Implementing Evidence-based Instructional Practices for English Learners

Using Research to Guide Practice

This is the fourth publication in a series designed to highlight evidence-based practices for educators and other staff who support English learners (ELs) and their families in acquiring English and maintaining native languages.

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Introduction

As with all learners, English learners (ELs) require more than basic reading and writing skills to successfully engage with rigorous academic content, progress through school, and be fully prepared for postsecondary education and careers. ELs must be able to access grade-level content while simultaneously developing proficiency and autonomy in using academic English. ELs must also acquire the advanced literacy skills to engage with complex content and express their ideas in ways that meet the language-use expectations of each content area. Individuals at all levels of the education system can help students develop these skills by making intentional and evidence-based instructional decisions.

To support educators in this endeavor, this brief presents and elaborates upon five evidence-based instructional practices:

1. Provide ELs with opportunities to build content knowledge and language competence in tandem.
2. Leverage ELs' home language, prior knowledge, and cultural assets.
3. Engage ELs in productive interactions with peers.
4. Provide direct and explicit instruction focusing on key aspects of literacy.
5. Incorporate regular opportunities to develop written language skills.

These practices were drawn from practices identified as "promising and effective" in *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures*, as well as from practices recommended by the What Works Clearinghouse Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Practices Guides, *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades* and *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle*.[1] We identified these practices through a synthesis of the recommendations in the reports noted above and selected them based on the frequency with which they appeared, the strength of their supporting evidence, and their practical application for K–12 educators. Although the exact definitions and standards underlying the recommendations in these publications differ slightly, we refer to all of the practices in this report as "evidence-based" because they were based on extensive research reviews by experts in practice, pedagogy, and research methods.

[1] These three documents (i.e., *Promising Futures* and the two IES practice guides) provide the evidence base for the practices in this brief. However, this brief does not make claims about how these practices correspond to the evidence tiers of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). See guidance about how What Works Clearinghouse standards relate to the ESEA standards. Meanwhile, *Promising Futures* does not state how its recommendations, based on an extensive review process by 19 national experts (see pp. 17–20 of the report), relate to the ESEA evidence tiers. It is important to note that the research underlying these three documents was current as of their publication. While it is likely that additional research has been published since 2017 concerning these practices, there is no evidence of which the authors are aware that any of the practices recommended herein have been undermined or updated in ways that would render any of this report's content untrue or ineffective.
Baker, S., Lesaux, N., Jayanthi, M., Dimino, J., Proctor, C. P., Morris, J., Gersten, R., Haymond, K., Kieffer, M. J., Linan-Thompson, S., & Newman-Gonchar, R. (2014). *Teaching academic content and literacy to English learners in elementary and middle school* (NCEE 2014-4012). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education; Gersten, R., Baker, S. K., Shanahan, T., Linan-Thompson, S., Collins, P., & Scarcella, R. (2007). *Effective literacy and English language instruction for English learners in the elementary grades: A practice guide* (NCEE 2007-4011). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2017). *Promoting the educational success of children and youth learning English: Promising futures*. The National Academies Press.

The goal of this brief is to offer educators suggestions for practical classroom application of the research presented in these reports. Each practice is followed by a *Highlight of the Practice in Action* section that describes a real scenario in which the practice has been implemented. Although the scenarios highlighted took place in the past, the practices described therein remain evidence-based and relevant to new settings.

Educators may review this brief independently or with a team of colleagues, such as within a professional learning community. Some suggestions for implementing the practices herein include engaging in lesson development, observing and discussing classroom instruction, or reviewing curricular materials and instructional calendars.

PRACTICE 1: Provide ELs with opportunities to build content knowledge and language competence in tandem.

DESCRIPTION AND EVIDENCE BASE

Students generally learn informal, spoken English relatively quickly, but this is typically not the case for more formal, academic English, which has more complex structural, grammatical, and lexical features.[2] While students learning English as an additional language are fully capable of engaging deeply with complex texts and tasks, without appropriate support the language of the texts they encounter in school can present a barrier to content learning. Students are required to interact with materials written in complex, disciplinary-specific[3] language and express themselves using the specialized structures and linguistic demands of the discipline.[4]

For students to develop proficiency in the academic English of each discipline, teachers should make the language of their content more transparent for students and intentionally plan instruction that allows students to develop their language skills within the context of the curricular subjects they teach.[5] An examination of current college- and career-readiness standards reveals that this type of intentional focus on language is already embedded and supports students' engagement with rigorous content and analytical practices while developing language.[6] For instance, most states' English language arts standards require that all students engage with complex texts; write to inform, explain, and argue; work collaboratively; and present ideas. The Next Generation Science Standards' Science and Engineering Practices call for students to ask questions, construct explanations, argue from evidence, and obtain, evaluate, and communicate information. A common expectation in mathematics standards is that students explain and justify their ideas as they make sense of and solve problems, construct viable arguments, critique the reasoning of others, and use precise language. Under these current standards, teachers should promote the development of academic language. As such, teachers

[2] See footnote 2, last citation.

[3] The terms discipline or disciplinary are used in this brief to refer to academic disciplines or content areas such as science, history, geography, mathematics, literary analysis, etc.

[4] DiCerbo, P. A., Anstrom, K. A., Baker, L. L., & Rivera, C. (2014). A Review of the literature on teaching academic English to English language learners. Review of Educational Research, 84(3), 446–482; Schleppegrell, M. J. (2009). Language in academic subject areas and classroom instruction: What is academic language and how can we teach it? The National Academies.

[5] Derewianka, B., & Jones, P. (2016). Teaching language in context. Oxford University Press.

[6] Heritage, M., Walqui, A., & Linquanti, R. (2015). English language learners and the new standards. Developing language, content knowledge and analytical practices in the classroom. Harvard Education Press.

should not only be skilled in the content they teach but also be knowledgeable about the discipline-specific characteristics of the academic language used within their content areas.[7]

In some instances, ELs are taught using simplified texts and materials with the mindset that they must master English before being exposed to complex content.[8] However, this results in simplifying the content and minimizing the opportunity for students to interact with discipline-specific academic language. In other cases, students may encounter complex disciplinary texts but receive little support for accessing them. Well-meaning teachers may focus on key vocabulary alone. While vocabulary is an essential component of language, broader aspects of language, such as the complex grammatical and organizational structures typical of academic texts, can be equally challenging.[9] Although most teachers have been prepared in their content area, they may have received little guidance on teaching the language and literacy of their discipline.[10] To effectively address language demands for their students and support students' steady development of disciplinary literacy, teachers should be familiar with the content-specific ways that language functions within their discipline.

Practice 1 was included in *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures* as a "promising and effective practice"[11] for students in grades pre-K to five, grades six to eight, and grades nine to 12.[12] It is also supported by the National Academies Press' *English Learners in STEM Subjects* and the IES Practice Guide *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School* with a strong evidence base.[13]

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Academic language includes the oral and written language components necessary for success in school.[14] Disciplinary literacy refers to the specialized ways academic language is used depending on the subject matter, with each academic content area having its expectations.[15] In essence, the language and literacy skills needed to acquire knowledge in one subject area (e.g., algebra) differ from those

[7] Lesaux, N. K., Kieffer, M. J., Faller, S. E., & Kelley, J. G. (2010). The effectiveness and ease of implementation of an academic vocabulary intervention for linguistically diverse students in urban middle schools. Reading Research Quarterly, 45(2), 196–228.

[8] See footnote 2, last citation; Valdés, G. (2001). Learning and not learning English: Latino students in American schools. Teachers College Press; Walqui, A., & van Lier, L. (2010). Scaffolding the academic success of adolescent English language learners: A pedagogy of promise. WestEd.

[9] See footnote 5, last citation.

[10] Fang, Z. (2014). Preparing content area teachers for disciplinary literacy instruction. Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 57(6), 444-448.

[11] As noted in footnote 2, the phrase "promising and effective" as used in the NASEM report should not be assumed to be synonymous with the use of these terms in connection with the ESEA evidence tiers. A link to the ESEA definitions is provided in footnote 2.

[12] These practices as listed in the NASEM report are: Pre-K–5 Practice 2. Develop Academic Language During Content Area Instruction; 6–8 Practice 2. Support Comprehension and Writing Related to Core Content; 9–12 Practice 1. Develop Academic English as Part of Subject-Matter Learning; and 9–12 Practice 2. Integrate Oral and Written Language Instruction into Content Area Teaching (for full citation, see footnote 2, last citation).

[13] In this 2014 IES Practice Guide (see footnote 2, first citation), a rating of strong evidence indicates that there is consistent evidence that the practice improves student outcomes for a diverse population of students. In the case of this practice, five studies resulted in positive impacts with no discernible or contradictory negative effects; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *English learners in STEM subjects: Transforming classrooms, schools, and lives*. The National Academies Press.

[14] Truckenmiller, A. J., Park, J., Dabo, A., & Wu Newton, Y.-C. (2019). Academic language instruction for students in grades 4 through 8: A literature synthesis. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 12*(1), 135–159.

[15] Spires, H. A., Kerkhoff, S. N., Graham, A., Thompson, I., & Lee, J. K. (2018). Operationalizing and validating disciplinary literacy in secondary education. *Reading and Writing*, *31*(6), 1401–1434.

needed to acquire knowledge in another subject area (e.g., history). Teachers can help students develop discipline-specific academic language by focusing on the genres typically used in that content area along with the register[16] choices that professionals in the field make when they speak and write.

Common genres that students encounter in school and that are generally required by college- and career-readiness standards include narrative, explanation, and argument. The purpose of a narrative, for example, is to entertain the reader. Accordingly, narratives have an orientation-complication-resolution text structure and contain language features such as descriptive details and dialog. This is distinct from the genre of argument, in which the author's purpose is to justify a position or persuade the reader to think a certain way. Accordingly, the structural and linguistic choices that the author makes in an argument will be very different from those in a narrative.[17] Understanding how a text's purpose drives organizational and linguistic decisions will help students comprehend the texts they read and construct their own spoken and written texts.

Teachers can integrate language and content instruction by explicitly drawing students' attention to the language choices authors make when writing discipline-specific texts. Teachers can also help students adjust their language choices appropriately when writing. Without this support, not all students can engage in these practices regardless of their status as an EL. Teachers should provide ample opportunities and appropriate support for all students to participate effectively in language-heavy classroom activities.[18] Consider the following sample practices in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research to Practice

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples
1. Explicitly draw students' attention to disciplinary language	Include activities that allow students to explore and discover how disciplinary language works in context.[19] Teach discipline-specific reading comprehension strategies and discuss with students different reading approaches for each content area.[20] Help students develop metalinguistic awareness by providing opportunities to talk about how English works as they engage meaningfully with complex texts across content areas.[21]	Students work together to examine letters to the editor and discuss how the authors' use of modal verbs (e.g., should, could, must) affects the authors' meaning. When approaching word problems, the teacher supports his students to read problems multiple times for different purposes, such as determining what the problem is about, what the problem is asking for, and what the important information is.

[16] "Register" refers to the choices that a writer or speaker makes when relaying a message. These choices are affected by the subject matter of the message, the relationship between the communicating individuals, and the communication medium (e.g., written or spoken communication).

[17] See footnote 6.

[18] See footnote 9, last citation.

[19] ETS & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2018). The Reading for Understanding Initiative: Key findings and implications for states and districts. Council of Chief State School Officers.

[20] See footnote 21.

[21] Gibbons, P. (2015). Scaffolding language scaffolding learning: Teaching English language learners in the mainstream classroom. Heinemann; see footnote 5 last citation.

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples
2. Scaffold students' engagement in content-rich tasks that promote language development	Prioritize intellectually engaging, grade-level tasks that allow students to use academic English meaningfully.[22] Create a language-rich classroom environment where students engage in discussions with the whole class, small groups, and partners often and regularly, so they have many opportunities to practice oral communication about academic content.[23] Strategically use short videos, visuals, multimedia, and graphic organizers to enhance content understanding and stimulate discussion.[24] Incorporate opportunities to clarify meaning, such as defining words in context or asking "right there" questions.[25] Highlight the structural components of written texts through color coding and annotating.[26] Encourage students to use home language knowledge to comprehend and summarize challenging text and to engage in discussions.[27]	At the start of a unit on human migration, students view images of immigrants and discuss what they see, who they see, what actions they see, and what questions they have. A group of fourth grade teachers collaborates to plan their ELA lessons using their grade level standards and curricular materials. They plan intentionally to sequence tasks that build in complexity, that provide multiple entry points, and that include linguistic scaffolds to support use of the language needed to participate.

HIGHLIGHT OF THE PRACTICE IN ACTION

The following *Highlight of the Practice in Action* is adapted from the work described in Schools to learn from: How six high schools graduate English language learners college and career ready by Castellón et al. Figure 2, included in the *Highlight of the Practice in Action*, is an excerpt from the same source.[28]

This scenario highlights the following sample practices described above:

2A. Prioritize intellectually engaging, grade-level tasks that allow students to use academic English meaningfully.

2B. Create a language-rich classroom environment where students engage in discussions with the whole class, small groups, and partners, often and regularly, so that they have many opportunities to practice oral communication about academic content.

2C. Use short videos, visuals, multimedia, and graphic organizers strategically to enhance content understanding and stimulate discussion.

[22] See footnote 21.

[23] See footnote 21.

[24] See footnote 2, last citation.

[25] "Right there" questions are literal questions that can be answered by looking directly at the text (e.g., What is the protagonist's name?); Carlo, M. S., August, D., McLaughlin, B., Snow, C. E., Dressler, C., Lippman, D. N., Lively, T. J., & White, C. E. (2004). Closing the gap: Addressing the vocabulary needs of English-language learners in bilingual and mainstream classrooms. *RRQ Reading Research Quarterly, 39*(2), 188–215; Tong, F., Irby, B. J., Lara-Alecio, R., & Koch, J. (2014). Integrating literacy and science for English language learners: From learning-to-read to reading-to-learn. *The Journal of Educational Research, 107*(5), 410–426.

[26] See footnote 2, last citation.

[27] See footnote 2, last citation.

[28] Castellón, M., Cheuk, T., Greene, R., Mercado-Garcia, D., Santos, M., Skarin, R., & Zerkel, L. (2015). *Schools to learn from: How six high schools graduate English language learners college and career ready*.

Manhattan Bridges High School is located in the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood of Manhattan. At the time of the scenario highlighted here, Manhattan Bridges served approximately 500 students, 53% of whom were ELs. *U.S. News & World Report* identified Manhattan Bridges as one of the best high schools in the nation in 2015; at the time, it had a significantly higher graduation rate (94%) than the city in general (70%).[29]

At Manhattan Bridges, teachers embraced the idea of scaffolding students' language acquisition while focusing on content instruction, and they regularly collaborated to strategically develop and embed schoolwide language scaffolds across content areas. For example, they introduced a schoolwide focus on argumentative writing in response to the argument-writing requirement on the New York State Regents Exam for English Language Arts. The MEAL writing-support acronym (main idea, evidence, analysis, and link to argument) was first introduced to the students in their targeted English language development classrooms and then incorporated throughout the day in the content area classrooms where argument writing conformed to the same structure.

In one example, students in a U.S. history class worked in triads to analyze Great Depression-era visual art documents and determine the artists' points of view. Students compared and contrasted the images and used the MEAL chart in Figure 2 to support their conversations and subsequent writing.

Figure 2: Argumentative Essay

Organization for the Argumentative Essay

Argument: A statement, reason, or fact that persuades others that an action or idea is right or wrong.

Main idea: Your claim or position	The main idea is one sentence that expresses support for your argument. It must be written *in your own words*.
Evidence	• For example, _____. • According to the text, _____. • This shows _____. • The text states "_____." • This means _____.
Analysis	• This is important because (express a universal truth). • If _____ then _____. • (Say your evidence in other words) shows that (express a universal truth) because _____.
Counterclaim: Report and reject	• Others may say that _____. However, this would be incorrect because _____.
Link to argument	• This proves that (argument) because _____. • The argument that (argument) must be true because _____. • The most logical conclusion we can draw from this is that (argument) because _____.

Because students encountered consistent expectations and supports for argumentative writing in their English language development and content area classrooms, they were prepared to engage in the thinking and analysis required by these types of argument-writing tasks.

[29] See footnote 30; U.S. News & World Report. (2015). Manhattan Bridges High School: Overview. *U.S. News & World Report.*

TOOLS AND INSTRUCTIONAL ROUTINES

Authors make choices when they write based on their audience, the discipline in which they are writing, and their purpose for writing. Four of the most common purposes for writing are to (1) explain, (2) describe, (3) persuade, and (4) entertain. These purposes guide the way the author structures the information or ideas in the text and selects specific elements of language (such as verb tenses, sentence structures, and vocabulary). To help students focus on the structural and linguistic components of disciplinary texts, teachers should read and analyze the text in advance. Figure 3 shows sample questions that can support educators as they analyze texts in preparation for instruction.

Figure 3: Sample Guiding Questions for Text Analysis[30]

Guiding Questions for Text Analysis

Purpose:	• What is the purpose of this text? • Why did the author write it? • What is the author trying to achieve? • Who is the audience for this text?
Structure/Organization:	• How is the text structured? • How is the information organized at the whole-text level? How is it organized at the paragraph level? • What do you notice about the sentence-level organization?
Linguistic Features:	• What language is critical for students to understand and use when interacting with this text and writing? • What are the grammatical features in this text/text type about which you want to raise students' awareness?
Vocabulary:	• What vocabulary is essential for students to understand and communicate the content? • General academic vocabulary. • Domain-specific vocabulary.

PRACTICE 2: Leverage ELs' home language, prior knowledge, and cultural assets.

DESCRIPTION AND EVIDENCE BASE

ELs can and should learn the content and skills expected of other students at their grade level. The fact that they will be doing so in a new language and in ways that may differ from their home culture and previous schooling makes this task more complex. However, ELs arrive at school with rich backgrounds and cultural knowledge, as well as language and skills that enable them to engage in academic learning. They often have literacy skills and content knowledge developed in their home language and through prior school and out-of-school experiences. Most ELs have acquired the social and emotional learning skills and aspirations that prepare them to be successful in school and have demonstrated resiliency through their family's migratory experience.[31] Teachers can capitalize on

[30] Adapted from *Teaching Language in Context,* by B. Derewianka and P. Jones, 2016. Oxford University Press.

[31] Crosnoe, R. (2006). Mexican roots, American schools: Helping Mexican immigrant children succeed. Stanford University Press

these assets by implementing instructional routines that leverage students' home language, knowledge, prior experiences, cultural assets, and current levels of English proficiency.

Students with literacy skills in their home language have knowledge to draw upon when learning to read in English. Research has demonstrated a significant positive correlation between literacy skills in an EL's first language and the development of literacy skills in English as an additional language.[32] For example, students who can read and write in their home language will understand that speaking, listening, reading, and writing are all used to understand and express information and ideas. Additionally, ELs often bring considerable content knowledge in such subject areas as science or math.[33] Teachers can capitalize on students' home language skills and content knowledge to support them in acquiring English. Rather than leave this process to chance, teachers should take time to understand and leverage each student's prior experiences, content knowledge, proficiency in their home language, cultural background, and other assets to connect new concepts to what is already familiar.[34]

Students come to school with their home and community knowledge, experiences, and perspectives. Students' responses to instruction are heavily influenced by the socialization practices experienced in their home cultures. Teachers can be responsive to students' home and community experiences by incorporating instructional techniques that are culturally familiar. For example, several studies have found that learning through observation is common in many indigenous communities around the world.[35] Teachers might take advantage of this cultural practice by ensuring that verbal instruction is accompanied by visual support and modeling. When teachers demonstrate they value students' assets and leverage them in their instruction, learning is more relevant, and teaching is more effective.

It should also be noted that proficiency in languages other than English has cognitive, communicative, cultural, and economic benefits. Research has demonstrated that children who develop competency in more than one language not only benefit from their ability to communicate widely but also may show enhanced cognitive development and improved academic outcomes in school over time.[36] In fact, a synthesis of the research comparing the achievement results for ELs developing competency in two languages versus peers who are exclusively taught in English-only settings either found no difference in outcomes for English learning or that ELs instructed in bilingual programs outperformed their peers receiving English-only instruction.[37]

Practice 2 is derived from practices described as "promising and effective" in the National Academies Press' *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures*.[38]

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[32] See footnote 2, last citation.
[33] See footnote 2, last citation.
[34] Echevarría, J., Vogt, M. E., & Short, D. (2013). *Making content comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP Model* (4th ed.). Pearson Allyn and Bacon; Llosa, L., Lee, O., Jiang, F., Haas, A., O'Connor, C., Van Booven, C. D., & Kieffer, M. J. (2016). Impact of a large-scale science intervention focused on English language learners. *American Educational Research Journal, 53*(2), 395–424.
[35] Silva, K. G., Correa-Chavez, M., & Rogoff, B. (2010). Mexican-heritage children's attention and learning from interactions directed to others. *Child Development*, *81*(3), 898–912.
[36] See footnote 2, last citation.
[37] See footnote 2, last citation.
[38] This practice, as listed in the NASEM report for Grades pre-K–5 and 6–8, is Capitalize on Students' Home Language, Knowledge, and Cultural Assets (for full citation, see footnote 2, last citation).

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

By incorporating topics, texts, and strategies that reflect students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, teachers empower students to share their knowledge, in turn promoting academic success and a sense of belonging in school. The key practice of identifying and leveraging ELs' assets and shaping instruction in a way that addresses their diverse linguistic and academic needs can lead to increased engagement. Failure to appropriately consider and address the assets and needs of ELs can lead to a student's decreased sense of belonging. The sample practices in Figure 4 reinforce the idea that teachers should respect, appreciate, and capitalize on students' linguistic, cultural, and prior knowledge. This remains true regardless of the instructional setting or teachers' proficiency in the students' home language or culture.

Figure 4: Research to Practice

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples[39]
1. Promote home language use in school	A. Provide home language accommodations and resources including bilingual dictionaries, instructions in students' home language, and other available home language resources where available.[40] B. Provide opportunities for students to engage in extended content discussions with students who speak the same home language.[41] C. Provide and promote opportunities for ELs to participate in bilingual programming.[42] D. Promote translanguaging.[43] E. Read texts in students' home language.[44] F. Preview or review instructional material in students' home language.[45] G. Provide definitions for target vocabulary in students' home language.[46] H. Call attention to cognates when encountered in English texts.[47] I. Give explanations in students' home language.[48]Include activities that allow students to explore and discover how disciplinary language works in context.[49]	A school administrator who speaks Arabic regularly comes to the classroom to read to Arabic-speaking students and extend their talk in Arabic. Students are provided daily opportunities in small groups with other students or staff who speak the same home language, allowing them to expand their talk and discuss content and practices in their home languages. When introducing new vocabulary, the teacher identifies or asks students to identify cognates.

39 Note that these examples are illustrative and not meant to describe a particular classroom or lesson. One example may encompass multiple practices and any one example does not encompass all practices.

40 August, D., Branum-Martin, L., Cárdenas-Hagan, E., Francis, D. J., Powell, J., Moore, S., & Haynes, E. F. (2014). Helping ELLs meet the common core state standards for literacy in science: The impact of an instructional intervention focused on academic language. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 7*(1), 54–82.

41 See footnote 2, last citation; Saunders, W. M., & Goldenberg, C. (1999). Effects of instructional conversations and literature logs on limited-and fluent-English-proficient students' story comprehension and thematic understanding. *The Elementary School Journal*, *99*(4), 277–301.

42 See footnote 2, last citation; Goldenberg, C. (2008). Teaching English language learners: What the research does and does not say. *American Educator* (pp 8-44).

43 Translanguaging refers to drawing upon one's full language repertoire with creativity and intentionality. Students who speak more than one language may translanguage by switching between languages and expressing their ideas using the language resources that they deem appropriate for a given situation.; Kleyn, T., & Garcia, O. (2019). Translanguaging as an act of transformation: Restructuring teaching and learning for emergent bilingual students. In L. de Oliveira (Ed.), *The Handbook of TESOL in K-12* (1st ed., pp. 69–82). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

44 See footnote 2, last citation; Liang, L. A., Peterson, C. A., & Graves, M. F. (2005). Investigating two approaches to fostering children's comprehension of literature. *Reading Psychology: An International Quarterly, 26*(4-5), 387–400.

45 See footnote 46.

46 See footnote 36, last citation.

47 Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2013). *Bringing words to life*. The Guilford Press; see footnote 26, first citation.

48 See footnote 42.

49 ETS & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2018). The Reading for Understanding Initiative: Key findings and implications for states and districts. Council of Chief State School Officers.

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples[39]
2. Leverage prior knowledge	A. Invite students to share expertise and life experiences about the content or topic.[50] B. Remind students their background knowledge may "live" in another language or culture.[51] C. Intentionally connect prior learning experiences to new learning experiences.[52]	Students engage in a structured interview with a partner in which they ask and answer questions about their favorite story before they begin learning about narratives and how they work.
3. Capitalize on cultural knowledge	A. Access students' experiences, cultural contributions, and perspectives.[53] B. Use students' strengths, interests, and backgrounds to drive instructional design.[54] C. Validate students' cultures by diversifying instructional strategies and curriculum choices.[55] D. Collectively create norms for equitable classroom interactions that highlight the importance of including all students' voices.[56] E. Learn about students' lives to make connections between their experiences, backgrounds, interests, and content learning.[57]	Students interview a family or community member about significant events in their life and how those events were impacted by their historical context. The classroom library has materials that represent the home languages and cultures of students in the classroom.
4. Cultivate an awareness and appreciation for language variation	A. Support students in developing academic English while also treating other languages and dialects as valid and valuable.[58] B. Include language activities that support students to develop an awareness of the differences between their home language or dialect and academic English.[59] F. Continually integrate formative assessment opportunities that allow for individualized scaffolding and support based on English proficiency level.[60]	A classroom bulletin board showcases students' home languages by displaying speech bubbles showing the word "hello!" in English and all the other classroom home languages.

[50] See footnote 36, first citation.

[51] Garcia, O. (2015). Critical multilingual language awareness and teacher education. J. Cenoz, D. Gorter, & S. May (Eds.), *Language awareness and multilingualism, encyclopedia of language and education*. Springer International Publishing.

[52] See footnote 36.

[53] See footnote 36, first citation.

[54] Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

[55] See footnote 55.

[56] Cohen, J., McCabe, L., Michelli, N., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, practice, and teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, *999*(1), 180–213.

[57] McIntyre, E., Turner, J.D., (2013). "Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction." In *Handbook of Effective Literacy Instruction*, edited by Barbara M. Taylor and Nell Duke 137–161. New York: Guilford.

[58] Santos, M., Castellón Palacios, M., Cheuk, T., Greene, R., Mercado-Garcia, D., Zerkel, L., Hakuta, K., & Skarin, R. (2018). *Preparing English learners for college and career: Lessons from successful high schools*. Teachers College Press.

[59] See footnote 44, last citation.

[60] Understanding Language. (2013). *Key principles for ELL instruction*. Understanding Language Conference: Stanford University.

HIGHLIGHT OF THE PRACTICE IN ACTION

The following *Highlight of the Practice in Action* is adapted from the work described in Culturally-sustaining, academic language instruction for Hmong-American children. [61]

This scenario highlights the following sample practices described above:

2A. Invite students to share expertise and life experience as they relate to the content or topic.

3A. Access students' experiences, cultural contributions, and perspectives.

3E. Learn about students' lives in order to make connections between their experiences, backgrounds, and interests and content learning.

At the time of the scenario highlighted below, Pang Vao Elementary School, a public school in Sacramento, California, had the first Hmong-English dual language program in the state. A majority of the school's students were Hmong-American, and 46 percent of the students in the school were identified as needing English language development services. Exploring Hmong culture was foundational to the curriculum. Examples of coursework included:

- Sixth graders formally researched the Hmong New Year by reading, annotating, analyzing, and discussing multiple articles to develop and present the traditions of the Hmong New Year and their significance to today's young people.
- Third graders used their discussion of *My Name is Yoon* by Helen Recorvits,[62] a story about a young Korean immigrant and her experiences in her new school in the United States, as a starting point for researching their own families' immigration experiences.
- Kindergarteners engaged in a unit of study around community gardens in which they learned about the importance of a healthy diet and worked in a garden with Hmong elders who shared their agricultural knowledge with the students.

TOOLS AND INSTRUCTIONAL ROUTINES

Some teachers may have subconscious ideas about how language should be used in an academic setting and, in turn, do not make their expectations explicit to students. It is essential that teachers make the linguistic expectations of school explicit and transparent to students, while also valuing the linguistic resources they bring. A singular focus on the correctness or incorrectness of a student's language use can reduce their interest in using that language for social and academic purposes, ultimately making them feel as though school is not a place they belong.[63] An inclusive classroom environment encourages students to use and expand their home language and also develop the language they use at school. Consider Figure 5 as a support for an asset approach to student language use.

[61] Spycher, P., Girard, V., & Moua, B. (2020). Culturally sustaining, academic language instruction for Hmong-American children. *Theory into Practice*, *59*(1), 89–98.
[62] Recorvits, H. (2003). *My name is Yoon*. Frances Foster Books.
[63] Spycher, P., Austin, K., & Fabian, T. (2018). The writing-centered classroom. *Educational Leadership, 75*(7), 54–59.

Figure 5: New Ways of Thinking About Language[64]

From a traditional conceptualization of…	To understanding…
Evaluative terms like • proper or improper • good or bad	Language choices as • more or less effective for communicating in a specific context
Grammar as • a set of inflexible rules that must be followed regardless of context • separate from meaning	Grammar as • patterns of language use • language choices that vary by setting and situation
Students that • don't speak/write properly • have very little language	Students as • following the language patterns of their home language or home dialects of English • using the full range of linguistic knowledge at their disposal to make meaning as they progress toward full proficiency in English
Language restriction by • saying, "Only use English." • not allowing students to use their home language	Language awareness by • inviting students to use their home language when appropriate • permitting and encouraging translanguaging
Correcting students' language by • writing copious red notes in the margin • hyper-focusing on punctuation and spelling	Students can • compare and contrast home language and English use • build on existing knowledge and add new language • prioritize meaning-making while also attending to conventions

PRACTICE 3: Engage ELs in productive interactions with peers.

DESCRIPTION AND EVIDENCE BASE

Students benefit from opportunities to interact meaningfully with each other about intellectually rich content. As educator James Britton once explained, "reading and writing float on a sea of talk."[65] This is particularly true of ELs, for whom oral academic discussions serve as an important bridge to academic reading and writing. Several studies have demonstrated positive learning outcomes following the integration of opportunities for students to discuss content in pairs or small groups.[66] In one such study, researchers investigated whether a peer-led, open-format discussion approach would impact

[64] Note. Adapted from *English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework for California Public Schools*, by California Department of Education, 2014, p. 919. Copyright 2015 by California Department of Education. (Originally adapted from *Code-Switching Lessons: Grammar Strategies for Linguistically Diverse Writers*, by R. S. Wheeler and R. Swords, 2010, p. 17. Copyright 2010 by Heinemann.)

[65] Britton, J. (1983). Writing and the story of the world. In B. Kroll & E. Wells (Eds.), *Explorations in the development of writing, theory, research, and practice* (pp. 3–30). Wiley.

[66] See footnote 42; see footnote 8; Vaughn, S., Martinez, L. R., Linan-Thompson, S., Reutebuch, C. K., Carlson, C. D., & Francis, D. J. (2009). Enhancing social studies vocabulary and comprehension for seventh-grade English language learners: Findings from two experimental studies. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 2*(4), 297–324.

English development in a group of 75 ELs in fifth grade.[67] The group that participated in the discussions performed significantly better than the control group on measures of listening and reading comprehension and produced longer, more coherent reflective essays containing more academic vocabulary and higher-quality reasons and evidence. Additionally, the group of students participating in the discussion group showed evidence of increased interest and engagement during discussion and improved attitudes toward learning English.

The National Academies Press Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures *and* English Learners in STEM Subjects reports identified productive peer interactions as "promising and effective" practices for all grade levels.[68] This notion is also supported by the IES Practice Guide *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades* with a strong evidence base.[69]

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Productive collaborative discourse is characterized by opportunities for students to engage in sustained talk and reciprocal interactions.[70] By providing well-structured opportunities for students to engage in discussion, teachers can work to ensure that interactions are equitable (not dominated by one partner or group member) and that students respond to each other by building onto, clarifying, and respectfully challenging each other's ideas.

Despite the research supporting the importance of student discussion, in many classrooms, there remains a tendency for the teacher to do much of the talking and processing. In the following third-grade conversation excerpted from the book *Content Area Conversations*,[71] we can examine the balance between teacher and student talk:

> **Teacher:** I was thinking about the life cycle of an insect. Do you remember the life cycle we studied? Malik?
>
> **Malik:** Yes.
>
> **Teacher:** What was the first stage in the life cycle? Jesse?
>
> **Jesse:** They was born?
>
> **Teacher:** Yes, things are born, but think about the life cycle of insects. Let's try to be more specific in our thinking. What is the first stage in the insect life cycle? Miriam?
>
> **Miriam:** Eggs.

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[67] Zhang, J., Anderson, R. C., & Nguyen-Jahiel, K. (2013). Language-rich discussions for English language learners. *International Journal of Educational Research, 58*, 44–60.

[68] These practices as listed in the NASEM report are: Pre-K–5 Practice 4. Encourage Peer-Assisted Learning Opportunities; 6–8 Practice 4. Use Collaborative, Peer Group Learning Communities to Support and Extend Teacher-Led Instruction; 9–12 Practice 6. Provide Opportunities for Extended Discussion of Text Meaning and Interpretation; 9–12 Practice 8. Provide Regular Peer-Assisted Learning Opportunities; and Grades Pre-K–12 Practice 2: Provide Opportunities for Interaction with Speakers Proficient in the Learner's Second Language (for full citation, see footnote 1, last citation). *English Learners in STEM Subjects* (for full citation, see footnote 13) identifies the following practice as "promising": Engage English learner students in productive discourse and interactions with others.

[69] This practice guide (for full citation, see footnote 1, second citation) notes that the *strong evidence* rating is based on several high-quality experiments and quasi experiments with ELs and native-English-speaking students that have consistently supported a positive impact on learning outcomes.

[70] Walqui, A., & Heritage, M. (2018). Meaningful classroom talk: Supporting English learners' oral development. American Federation of Teachers.

[71] Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Rothenberg, C. (2008). *Content area conversations*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, p.6.

Teacher: Yes, insects start as eggs. Then they change and develop. They become larvae after eggs, right? And then what? What happens to them after they are larvae? Adrian?

Adrian: They are adults.

Teacher: They do eventually become adults, but there is a step missing. What is the step between larvae and adults? What is that stage of the life cycle called? Joe?

Joe: Mature larva?

Teacher: Yes, there are two kinds of larvae in the life cycle of some insects. But what I was thinking about was what happened to them after the larva before they became adults. Mariah?

Mariah: Nymph?

Teacher: Now we're talking about the three-stage cycle for some insects. Do the insects that change into nymphs come from larvae? Let's look at our two posters again. Remember these? There is a three-stage process and a four-stage process. Let's study these again.

In analyzing the above exchange, we can determine that students are having a difficult time expressing their ideas about the content. One student at a time speaks while the others listen or, potentially, ignore the exchange altogether. In fact, the teacher speaks over 90 percent of the words in the exchange. While the teacher uses abundant academic language, students must use the associated language themselves to internalize the content. Calling on students one at a time in an initiate-response-evaluate structure, as is done in the above conversation, will not change the balance of talk in favor of the student. Students are not likely to develop the academic language needed for success in school and beyond if they are not given the opportunity to use it.[72]

Through participating in well-designed and well-executed opportunities for discussion, ELs have more chances to interact with other speakers. They take more turns speaking, and the amount of language they use is therefore increased. Additionally, they have the opportunity to clarify their thinking while learning and processing information.[73] If the teacher in the above conversation were to provide a structured opportunity for the students to engage in a conversation about the same content, the balance of teacher and student talk could shift dramatically, as it does in this adapted version of the conversation we examined above:

Teacher: I was thinking about the life cycle of the ladybug. Do you remember the life cycle we studied? Examine the diagram on the screen, and take a moment and think to yourself—what do you remember about the four stages of a ladybug's life cycle? (Teacher pauses to provide think time.)

We are going to engage in an academic conversation about what happens in each stage of the life cycle. Remember to lean in and look at your partner. Really listen to your partner and make an effort to add on to what they say. If it helps to deepen your conversations, feel free to speak to your partner in whatever language is most comfortable. I will come around and listen in to some of your conversations as you talk to your partner. Go ahead and begin.

Mariah: I remember the first stage of the life cycle is eggs—just like the other animals we've studied. This is when they get born. The female ladybug lays lots of eggs underneath leaves and they take about a week to come out—to hatch.

Jesse: Sí—the egg comes first. La etapa pupa es la próxima. Es cuando descansa antes de ser adulto. (The pupa stage is next. This is when it rests before being an adult.)

[72] Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Rothenberg, C. (2008). *Content area conversations*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
[73] See footnote 23, first citation.

Mariah: Pienso que no (I don't think so) because after the egg stage, the ladybug becomes a larva. Después de ser larva, se transforma a pupa. (After larva, it transforms into a pupa.) The third stage is a pupa, not the second.

Jesse: Ah sí—se me olvidó larva. Es cuando come mucho—¡aun la cáscara y sus hermanos! (Oh yeah—I forgot larva. That's when it eats a lot—even its shell and its brothers and sisters!)

Mariah: (Laughs). Yeah—it eats everything! That makes it grow really fast and shed its skin over and over again. It…it…it molts.

Jesse: Yes—and *then* it is a pupa. Es cuando descansa antes de ser adulto. La última etapa es adulto. (It's when it rests before becoming an adult. The last stage is adult.)

Mariah: Sí… sí… (Yes…yes…) It attaches to a leaf and its larva body changes into an adult body. And I agree with you—the last stage is adult. This is when it looks like a ladybug—it's red with black spots. Se cambió de huevo a adulto. (It changed from an egg to an adult.)

Teacher: Wow, you two remembered a lot about the ladybug life cycle. And, yes, the ladybug changes completely during the cycle. Do you remember a scientific term that we talked about that means a complete change?

Mariah: Hmmm. Meta…meta…

Jesse: Metamórfosis. ¡Es lo mismo en español! (Metamorphosis. It's the same in Spanish!)

Teacher: Can you two work together to come up with a complete sentence using the term metamorphosis?

Jesse: Las marquitas tienen un metamórfosis. (Ladybugs have a metamorphosis.)

Mariah: Sí. Un metamórfosis completo. Cambian de huevo a adulto y hay cuatro etapas. (Yes. A complete metamorphosis. They change from an egg to an adult and there are four stages.)

Jesse: ¿Ladybugs pasan por cuatro etapas en un… un… metamórfosis completo? (Ladybugs go through four stages in a…a… complete metamorphosis?)

Mariah: ¡Sí! (Yes!) Ladybugs go through four stages in a complete metamorphosis.

In this dialogue, the students think through information with their partner rather than listen as the teacher thinks. In the first scenario, while the purpose of the conversation is to review content knowledge, the purpose in the second scenario is twofold—to express content knowledge and build academic language structures simultaneously. It is also worth noting that in the second scenario, the teacher changes the discussion prompt to something more open-ended; instead of listing the stages of the life cycle in order, students are asked to describe what happens in each stage. Additionally, students are supported through access to a diagram of the ladybug life cycle.

The role of the teacher is to design the activity, provide support, and give the students ample opportunity to talk to one another rather than to do all the thinking and talking themselves. When ELs are provided with rich invitations in a supportive classroom environment, their ability to simultaneously develop analytic and language practices is positively impacted.[74]

In designing opportunities for students to engage in productive academic discussions and collaboration, it is important to plan with clear purpose, expectations, and opportunities for support. Consider the following sample practices in Figure 6.

[74] See footnote 6.

Figure 6: Research to Practice

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples[75]
1. Structure collaborative work	A. Provide home language accommodations and resources including bilingual dictionaries, instructions in students' home language, and other available home language resources where available.[76] B. Co-create discussion norms with students that include behavioral expectations around active listening and valuing all students' contributions.[77] C. Provide abundant opportunities to practice responding to attention signals, demonstrate active listening, move efficiently into pairs or groups, and other routines associated with student collaboration.[78] D. Group students strategically based on the purpose of the lesson so that students can support each other and work together productively.[79] E. Determine student roles, such as facilitator, notetaker, etc.[80]	When learning about the behaviors associated with academic discussions, students brainstorm norms that would support equitable conversations. Once they agree on a final list of norms, they create and post a list on chart paper. All students sign the chart indicating they agree to follow the norms.
2. Design engaging questions and tasks	A. Design tasks to include strategies, such as Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies, literature circles, and expert group jigsaw, that require student interaction.[81] (See Figure 8 for a description of these and other strategies.) B. Provide higher-order, open-ended, thought-provoking questions and tasks that require students to synthesize information, cite evidence, defend a stance, and grapple with a topic.[82] C. Carefully plan and carry out tasks that require interaction.[83]	A pair of students is given two similar pictures of honeybees and, without showing each other their pictures, they must determine and describe the differences between the honeybees and begin to hypothesize about why they are different.

75 Note that these examples are illustrative and not meant to describe a particular classroom or lesson. One example may encompass multiple practices and any one example does not encompass all practices.

76 August, D., Branum-Martin, L., Cárdenas-Hagan, E., Francis, D. J., Powell, J., Moore, S., & Haynes, E. F. (2014). Helping ELLs meet the common core state standards for literacy in science: The impact of an instructional intervention focused on academic language. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 7*(1), 54–82.

77 See footnote 57.

78 See footnote 73.

79 See footnote 59.

80 Vaughn, S., Klingner, J. K., Swanson, E. A., Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Mohammed, S. S., & Stillman-Spisak, S. J. (2011). Efficacy of collaborative strategic reading with middle school students. *American Education Research Journal, 48*(4), 938–964.

81 See footnote 2, last citation.

82 See footnote 2, last citation.

83 See footnote 73.

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples[75]
3. Provide linguistic scaffolding	A. Consider partnering students who are new to English with a "language broker," a student who speaks English proficiently (or relatively proficiently) and who has the same home language as the partner student.[84] B. Provide adequate thinking time after posing a question and before asking students to talk to a partner or group.[85] C. Before asking students to share out to the whole class, allow rehearsal time with a partner or group.[86] D. Provide linguistic support that allows students to engage in high-level talk moves, such as agreeing and disagreeing, clarifying, and comparing and contrasting ideas (e.g., a clarifying sentence frame, such as "Can you say more about ____?").[87] E. Encourage students to use their home language to deepen their content area discussions.[88] F. Rephrase or recast student share-outs using the academic language and concepts the lesson is focused on developing.[89] G. Question students to prompt them to elaborate on their initial responses.[90] H. Offer opportunities for ELs to interact with speakers proficient in English, allowing ELs to receive an increase in the quantity and quality of input while also challenging them to engage at higher proficiency levels.[91]	Students engage in a quick write or quick draw about a discussion prompt prior to sharing their ideas with their group. When a student explains that her seed pod *growed*, the teacher replies, "Your seed *grew*? That's very exciting. How much did it grow? Did you measure it?" When planning a group project, the teacher creates groups with students who have a mix of language levels, including students who are proficient in English. For groups containing a newcomer student, he attempts to include another student who speaks the same home language and is more proficient in English.

[84] See footnote 59.
[85] Stahl, R.J. (1994). Using "think-time" and "wait-time" skillfully in the classroom. *ERIC Digest*.
[86] Zwiers, J. (2014). *Building academic language: Meeting Common Core Standards across disciplines, grades 5–12* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.
[87] See footnote 2, last citation.
[88] See footnote 2, last citation; see footnote 43, last citation.
[89] See footnote 2, last citation.
[90] See footnote 2, last citation.
[91] See footnote 2, last citation.

HIGHLIGHT OF THE PRACTICE IN ACTION

The following *Highlight of the Practice in Action* is adapted from the work described in *Preparing English Learners for College and Career: Lessons from Successful High Schools*.[92] Figure 7, included in the *Highlight of the Practice in Action*, is an excerpt from the same source.

This scenario highlights the following sample practices described above:

2B. Provide higher-order, open-ended, thought-provoking questions and tasks that require students to synthesize information, cite evidence, defend a stance, and grapple with a topic.

3B. Provide adequate thinking time after posing a question and before asking students to talk to a partner or group.

3C. Before asking students to share out to the whole class, allow rehearsal time with a partner or group.

3D. Provide linguistic support that allows students to engage in high-level talk moves, such as agreeing and disagreeing, clarifying, and comparing and contrasting ideas (e.g., a clarifying sentence frame such as "Can you say more about ____?").

The Boston International High School and Newcomers Academy, located in Boston, Massachusetts, was designed to serve students newly arrived in the United States as well as students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE).[93] At the time of this highlighted scenario, all of the school's students were ELs or recently reclassified English learners and represented over 25 language backgrounds.[94]

In one 10th-grade English lesson, students discussed the idea of paying students to attend school. They began by working on a pre-writing task in their writing notebooks in which they evaluated this idea. Alongside the writing prompt were suggested sentence starters:

- I concur with the idea that _____.
- I take issue with the fact that _____.
- To make this program more effective, I would _____.

After their independent writing time, students transitioned to a discussion in pairs and small groups to share their initial thoughts, then into a structured whole-group discussion led by the teacher. Students were provided with the following handout (Figure 7) to support entry into or continuation of their discussions.

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[92] See footnote 59.

[93] The state of Massachusetts defines SLIFE as students with limited or interrupted formal education. These students are "English learners who have experienced interrupted education or have limited formal education prior to enrolling in the district. SLIFE usually come from a home in which a language other than English is spoken, have gaps in their education from their home country, and are at least two grade levels behind in reading and mathematics. They may have attended school in the U.S. but can have gaps in language and literacy due to ineffective or missing instruction. They are often at risk for dropping out of school and may need intensive support" (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2019). *Massachusetts students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) definition and guidance*.).

94 Although dedicated newcomer programs may be appropriate in some settings to support recently arrived immigrant students, it is important to note, per guidance from the Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR), that "EL programs may not unjustifiably segregate students on the basis of national original or EL status" (see p.22 of January 7, 2015 Dear Colleague Letter. The OELA Newcomer Toolkit provides additional information and resources on this topic.

Figure 7: Student Handout for Academic Discourse

Skill	Sentence Frames	What I Said[95]
Asked questions that propelled conversation	• What would happen if... • Is it justified for... • Do you agree that...	
Answered questions that propelled conversation using evidence and analysis	• In response to X's question, … • Going back to the question that X asked, ...	
Connected the discussion to larger ideas (other books, other news stories, other classes, or other situations)	• This is similar to/different from... • In comparison, ...	
Successfully incorporated others into the discussion	• Earlier you were saying that... • Can you say more about... • What is your opinion on... • Do you agree with X about...	
Made classmate's comment clearer by adding new evidence or information	• To clarify what X said about... • Another way to explain what X said is...	
Verified the truth of a classmate's comment by adding new evidence or information	• I'd like to verify what X said about... • Her comment is accurate because...	
Challenged the truth of a classmate's comment by adding new evidence or information	• I'd like to challenge what X said about... • According to...	
Summarized points of agreement or disagreement in the group	• To summarize, X and Y disagreed about...because... • Ultimately, X and Y agree about... because...	
Justified her claim using evidence and analysis	• In my view, ... • According to... • This illustrates that...	
Explained why she changed her opinion or ideas based on new evidence or information	• After considering what X said about... I have reconsidered my opinion... • X's comment about...made me think that...	

Due to the open-ended and controversial nature of the discussion prompt, students did not come to a consensus as to what the "right" answer might be, but instead agreed or disagreed and challenged one

[95] This table was used as described in the highlighted scenario. It could be adapted for teachers to create a handout that supports students to plan and capture their language. The third column is intentionally left blank as students would complete this portion of the table as they engage in their discussions.

another's thinking. Students used the Student Handout for Academic Discourse (Figure 7) to incorporate others into the discussion, ask clarifying questions, and explain why they changed their ideas based on others' contributions. The teacher used the same handout to take notes on students' discussion moves and highlight instances in which students justified their thinking or built on others' ideas. Students concluded the lesson with an exit ticket that asked them to reflect on which discussion practices were becoming easier and which continued to cause difficulty.

TOOLS AND INSTRUCTIONAL ROUTINES

The instructional strategies in Figure 8 are designed to require student conversation and move beyond the simplicity of a traditional partner interaction.

Figure 8: Structures for Engaging Students in Collaboration

Structure	Description
Collaborative reasoning	Students participate in peer-led small group discussions to read and comprehend a text that raises an issue or concept with multiple and competing viewpoints.[96] Students take a position and support it with reasons and evidence while also listening to, evaluating, and challenging group members' thinking.
Expert group jigsaw	Students read the same text as a small group of their peers (i.e., the expert group) and then work with that group to engage in discussion and become experts on the reading selection. They agree upon the most important ideas to share with other students and prepare to move into their jigsaw, or base, group to interact with members who read different texts from their own. The expert groups then reconvene to share the notes they gathered in their jigsaw group and review their learning. This structure is often supported by a note-taking matrix for students to take notes on their "expert" topic or text and gather notes from other students they engage with in their jigsaw, or base, group.[97]
Literature circles	Students prepare for and take on various roles in order to participate in a group discussion around a complex text. For example, one student may serve as a discussion director and develop and pose questions to the group, another student may look for and share connections from the text to the outside world, and a third student may look for unusual or interesting vocabulary choices the author makes. Students share their ideas and clarify and build upon the contributions of their group mates.[98]
Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies	Higher- and lower-performing students work together (without an extreme difference between levels) to perform the roles of coach and reader. The students work on structured activities that introduce grade-relevant skills such as phonics, fluency, and comprehension and hone in on the difficulties each pair of students is experiencing.[99]
Socratic seminar	Students engage in a formal discussion in which the leader asks open-ended questions based on a text. Students are expected to listen closely to the comments of others, share their own thoughts, and respond to the thoughts of others.[100]

[96] See footnote 68.

[97] Spycher, P., & Spycher, T. (2016). Writing arguments in world languages: Scaffolding content and language learning simultaneously. In L. de Oliveira (Ed.), *The Common Core State Standards in English language arts for English language learners: Literacy in the technical subjects, Grades 6-12* (pp. 123–140). TESOL Press; see footnote 9, last citation.

[98] Daniels, H. (1994). Literature circles: Voice and choice in the student-centered classroom. Stenhouse.

[99] Kearns, D. M., McMaster, K. L., Saenz, L., Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (2015). How to use Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies to improve children's word recognition and comprehension skills. In K. R. Harris & L. Meltzer (Eds.), *The power of peers: Enhancing learning, development, and social skills* (pp. 188–223). Guilford.

[100] Israel, E. (2002). Examining multiple perspectives in literature. In J. Holden & J. S. Schmit (Eds.), *Inquiry and the literary text: Constructing discussions in the English classroom*. NCTE.

Structure	Description
Stronger and clearer each time	Students think or write independently to prepare a response to a prompt before engaging in a structured partner interaction where they refine and clarify their initial response through interaction. Students engage in a succession of partner conversations in which they ask each other for clarification about the ideas shared. Oral presentations or writing drafts that follow these conversations should show evidence of refinement.[101]

PRACTICE 4: Provide direct and explicit instruction focusing on key aspects of literacy.

DESCRIPTION AND EVIDENCE BASE

The ability to read and interpret complex text is an important predictor of postsecondary education success; as such, a significant number of state content-area and English language acquisition standards focus on engaging with complex texts.[102] Reading curriculums through third grade generally concentrate on the basics of teaching students to read, including skill development such as phonological awareness, decoding skills, and reading fluency. Curriculums in fourth grade and beyond often assume that students read well enough to learn academic content through texts that are more complex than what they have previously encountered. It is at this point that many students, including ELs, can begin to struggle. Students who still experience reading challenges at the end of third grade often have difficulty learning both the academic content that they read about as well as the language structures and forms contained in complex texts. A continued focus on literacy, including foundational skills as necessary and an explicit focus on comprehension, text analysis, and cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies, is therefore essential as students progress through the grade levels.[103]

Supporting ELs to interact with complex texts is paramount. A place where ELs are likely to encounter the words, grammar, and rhetorical features of academic language is in written texts. Accordingly, it is important that ELs have frequent opportunities to meaningfully engage with the academic language provided in written texts.[104] Learning to engage with complex texts requires continuous interaction and teacher support around written language and its forms, structures, and functions. To advance students' reading skills, it is important to provide them with abundant opportunities and appropriate support to read and interact with texts that are beyond their independent reading level. Research indicates that explicitly teaching students the various components of literacy, including the meanings of words (vocabulary) and thinking about what they are reading (comprehension), supports literacy development.[105]

Practice 4 was derived from several evidence-based practices included in Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures as well as recommendations from the IES Practice Guide: Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades and the IES Practice Guide: Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to

[101] See footnote 86.

[102] See footnote 2, last citation.

[103] See footnote 2, last citation.

[104] National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2017). *Promoting the educational success of children and youth learning English: Promising futures*. The National Academies Press, p. 301.

[105] See footnote 2, last citation.

English Learners in Elementary and Middle School.[106] The recommendations from the IES Practice Guides cite a strong evidence base, indicating consistent evidence that the practice improves student outcomes for a diverse population of students.

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE: VOCABULARY

Experts recommend that instructors teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities.[107] This includes the use of student-friendly definitions; meaningful use of vocabulary words in reading, writing, speaking, and listening; and regular review.[108]

Consider the following sample practices for vocabulary instruction in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Research to Practice

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples[109]
1. Create opportunities for wide reading and exposure	This includes reading often and widely, including reading many different types of texts and listening to texts read aloud.[110] Practices include • using academic language when speaking to students.[111] • learning what types of books students enjoy and encouraging them to read independently.[112] • reading books aloud to students, particularly texts that are too complex for students to read independently.[113]	The teacher surveys her students to determine their interests and tries to include those topics and text types in the classroom library. She has brief weekly conferences with each student about what they are currently reading and what they think about it.

[106] These practices as listed in the NASEM report are: Pre-K–5 Practice 1. Provide Explicit Instruction in Literacy Components; 9–12 Practice 4. Develop Reading and Writing Abilities of ELs Through Text-Based, Analytical Instruction Using a Cognitive Strategies Approach; and 9–12 Practice 5. Provide Direct and Explicit Comprehension Strategy Instruction (for full citation, see footnote 2, last citation). The IES Practice Guide recommendations are: Provide extensive and varied vocabulary instruction (for full citation, see footnote 2, second citation) and Teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities (for full citation, see footnote 2, first citation).

[107] See footnote 2, first citation.

[108] See footnote 2, second citation.

[109] Note that these examples are illustrative and not meant to describe a particular classroom or lesson. One example may encompass multiple practices and any one example does not encompass all practices.

[110] Stahl, S. A., & Nagy, W. E. (2006). *Teaching word meanings*. Routledge; Graves, M. F., August, D., & Mancilla-Martinez, J. (2013). *Teaching vocabulary to English learners.* Teachers College Press.

[111] See footnote 49, first citation.

[112] See footnote 110, last citation.

[113] See footnote 110, last citation.

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples[109]
2. Teach independent word-learning strategies	Independent word-learning strategies are those students use when reading independently and include using context, or looking at the text around a word, and using morphology, or looking at word parts.[114] Practices include • teaching students about morphology (word parts), including root words and affixes.[115] • modeling through thinking aloud how to use context clues to figure out a word's meaning.[116] • providing opportunities for students to use context to figure out a word's meaning, such as asking a text-dependent question about the word or that uses the word.[117]	The class develops an anchor chart of their process for using context clues. The teacher models the process through thinking aloud. He reads a sentence with an unfamiliar word and looks for clues within the sentence and in the surrounding sentences. He makes an educated guess about the unfamiliar word's meaning and then rereads the sentence, substituting his definition for the unfamiliar word.
3. Foster word consciousness	Word consciousness includes both an interest in words and an awareness of words and how they can be used to make meaning.[118] Practices include • helping students refine their writing with a focus on word choice.[119] • lifting sentences or sections when reading texts to call attention to the author's use of a particular word.[120] • playing word games with students.[121]	Students discuss an author's use of description words and the impact that has on how characters are portrayed (e.g., the effect of the word *stubborn* versus *persistent*).

[114] See footnote 49, first citation; see footnote 110, last citation; see footnote 15.
[115] See footnote 49, first citation; see footnote 110, last citation; see footnote 15.
[116] See footnote 49, first citation; see footnote 110.
[117] See footnote 49, first citation; see footnote 110, last citation; see footnote 15.
[118] See footnote 110.
[119] See footnote 49, first citation.
[120] See footnote 49, first citation.
[121] See footnote 49, first citation; see footnote 110; last citation.

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples[109]
4. Explicitly and intensively teach vocabulary words	Students can learn 300–400 words per year from direct instruction when words are carefully chosen, developmentally appropriate, and taught well.[122] Practices include • choosing general academic vocabulary words that can be used widely across different disciplines and support students in building an academic register. [123, 124] • teaching words using a predictable routine across multiple days (Baker et al., 2014).[125] See the next section for a sample vocabulary instructional routine.	A teacher selects four to five words from the text that students are currently working with for his vocabulary focus. He chooses words that are critical for understanding this text but that will also be high-utility for future texts and contexts.

TOOLS AND INSTRUCTIONAL ROUTINES: VOCABULARY

Figure 10 contains an example of an instructional routine that can be used to explicitly and intensively teach general academic vocabulary words. It focuses on the word "miserable" from *The Patchwork Quilt* by Valerie Flournoy.[126] While this text and associated vocabulary words would be taught at the elementary level, the routine can be adapted for use at any grade level and should take no longer than 10 minutes.

Figure 10: Sample Vocabulary Routine for "Miserable"[127]

Step	Description
Set the purpose, then say the word, have students repeat it chorally, write the word and have students write it in their logs, note the relevant morphology and syllable breaks, and briefly situate the word in its original context.	Say: *The word we will learn today is "miserable." Say miserable* (choral response). *Clap the syllables: mis-er-a-ble. How many syllables?* (4) *In the story, The Patchwork Quilt, Jim was miserable because his favorite pants were ruined. In Spanish the word is "miserable."*
Provide a student-friendly definition (an easy-to-understand explanation in kid language). Note cognates. Students write keywords in a vocabulary log.	Say: *When you're miserable, you're very, very unhappy.*

[122] See footnote 110.

[123] General academic vocabulary words are far more likely to appear in written texts than in speech. They are used across many content areas and can appear in all types of texts, although their uses often shift depending on the context of the discipline. For example, the word *distribute*, when used in mathematics, means to multiply the terms within parentheses by another term that is outside the parentheses, while in other contexts it usually means to share things among a group of people. Domain-specific vocabulary words are unique to a specific field of study and far more commonly found in informational text than in literature. For example, the word *photosynthesis* is linked to science while the word *onomatopoeia* is linked to English Language Arts. Domain-specific vocabulary words are often defined by the author within the text or in a side note or glossary and are used repeatedly within the text.

[124] See footnote 49, first citation; see footnote 15.

[125] See footnote 2, first citation.

[126] Flournoy, V. (1985). *The patchwork quilt*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.

[127] Lesson constructed based on the practices presented in (1) *Bringing Words to Life,* by I. L. Beck, M.G. McKeown, and L. Kucan, 2013. (2) "Learning Academic Language Through Science in Two Linguistically Diverse Classrooms," by P. Spycher, 2009, *Elementary School Journal, 109*(4), p. 359–379.

Step	Description
Explain the meaning more fully in the context of the text.	Say: *In The Patchwork Quilt, Tanya's brother Jim was very unhappy because his favorite pair of pants, which had been held together with patches, were not able to be repaired. He was miserable because he would not be able to wear them anymore.*
Provide sentences in which the word is used in other contexts. (Include pictures, movement, or other scaffolds).	Say: *I'm going to give you some other ways that we can use the word miserable:* • A couple of weeks ago, I was taking a walk and it started to rain. I didn't have my car, and I didn't have an umbrella. I had to walk all the way home and it took an hour. I was wet and cold and tired when I got home. I was miserable. • My brother has had a horrible week—his goldfish died, he got a bad grade on a test he studied very hard for, he lost his favorite book, his bike got stolen, he sprained his ankle and can't play soccer, and his best friend is moving far away. My brother is miserable.
Ask the students a guiding question suggesting a scenario or context in which the word is used. Provide think time and have students share using a sentence frame that includes the word.	Ask Discussion Question #1: *What is something that would make you miserable?* Sentence frame: _____ would make me miserable. Examples: • Getting sick with the flu would make me miserable. • Having to walk five miles in the hot sun would make me miserable. Discussion Question #2: *What might make your teacher miserable?* Sentence frame: My teacher might be miserable when _____. • My teacher might be miserable when students are disrespectful to each other. • My teacher might be miserable when students don't do their homework.
Ask short questions about the word to push students to clarify and deepen their understanding.	Say: *I'm going to give you examples. Think about whether or not they would make you miserable. If it is an example of something miserable, say "miserable." If it is not an example, say "not miserable."* • You trip in the mud and fall on your face in front of the whole class. (miserable) • You get to play an extra 20 minutes at recess. (not miserable) • Your teacher gives your class a surprise party. (not miserable) • The air conditioning goes out at school in 100-degree heat and you have to stay at school and work. (miserable)
Remind students what word they learned and encourage them to use it.	Say: *When you go home today, I want you to teach your parents/caretaker the new word we learned. That word is _____.* (Choral response).

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE: COMPREHENSION

Teachers should explicitly draw students' attention to the thinking and strategies that experienced readers use while interpreting complex texts. Consider the sample practices in Figure 11 for comprehension instruction.

Figure 11: Research to Practice

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples[128]
1. Before reading	A. Leverage students' existing background knowledge.[129] B. Focus students' attention on concepts to be developed.[130] – Introduce vocabulary in context.[131]	Students engage with an anticipatory guide before reading that asks them to discuss their opinions on various themes or topics that they will encounter within the text.
2. During reading	A. Provide multiple opportunities for students to collaboratively construct ideas about the text.[132] B. Draw on students' home language knowledge, such as developing cognate awareness.[133] C. Provide visual and multimedia supports.[134] D. Teach students to monitor their understanding and identify and repair breakdowns in understanding.[135] E. Explicitly teach how to use context clues to determine the meaning of unknown words during reading.[136] F. Provide explicit instruction on taking notes and using graphic organizers.[137] G. Model through thinking aloud as you read, making explicit reference to the strategies (e.g., visualizing, predicting) you use.[138] H. Provide multiple opportunities for students to practice comprehension strategies.[139] I. Deconstruct text by focusing on understanding a chunk, reconnecting the chunk to the whole text, and establishing connections between ideas within the text.[140] – Explicitly teach the structure and linguistic features of specific text genres (e.g., narrative, argument, explanation) and how to analyze them.[141]	During the first read of a repeated read-aloud, the teacher stops to explain new words and phrases in context and explains her thinking out loud as she reads. Students read a short memoir in sections, stopping after each section to discuss what they learned about the author and how that connects to what they learned in previous sections. Students engage in a partner read in which they take turns reading a paragraph and then choosing an action to engage in, such as summarizing the paragraph, connecting to other knowledge, or predicting what will happen next.

128 Note that these examples are illustrative and not meant to describe a particular classroom or lesson. One example may encompass multiple practices and any one example does not encompass all practices.

129 See footnote 36, first citation.

130 See footnote 9, last citation.

131 See footnote 49, first citation.

132 See footnote 21.

133 See footnote 49, first citation.

134 See footnote 21; see footnote 2, last citation.

135 See footnote 80.

136 See footnote 49, first citation; see footnote 110, last citation.

137 See footnote 36, first citation.

138 See footnote 21.

139 See footnote 21.

140 See footnote 21; see footnote 9, last citation.

141 See footnote 23, first citation.

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples[128]
3. After reading	A. Explicitly teach high-leverage vocabulary words found in complex texts.[142] B. Make connections to ideas from other texts, to the outside world, or to large conceptual questions.[143] C. Apply newly gained knowledge to novel or problem-solving situations.[144] D. Create products based on new understandings.[145]	After reading a short story, students write a letter from one character to another, incorporating what they know about both characters from the reading.

TOOLS AND INSTRUCTIONAL ROUTINES: COMPREHENSION

When reading complex texts, students may skip linguistically challenging sentences. However, teachers can support students to analyze long, densely packed sentences and connect the language they contain to content area learning by following these steps:

1. Choose a complicated and/or informationally dense sentence to unpack. The sentence should be selected because it is essential to understanding the key ideas in the text along with its linguistic complexity, rather than merely because of difficult vocabulary or grammatical structures.
2. Ask students to discuss what they think the sentence means or what it tells them about the topic, theme, or ideas under study.
3. Divide the sentence into meaningful segments. Focus on dividing the sentence by phrases and clauses rather than parts of speech.
4. To unpack each chunk of text, ask the following questions. Encourage students to talk to a partner before they share with the larger group. Record the students' answers as they share out.
    a. "Who or what is this segment about?"
    b. "What is the 'who' or 'what' doing?"
    c. "What does this mean?"
    d. "What is this part of the text telling us?"
    e. For any pronouns in the segment of text, ask: "What or who does _____ refer to?"
    f. For any conjunctions or text connectives, ask: "What does this word signal to us?"
    g. For vocabulary words in the segment of text, ask: "What does this word mean?"
5. After unpacking the language, return to the core meaning of the sentence by asking questions such as:
    a. *Now*, what do you think this sentence means?
    b. What new information do we now understand about the topic, theme, or idea?
    c. What do we now understand about this topic, theme, or idea that we didn't understand before we unpacked the sentence?

[142] See footnote 2, first citation, see footnote 49, first citation.
[143] See footnote 21.
[144] See footnote 9, last citation.
[145] See footnote 9, last citation.

Note that step 5 is essential. The point of this instructional routine is not to focus on the word or sentence-level meanings in isolation but rather to support students to be able to analyze, understand, and articulate complex ideas.

Figure 12 contains an example of the sentence unpacking procedure outlined above with a sentence from a science textbook.

Figure 12: Unpacking a Complex Sentence[146]

"When silt enters a stream or river where salmon redds are, it covers the eggs, which prevents the cool, oxygenated water from flowing over the eggs, causing them to suffocate."

Text Chunk	Guiding Question to Get Students to Pay Attention to the Chunk	What does it mean? (To be completed collaboratively as students share their thinking)
When silt enters a stream or river	• What does the "when" tell us? • Why does the author use it and what does it mean in this sentence?"	• The "when" tells us that the author is going to tell us about time, when something happens, or its cause and effect. • Silt is the little dirt at the bottom of a lake, or very little pieces of sand (rocks/rock cycle.) • The silt gets into the water.
where salmon redds are,	• Who or what is this chunk of the sentence about? • What is it saying about the redds? • What does this chunk do?	• This chunk tells us about the River: Salmon are in the river. • The redd are salmon nests, where the salmon eggs are.
it covers the eggs	• What is this chunk telling us? • What does "it" refer to? What is happening?	• The silt or dirt gets on top of the eggs.
which prevents the cool, oxygenated water from flowing over the eggs,	• What information does this chunk tell us? • What does prevent mean? • What's happening? • Describe the water. What does it do? How do you know? What words or signals tell us that? • What is preventing the water from flowing over the eggs? Where is that information?	• This is telling us what the silt does. • It's (the silt) too high so the water doesn't move over the eggs. • The water is cold — it keeps the eggs cold. • The water has oxygen. • The oxygen helps the eggs breathe. • The water moves over the eggs all the time (flow). • "Prevent" means the water cannot go over the eggs.
causing them to suffocate.	• What does this chunk tell us? • What causes them to suffocate? • What does "suffocate" mean? • Who suffocates? Who is "them"? • What happens to the eggs? • Why?	• The eggs cannot breathe. • The baby salmon inside the eggs die. • The silt on top of the eggs makes the eggs die. • The eggs die because the silt gets on top of the eggs.

[146] Note. The quote is from Kalman, B. (2007). *The life cycle of a salmon*. New York, NY: Crabtree Publishing Company. This figure is adapted from a lesson created by WestEd during the U.S. Department of Education i3 grant.

As is true of all instructional routines, sentence unpacking can be differentiated for students at various proficiency levels. All students can benefit from balancing teacher modeling with asking students to respond; structured partner conversations before whole-group discussions; and providing linguistic scaffolds, such as formulaic expressions—phrases that help start or link ideas and that can be used in many situations (e.g., "I will read the first chunk, ____. I think it means _____ because ____."). For students at lower levels of English proficiency, educators might also consider strategically partnering students with a language broker, an English-proficient student who speaks the same primary language as an EL child and serves as a bridge between the primary language and English; adding pictures and other visuals next to each chunk of meaning; and repeating the practice in small groups with additional sentences to ensure students feel confident with the structure.

Comprehension instruction is not limited to unpacking complex sentences but must be expanded also to include the unpacking of complex ideas. Teaching form and function in isolation from real, meaningful, discourse-based communication does not produce transformative learning for ELs.[147] This type of generative learning requires opportunities for students to actively pursue a deep understanding of content-area ideas and analytical practices by asking and answering questions, evaluating information, justifying ideas with evidence, and effectively communicating understanding. Teachers can support students in moving from clarifying key details in a text to building deeper textual understanding by carefully crafting and coherently sequencing questions, ensuring students stay focused on the text and come to a gradual understanding of its meaning.[148] Figure 13 explains three question types that support students' explicit and implicit understanding of text along with examples of each type.

Figure 13: Levels of Questions[149]

Question Type	Description of Question Type	Example Questions
On-the-surface questions	This type of question helps students clarify the basics of the text and understand the importance of the details that contribute to understanding the text.	• What is this part mostly about? • What is happening? • Who is involved in what's happening? • When and where is it happening?
Below-the-surface questions	This type of question helps target students' inferential comprehension of the text. These questions probe student thinking to get to the deeper meanings that the author does not explicitly state.	• How does the author let us know____? What words in the text make us think this is? • Why does ____ happen? How do we know? • What if ___? How do we know? • Would ____? How do we know?
Deeper-dive questions	These types of questions help students think more deeply about the meanings the author is trying to convey in the text and build and support students' interpretations of the deeper meanings in the text.	• What do you think the author wants us to understand about ___? • How does the author use special words to show us_____? • How does the author add to/enhance/convey meaning?

[147] See footnote 7.

[148] Student Achievement Partners. (2013). *A guide to creating text dependent questions for close analytic reading.* Achieve the Core.

[149] Note. This table is adapted from a resource created by WestEd during the U.S. Department of Education i3 grant.

Language learning focused on comprehension and communication is most effective when embedded in the context of worthwhile activity. This is best accomplished through participation in carefully structured opportunities to interact with peers like those discussed in the previous section, Practice 3.

HIGHLIGHT OF THE PRACTICE IN ACTION

The following *Highlight of the Practice in Action* is adapted from the work described in English language learners and the new standards. Developing language, content knowledge, and analytical practices in the classroom. Figure 14, included in the *Highlight of the Practice in Action*, is an excerpt from the same source.[150]

This scenario highlights the following sample practices described in Figure 11:

2D. Teach students to monitor their understanding and identify and repair breakdowns in understanding.

2G. Model through thinking aloud as you read, making explicit reference to the strategies (e.g., visualizing, predicting) you use.

The International Newcomer Academy High School in Fort Worth, Texas, receives newly arrived immigrant teenagers for one year before they are transferred to their community schools.[151] At the time of the scenario highlighted here, teachers at the academy concentrated on supporting students to read critically and understand key ideas in complex texts. In doing so, students developed conceptual understandings as they developed English.

In one lesson exemplifying this approach, students read a narrative told from the perspective of a girl on a student trip to Washington, D.C., and described her initial misunderstanding of and eventual friendship with a Muslim-American student who was also on the trip. The teacher wanted to support his students to understand key concepts from the text they were reading: how the student visiting Washington, D.C., learned both about the capital city and diversity.

The teacher found the original text in his entry-level English language development textbook to be superficial, so he revised it to include complex sentences and abundant elaborations to make the reading richer and more accessible.[152] To help students read and discuss the text, the teacher used a clarifying bookmark, an example of which is shown in Figure 14. The clarifying bookmark helps students to think deliberately about what they need to do when they encounter difficulties with a text (e.g., summarize what I read, ask for clarification, use prior knowledge to help me understand) and provides formulaic expressions to help students articulate their points of confusion.[153] The teacher began by modeling the use of the clarifying bookmark with the first paragraph of the text before asking students to try it with their partners.

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[150] See footnote 7.

[151] As noted in footnote 94, the Department's Office for Civil Rights has provided guidance that "EL programs may not unjustifiably segregate students on the basis of national origin or EL status" (p.22). More information is available in a 2015 Dear Colleague Letter.

[152] Text revision can involve (1) strategic amplification (not simplification) of the language of a text through additional linguistic clues and redundancy and (2) adaptation of key structural elements such as chunking the text into meaningful units, adding headings and subheadings between the chunks that alert the student as to what is coming next, and incorporating focus questions to guide the student as s/he reads (Billings, E., & Walqui, A. (2017). *De-mystifying complex texts: What are "complex" texts and how can we ensure ELLs/MLLs can access them?* New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages).

[153] See footnote 9, last citation.

Figure 14: Clarifying Bookmark[154]

I am going to…	What Partner 1 can say…	What Partner 2 can say…
Summarize what I read.	• I can summarize this part by saying … • I think the main idea of this part is …	• I agree with your summary, and I can add … • I disagree with your summary because …
Ask for clarification.	• This part confuses me a little because I don't understand … • I'm not sure what this is about, but I think it might mean …	• Yes, I can help. I think this part means … • I'm confused about this part, too, because …
Use prior knowledge to help me understand.	• I know something about this from … • I have read or heard something about this when …	• This also reminds me of … • I think the main idea of this part is …

The teacher combined learning English with critically approaching texts, emphasizing the understanding of key ideas in the text while also developing students' awareness of what they did not understand. He focused predominantly on meaning and content rather than grammatical or pronunciation accuracy and supported students to develop conceptual understandings and critical reading skills as they engaged in the lesson.

PRACTICE 5: Incorporate regular opportunities to develop written language skills.

DESCRIPTION AND EVIDENCE BASE

To be successful in school and beyond, students must effectively communicate their ideas in writing for varied purposes. As such, college- and career-readiness standards include the expectation that students routinely engage in many discipline-specific writing tasks. As students advance in the grades, writing expectations become more rigorous; students are expected to produce longer, more complex pieces of analytical writing in which they support their ideas with reasons and relevant evidence. Research has demonstrated that providing students with regular, structured opportunities to develop written language skills promotes increased writing ability. For example, in one study, students were taught writing strategies at the word, sentence, and connected-text levels, leading to positive outcomes for ELs in on-demand writing assessments.[155]

Practice 5 is included in *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures* and the IES Practice Guide: *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English*

[154] Note. Adapted from Walqui, A. (2006). Scaffolding instruction for English language learners: A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 9(2), 159-180.

[155] Kim, J., Olson, C. B., Scarcella, R., Kramer, J., Pearson, M., van Dyk, D., & Land, R. (2011). A randomized experiment of a cognitive strategies approach to text-based analytical writing for main-streamed Latino English language learners in grades 6 to 12. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 4*(3), 231–263.

Learners in Elementary and Middle School.[156] The recommendation from the IES Practice Guide references minimal evidence.[157]

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

When students write about their ideas, they not only deepen their understanding but also communicate that understanding to others. In an ideal setting, student writing assignments are linked to academic content and have specific objectives related to the development of academic language. However, students are often assigned a writing task at the end of a unit or after engaging with a particular set of texts under the assumption that, if they understood the content, they are effectively prepared to write about it. To be successful, students need explicit instructional supports. Without them, their writing will often revert to the use of informal, everyday vocabulary and grammar choices.[158] Teachers should plan instruction that explicitly focuses on writing and how to help students make appropriate linguistic choices for the content and text type.

Language structures, forms, and meaning are inextricably linked. Effective communicators make language choices based on the social context in which language is used (e.g., among friends or in a formal academic setting), and the purpose for communication (e.g., to argue or entertain). More specifically, each content area has its own genre and language pattern. The language used in a historical recount is very different from that used in a scientific explanation. Success in school is largely dependent on this understanding; students must be able to manipulate the language patterns characteristic of the text types used in school.[159] ELs should be given abundant opportunities to interact with texts in ways that build an understanding of how academic English functions in key disciplinary genres. Educators can use mentor texts to teach important ideas and concepts and teach how authors make choices about craft and structure—both to conform to the expectations of their target genre and to strengthen their message. By supporting students in analyzing the organizational and linguistic features of content-specific texts, teachers can help them increase comprehension of the texts they read and produce clearer, more cohesive writing.[160]

Students can benefit from instructional routines as they prepare to write, engage in writing, and revise their writing.[161] For many students, particularly ELs, teachers should provide them with scaffolding to develop their writing skills and awareness about how writing works so that they can become effective and informed writers. The practices suggested in Figure 15 articulate an explicit approach to the modeling and development of writing that facilitates students' exposure to and mastery of the genres typical in school.

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[156] This practice, as listed in the NASEM report (for full citation, see footnote 1, last citation) and the IES Practice Guide (for full citation, see footnote 2, first citation), reads: Incorporate regular structured opportunities to develop written language skills.

[157] Two studies met What Works Clearinghouse standards for this recommendation's evidence and the recommendation is therefore based largely on the panel's expertise. IES states that "a minimal evidence rating does not indicate that the recommendation is any less important than other recommendations with a strong or moderate evidence rating" (for full citation, see footnote 2, first citation).

[158] See footnote 2, first citation.

[159] See footnote 5, last citation.

[160] See footnote 64.

[161] See footnote 2, first citation.

Figure 15: Research to Practice[162]

Sample Practice	Practice Implementation	Examples[163]
1. Build knowledge of the topic	Ensure students have enough knowledge of the topic to write about it by A. focusing on immersing students within the content they are learning. B. providing them with rich and varied learning opportunities to engage with the topic and the language used in topic texts. C. helping students gather and organize information through speaking, listening, reading, and research.	In preparing to write a compare-and-contrast report about the 1918 flu and COVID-19 pandemics, students discuss video clips, texts, podcasts, images, and personal experiences. They organize the information they collect in a note-taker that includes information about both pandemics.
2. Model and deconstruct the text type	Focus on the purpose, organizational structure, and linguistic features of the genre in which students will be writing by A. analyzing mentor texts of the same genre. B. teaching the metalanguage (language for talking about language such as 'verb,' 'conjunction,' or 'prepositional phrase') relevant to talking about that genre.	Students work with the teacher and each other to analyze compare-and-contrast reports. In one series of tasks, they focus on and discuss the impact that comparing text connectives (e.g., similarly, likewise) and contrasting text connectives (e.g., but, although) have on the texts' meaning.
3. Jointly construct texts (See the instructional routine on page 43 for more details about joint construction.)	Illustrate the process of writing a text by A. writing a text (or part of a text) with students in the focus genre. B. illustrating the writing process while integrating the structure and linguistic features students learned from the mentor texts they analyzed.	The class works together to write a body paragraph comparing and contrasting where the two pandemics started. The students work with a partner to develop ideas and then share them out with the whole group. The teacher serves as a scribe as the class collaboratively crafts the paragraph.
4. Write independently	Help students write independently from the teacher by A. engaging them in the writing process (drafting, conferencing, revising, etc.) as they write their texts. B. continuing to include collaboration as they work on their writing.	Students draft compare-and-contrast reports. Throughout this process, the teacher carefully plans opportunities for students to check in with each other and engage in writing conferences with the teacher.

Teachers can analyze students' writing to determine what they can achieve and where they need further support. They should think systematically about what students' writing tells them about their knowledge, skills, and abilities and their future learning needs.

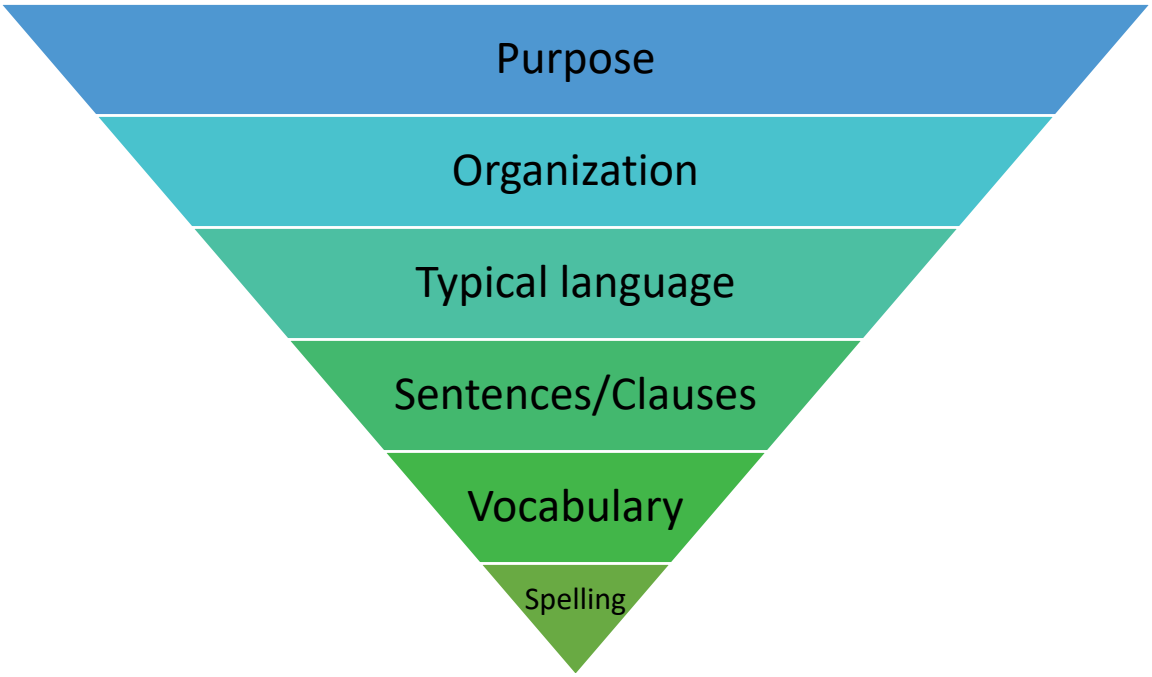
It is critical for teachers to design instruction for and give feedback to ELs on the essential elements of their writing. In the inverted pyramid in Figure 16, the most important ideas are at the top, where language and content learning intersect, and the less important ideas are toward the bottom. A focus on meaning and content—how the ideas in the writing conform to the purpose of the genre and the

[162] Note. Adapted from *Scaffolding Language Scaffolding Learning: Teaching English Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom*, by P. Gibbons, 2015. Copyright 2015 by Heinemann.

[163] Note that these examples are illustrative and not meant to describe a particular classroom or lesson. One example may encompass multiple practices and any one example does not encompass all practices.

assignment—should come first. Only then does the shift in focus on instruction, modeling, and feedback move to how the content was expressed, gradually getting to precision and accuracy of grammar, vocabulary, and conventions.[164]

Figure 16: Feedback Priorities[165]



Too often, writing instruction for ELs emphasizes sentence construction, vocabulary and word choice, and spelling and punctuation. In the holistic top-down view of writing above, teachers focus first on the big picture before moving on to the more formal aspects of language.[166]

HIGHLIGHT OF THE PRACTICE IN ACTION

The following *Highlight of the Practice in Action* is adapted from the work described in "The Writing-Centered Classroom."[167]

Rowell Elementary School in Fresno, California, serves grades K to six students, 39 percent of whom were identified ELs at the time of the highlighted scenario.[168] To support students' writing development, teachers focused on two key aspects of writing instruction:

1. Demystifying how language works in different genres so students have the tools to communicate their ideas across content areas, in a variety of genres, and to a range of audiences.

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[164] Walqui-van Lier, A., & Hernandez, A. (2001). *A scaffold for change: Professional development for teachers of English learners*. San Diego County Office of Education.

[165] Note. Adapted from A Scaffold for Change: Professional Development for Teachers of English Learners, by A. Walqui-van Lier and A. Hernandez, 2001. Copyright 2001 by the San Diego County Office of Education.

[166] See footnote 23, first citation; see footnote 9, last citation.

[167] See footnote 64.

[168] California Department of Education. (n.d.). 2018-19 Enrollment by English Language Acquisition Status (ELAS) and Grade.

2. Making sure writing is authentic and relevant to students' lives, what they are learning, and the world around them so they can deeply connect with subject matter content and see how their writing can impact the world.

Students were often asked to explore the social purpose, organization, and linguistic choices authors made to create meaning in the text. In one unit, fifth-grade students learned about threats to local owl populations while analyzing the language of explanation texts. A sampling of their learning activities includes

- reading and discussing informational texts about owls to gain core conceptual understandings.
- investigating the owl's role in the food chain by engaging in owl pellet dissection and taking field notes in their science journals.
- engaging in a text jumble game in which they reassemble sections of an explanation text based on their knowledge of the structure and organization of explanations.
- identifying cohesive language that helps explanation texts flow together (e.g., text connectives, referencing, and summarizing nouns like "these actions").
- writing explanation texts about threats to owl populations.

This scenario highlights the following sample practices described in Figure 15:

1. Make sure students have enough knowledge of the topic to write about it by
   A. immersing them in the content they are learning.
   B. providing them with rich and varied learning opportunities to engage with the topic and the language used in texts about that topic.
   C. helping students gather and organize information through speaking, listening, reading, and researching.
2. Focus on the purpose, organizational structure, and linguistic features of the genre that students will be writing by
   A. analyzing mentor texts of the same genre.

Activities like these helped students understand that effective writing is not formulaic or about following a set of rules; it involves making informed decisions about language use based on the purpose of communicating.

TOOLS AND INSTRUCTIONAL ROUTINES

A joint construction of writing can serve as an important scaffold for students before they engage in independent writing. Through joint construction, students can rehearse the language forms, structures, and functions they have learned before incorporating them into written work. In a joint construction, the teacher scribes and facilitates the conversation while students share their ideas.

Joint Construction Steps:[169]

1. **Brainstorm:** Ask students to engage in a collaborative discussion about what they know about the topic and their ideas about the prompt.
2. **Review structure and language:** Review the organizational structure and linguistic features of the type of text about which students are writing. (This is not the time for instruction in these areas but rather reminders about what has already been taught.)

[169] Spycher, P. (2017). Scaffolding writing through the "teaching and learning cycle." WestEd.

3. **Joint construction:**
    a. Ask students questions according to the topic and genre of text. Sample questions include:
        i. How should we start our text?
        ii. What is our position statement/claim?
        iii. What word could we use here? How can we be more precise?
        iv. How can we phrase that? Is there another way to say that?
        v. Could you say more?
        vi. How could we expand that idea to _____?
        vii. How could we condense that idea?
        viii. How could we connect those ideas?
        ix. What evidence can we use? Why is that information important?
        x. Is that how we want to sequence our ideas?
    b. Provide positive feedback while prompting students for clarification or detail (e.g., "I think we need to connect these two ideas—how can we do that?").
    c. As students share ideas, write the text in a visible location, such as under a document camera or on chart paper. Model the draft-writing process by crossing out, adding, and/or rearranging words and phrases.

In addition to a valuable writing exercise, the jointly constructed text can now serve as a model text to support students' independent writing.

Additional Resources

The following resources informed the selection of the practices discussed in this report and can be consulted to understand and implement these practices.

- National Academies Press: *English Learners in STEM Subjects* (2018)
- National Academies Press: *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures* (2017)
- National Academies Report Series Topic Brief: Integrating Language Into Early Childhood Education (2020)
- National Academies Report Series Topic Brief: *Integrating Language While Teaching Mathematics* (2021)
- National Academies Report Series Topic Brief: *Integrating Language While Teaching STEM* (2020)
- What Works Clearinghouse IES Practices Guide: *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades* (2007)

- What Works Clearinghouse IES Practices Guide: *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School* (2014)

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