Ask students questions such as “How do you know?” “where in the passage can you find your evidence to support your answer?” “Would it still be an urban community if everyone moved from it?” “ Why would people want to live in an urban community?”</p> <p>Then show students the Urban Community graphic organizer. Explain to students that in each bubble they will be writing down facts that they learned about an urban community. Remind students that they can use the information from the KWL chart and the passage to help them complete their worksheet.</p> <p>Have students turn and talk to discuss some of the facts they chose to put on their worksheet. Then choose some students to share their answers with the class.</p>

Figure 9- Graphic Organizer



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Figure 10- Mini Graphic Organizer with Graphic Supports



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Figure 11- Sample Lesson Plan for Teachers

<p><b>Social Studies</b></p>	
<p><b>Material:</b></p>	<p>Urban and suburban community reading passage          Graphic organizer  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRxNQpmj1-8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YRxNQpmj1-8</a></p>
<p><b>Objective</b></p>	<p>TSWBAT compare and contrast urban and suburban communities by using the two provided passages to obtain their information.</p>
<p><b>Vocabulary:</b></p>	<p><u>Urban community</u>- a big city or town with a large population  <u>Suburban community</u>- located in areas that are outside of the city or a large town</p>
<p><b>Procedure:</b> <b>I Do:</b></p>	<p>Have students T&amp;T to discuss what they already know about each type of community. Then have some students share out their answers.          Show students the graphic organizer and model how they will be using it.          Fill out a fact for the first community, Rural, using a think aloud.</p>
<p><b>We Do:</b></p>	<p>Next, fill out the next type of community, suburban, with the students. Have students T&amp;T to define what a suburban community and identify a fact about them. Then choose some pairs to share their answer. Allow students to fill in that fact on their graphic organizer.</p>
<p><b>They Do:</b></p>	<p>Then have students work in groups to fill out the rest of the graphic organizer together.</p>
<p><b>Closure:</b></p>	<p>Have groups share the identified similarities and differences between the two communities.</p>

Figure 12- Exit Ticket

**Exit Ticket**

What is your biggest take away from the two sessions?

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## Appendix B

### **Introduction**

As America has always been the melting pot of the world, we have had a surge in recent years of cultural change, diversity and even a bit of controversy within our borders. With that comes an even greater importance and emphasis for our youth as they are our future. This starts inside our classrooms, as it is the number one place to guide and mold them for the future. The population of students in schools all over the United States is becoming increasingly more and more diverse. Schools populations are made up of students from more cultures than ever before. Adolescents from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and a vast variety of ethnicities who speak a wide range of languages and dialects. Although there are various factors that contribute to a school's diversity, I would like to focus on students language backgrounds. More and more students are entering schools where a language other than English is the primary language. Many teachers are not properly trained to work with this population of students. In addition to this challenge, there are also other overarching challenges that English language learners face on a daily basis in school. These challenges are in the linguistic, socio cultural, assessment and evaluation areas of education.

For my case study, I observed a 12 year old student going into seventh grade, who attends a public school. Student A is originally from another country. Student A and her family came to the United States when she was eight years old. At home, Student A speaks mostly Chinese. With this being the norm at home for her, the only exposure to English is when she is at school. I observed Student A in an ENL Summer Enrichment Program where the classroom was composed of 15 students who spoke either Bengali or Mandarin. Peregoy and Boyle (2015), state that students who are immersed into an environment where their new language is spoken

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are provided with many opportunities to hear and use regularly and that they are often more motivated to acquire the language because it is important in their daily life.

### **Linguistic Challenges**

During my observations I noticed that Student A did not actively participate in classroom discourse or engage in conversations pertaining to the content being learned with her peers. When prompted by the teacher Student A would answer a text dependent question, however, would need a lot of support in order to answer it correctly.

With there being a few students in class who spoke Mandarin, the remaining students spoke Bengali, leaving Student A as the only student in class who spoke Chinese. During class, students are often asked to work in small groups, I would notice that Student A frequently gravitated towards the students who spoke Mandarin. Although there are differences between Chinese and Mandarin, it appears as though they're still able to communicate with one another. Student A appeared much more comfortable when working with the Mandarin students, and I believe this is because they share a similar culture. When small groups are assigned and Student A had to work with some of the Bengali speaking students, she would fidget, she would look down at her paper, stare off into space and was more apprehensive to participate than when with her Mandarin speaking peers.

Student A is very animated and you can always sense her mood and level of comfortability by looking at her face and reading her expressions. In addition to this form of nonverbal communication, Student A will also point and use hand gestures to communicate what she is saying more clearly. These nonverbal hand gestures correspond to how Student A likes to learn. Since her English proficiency is not very high, the use of videos, pictures, songs, and hand

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movements which correlate to what is being said clearly helps the student understand more and acquire the language easier.

Although Student A stated during the interview that she did not read at home, she is exposed to a variety of genres of texts during class. Student A appears to like reading, however her face would often look confused while she was reading independently. When Student A reads aloud you can see her decoding abilities are strong. However, I assumed she would not comprehend much of what she read based off her confused expression and difficulty answering text dependent questions. When Student A is asked to write, either in response to a text or for a reflection, she often groans and expresses that she doesn't want to write because it makes her hand hurt. Despite her negative attitude towards writing she is able to compose simple sentences which are organized and understandable.

### **Socio-cultural Contexts' Impacts**

I also observed Student A having difficulties assimilating to the different socio cultural norms which were present within the classroom. In China, education is more teacher lead and students often do not participate in various exploration type activities. There is a lot of pressure placed on students by their parents to compete and to maintain high grades. The expectation for high grades is ingrained in Chinese culture, everyone takes letter grades and standardized test scores seriously. This could contribute to why Student A appears nervous during tests. Chinese culture is also very group dependent. This could contribute to why the student struggles with completing tasks independently.

After speaking to the teacher I learned that Student A is very close with her family and spends the majority of her leisure time with them. Student A is accustomed to Chinese cultural values, which differ greatly from other cultural values represented in our class and in the school

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as a whole. Student A is very respectful towards adults and peers in the class which is a reflection of her cultural upbringing. The way a child acts in a public and/or a class setting is a direct representation of the whole family and their values.

### **Complexity of Assessment and Evaluation**

I also had the opportunity to observe Student A while she was taking an assessment. When given a chapter quiz I noticed that her demeanor shifted from positive to negative. Student A appeared to be nervous and when later asked during an interview how tests made her feel, she reported that they made her feel nervous and confused. It appeared as though the linguistic barrier lead to difficulty in her comprehending what had occurred in the story the quiz was based off of. Additionally, the questions on the test also presented a challenge for the student. On the first test I observed Student A take she was able to answer three out of the four questions. However she was only able to answer one out of the three questions correctly. I also asked the student during the interview if her teachers ever provided her with accommodations for her tests and she replied by telling me that sometimes her teachers give her extra time.

### **Impact on the student**

Overall, I feel that these three overarching issues negatively impacted Student A's level of achievement. The linguistic challenges faced by the student made it difficult for her to engage in conversations with her peers in the L2. Additionally, these challenges made it difficult for Student A to understand and comprehend what she was reading. This lack of comprehension directly impacted her academic success on assessments. Although Student A is able to form simple, coherent sentences, her writing contains errors in subject and verb agreement and lack complexity. Socio cultural differences amongst the student and the other students in the classroom certainly present challenges. The student is accustomed to working in groups and has

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a group oriented mentality when it comes to completing a task. However, there are many tasks presented in class that are meant to be completed independently. This can result in feelings of nervousness and uneasiness, which is displayed by the student when she fidgets and looks down at her paper in order to avoid eye contact with the teacher. In addition to this, tests that are administered to Student A often do not have accommodations. Accommodations are meant to support student's success. Due to the linguistic barrier, the student struggles with understanding what test questions are asking her and as a result is unable to display her knowledge accurately. These testing formats negatively impact The student's achievement scores.

### **Research on Strategies**

In order to mitigate both the linguistic and sociocultural challenges I implemented strategies such as using graphic supports. Wright, McTigue, and Eslami (2014), argue that graphic supports perform many functions such as providing comprehensible input and making complex ideas more accessible and language more memorable. I used graphic supports and graphic organizers to pre-teach vocabulary terms to students. The terms used were preselected and I felt that they were important to understand in order to comprehend what was occurring in the story. Additionally, the graphic organizer for vocabulary helps support language acquisition. I also used a graphic organizer to help summarize the chapter in the story that we focused on for the day. I had students work in collaborative groups with peers who had the same or similar L1 as them. Peregoy and Boyle (2015), state that linguistic interactions are important because teaching and learning depend upon communication. Eun (2016), also supports using mixed grouping to mediate the development of literacy. When inclusive education is present it will provide ELLs with equal access to the curriculum which therefore sets them up for success.

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Piazza, Rao and Protacio (2015), believe that culturally responsive teaching will help ratify linguistic and sociocultural challenges. These researchers recommend implementing collaboration and visual representation in order to promote more culturally responsive literacy practices (Piazza et al., 2015). After implementing the use of the graphic organizers as well as setting classroom norms and expectations for participation I noticed an overall positive change in Student A both academically and socially. Student A participated much more after graphic organizers were implemented. During my interview with her she explained that the graphic organizers helped her understand what was going on in the story. Student A also said that they helped her organize her thoughts, which made it easier to participate during whole group discussions. I asked the student if she liked using the graphic organizers for vocabulary and she said that she liked them because it helped her remember the meaning of the words because she got to draw pictures. Piazza et al. (2015), asserts that literacy is a social practice and that all interactions are mediated by language and symbols.

In order to mitigate the assessment issue I implemented the accommodation of providing graphical images that supported what the question was asking. Jimenez, Nixon, and Zepeda (2017), suggest that structural accommodations such as visual graphics, should be implemented during the construction phases of standardized examinations. Language barriers can prevent ELLs from displaying their full knowledge due to difficulty of understanding the linguistic structure of items (Jimenez et al. 2017). Graphical aids help support student success because ELLs rely heavily on graphic images to develop meaning (Jimenez et al., 2017). In order to determine if this accommodation worked effectively, I first gave the test without the accommodation and before implementing the use other graphic organizers. I then had students complete the graphic organizer in small groups to aid their comprehension and then provided

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them with the same test but with the graphical accommodation. Student A's test score increased from 12.5% to 62.5%.

### **Conclusion**

Overall I feel that outcome of this case study was positive. Student A's initial observed experience was negative due to the various challenges that English language learners often face on a daily basis. However, I felt the outcome resulted in a more positive experience for the students because her linguistic, sociocultural, and assessment needs were being met. The student's feelings of nervousness and confusion were able to turn into more positive feelings of understanding and perseverance.

Overall, I have been able to walk away with some implications from this case study that I can use going forward in my professional development. The first implication is to take into account a student's linguistic needs. It is important for educators to remember that students come from a large variety of language backgrounds and cultures. This can play a key role in a student's success in the classroom. By keeping this in mind and creating a classroom environment that is welcoming to all and includes differentiation, educators will be better equipped to support students. Another implication is that graphic organizers are beneficial to support English language learners comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. Depending on how the educator implements the use of graphic organizers, they can also foster a collaborative, language rich working environment between students. The final implication from this project is the importance of taking into account your learner and the supports they need in order to be successful on tests. Accommodations, such as graphical images, are beneficial and can be easily formatted into tests in order to ensure that ELLs are provided with an equal opportunity to display their knowledge.

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The areas that Student A struggled in are often areas that a lot of ELLs struggles in. I learned through my observations the signs to look for and what type of data to collect in order to help me best meet the needs of my students. I will be able to take this experience with me and utilize what I learned with my future students.