

## Considerations for Working with Beginning English Language Learners

### **Be aware of, and allow for the Acculturation process**

- Newcomers move through predictable stages when adjusting to new cultures.
- Negative emotions and attitudes may be associated with certain acculturation stages, in particular "culture shock".

### **Accept the "Silent" Period**

- It is typical for newcomers to not be orally expressive for up to two terms. The time period depends on the ELLs learning style and comfort level.
- During this time, they are assimilating language internally and are making significant gains in receptive skills (learning vocabulary, syntax and concepts without verbal expression).

### **Enhance Positive Intercultural Attitudes**

- Language is learned best when the learner feels safe and accepted.
- ELLs become 'engaged' in the learning process when they feel emotionally and socially 'connected' to the classroom and school community.
- Create an inclusive classroom by reflecting and valuing the cultures and first languages of all class members; this may include displays, visuals and learning materials.

### **Be Realistic in your Expectations**

- It takes 5 to 7 years to learn a second language.
- It will take 1 to 1.5 years for the ELL to move through the first of four stages.
- It is not appropriate for newcomers to be expected to perform at grade level expectations during stage one and two.
- Even though it is ideal for the ELL be fully immersed in an alternate program at his/her level, it is neither realistic nor expected in the classroom environment.

## **Plan Learning Experiences that are within the Comprehensible' Range for the Newcomer**

- Newcomers require modified plans based on the goals indicated in stage one.
- During the stage one phase, expectations are based on 'functional language' instead of 'academic skills' and on basic interpersonal communication skills instead of cognitive / academic language development.
- As the student becomes more proficient in English a greater emphasis is placed on accommodating the ELL and less on modifying programs.
- As newcomers become more proficient in English, it becomes more appropriate to gradually integrate curriculum content-based expectations.

## **Use a Communicative Approach**

- Emphasize meaning and fluency before accuracy.
- Aim to communicate and understand real messages from the beginning.
- Create experiences that are meaningful and purposeful while focusing on oral communication and functional language.
- Accept errors and inter-language forms as a natural part of learning.
- Expose the ELL to target language structures and involve him/her in activities that require these to be used.

## **Create Efficient Learning Environment that is Manageable for the Teacher**

- Students can be effective teachers in a classroom: Enlist the assistance of classmates.
- Classmates provide authentic and meaningful English language models for the newcomer.
- Classmates provide real opportunities for basic interpersonal communication skills (stage one and two ELL expectations).
- Organize a Peer coaching system.