EL
EXCELLENCE
EVERY DAY

I. Essentials

II. Engage

III. Support

IV. Apply

TONYA WARD SINGER
FOREWORD BY JEFF ZWIERS

EL Excellence Every Day

The Flip-To Guide for Differentiating Academic Literacy

First Edition

Tonya Ward Singer

Foreword by Jeff Zwiers

A Joint Publication

CORWIN   *learningforward*

Practical emphasis on mindsets helps teachers create powerful learning environments.

iStock.com/as

CHAPTER 2

ESSENTIAL MINDSETS

"How teachers perceive their students and themselves in relation to them, determine, to a large extent, what the educational experience of students will be."

—Noma LeMoine (2007, p. 6)

MINDSETS MATTER

I start this book with mindsets because they matter more than any strategy.

Seriously.

I can teach at a high level, actively engage students, and use awesome strategies, but none of this will make any difference if I do not value my English learner (EL) students and believe they will succeed.

18   EL Excellence Every Day

Bold headings facilitate navigation from vision to reflection to action.

VALUE ENGLISH LEARNERS' ASSETS

VISION: Ensure ELs (and all students) feel affirmed and valued as members of the learning community. Build trusting relationships with ELs that foster safety and belonging, which are foundational to academic risk taking. Value students' home cultures, languages, and life experiences. Help students make intentional connections to their background experiences and home language(s) to deepen their learning.

WHY THIS MINDSET MATTERS

The purpose of this mindset is to ensure every student feels valued and a sense of belonging at school. A sense of belonging is a core psychological need (Maslow, 1943) and impacts student motivation and academic achievement (Goodenow, 1993; Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Without a sense of belonging, human brains go into fight-or-flight mode. Zaretta Hammond (2015) describes the impact of a perceived threat on the brain as an *amygdala hijack*: "When the amygdala sounds its alarm with cortisol, all other cognitive functions such as learning, problem solving or creative thinking stop" (p. 40).

In other words, a student's sense of belonging in a classroom physiologically makes or breaks the learning process. Valuing ELs to foster their sense of belonging in your classroom community is more important than any strategy in this book.

"We cannot downplay students' need to feel safe and valued in the classroom."

—Zaretta Hammond (2015, p. 47)

The symptoms of a student not feeling valued vary by individual—and are often internal. That a student doesn't feel a part of the classroom community can look to the teacher like lack of motivation or lack of initiative for learning. When a student is silent, opts to follow rather than lead, avoids challenge, or gives up quickly, there can be many reasons for such behaviors that are not about the individual student but about the climate we have created within our classroom for the student to thrive. When ELs exhibit such behaviors in an English-dominant classroom, reflect: Do my EL students feel a sense of safety and belonging in our community of scholars? Do they feel affirmation for who they are as individuals, for their unique life experiences, and for the cultural and linguistic assets they bring? What shifts will I make to ensure every EL feels a strong sense of belonging and value in my classroom learning culture?

WAYS WE MIGHT GET STUCK

Valuing EL assets often means valuing what we don't understand. This can be tough as it requires us to see beyond what we know and our own cultural sense of "normal" to value what is "normal" from others' point of view. This requires both humility to be aware of what we don't know and empathy to find value in how others experience and view the world. We can get stuck easily when we:

- **MISS OUR OWN CULTURAL LENS:** We all have cultural norms and values that are shaped by and shape our reality. These are the lens through which we interpret what is right, normal, just, unjust, important, unimportant, and more. To value students' diverse

20   EL Excellence Every Day

3.3 SMALL-GROUP CONVERSATION STRUCTURES

WHAT AND WHY?

Small-group conversation structures are great for engaging a table group or any small group of students in a collaborative conversation. Unlike in a partner conversation, where the student listening will always be the next to talk, in a small-group conversation there are many possible dynamics for turn taking and building up ideas together. Use small-group conversations when you want to add variety or complexity to how students collaborate to discuss ideas.

STRUCTURES FOR SMALL-GROUP CONVERSATIONS

Numbered Heads: Have students at each table count up from one so that each student has a number (1, 2, 3, etc.). Ask a question to elicit discussion. When time is up, select a number and have the student with that number from each table report to the class. This is a go-to structure to give every student an accountable role while leaving conversation dynamics open-ended. A student can opt to be silent during the small-group conversation and still have an important role to listen and be prepared to report for the group.

Flip-to engagement strategies help you increase academic conversations and active student participation in any lesson.

Numbered Heads in Context: After reading and annotating a text about ocean pollution, a teacher uses the numbered heads strategy to have students to discuss the effects of human pollution on the ocean environment. First, students discuss the effects in their small groups. Next, the teacher spins a projected spinner to randomly choose which number will report to the whole group. She calls on number 3, and has each student with that number show a silent thumbs-up or thumbs-down if ready to share. If any thumbs are down, she gives the table groups an extra minute to prepare the reporting student to share. Student number 3 from each table then reports an effect of ocean pollution to the group.

Talking Chips: Ask a question to elicit discussion. Each member receives the same number of chips (plastic markers, pennies, etc.). Each time a member contributes to the conversation, he or she tosses a chip into the center of the table. Once individuals have used up their chips, they no longer speak. Continue discussion until all members have exhausted their chips. This structure helps students build awareness about how often they speak in a group and gives them a tool to ensure everyone has a voice in the conversation. Try it occasionally for this purpose, then drop the structure to create room for the natural flow of authentic conversations fueled by engaging topics and texts.

Pass the Stick: At each table group, students pass a "talking stick" or other class-adopted object to designate the speaker. When holding the stick, each student takes a turn contributing to the conversation. This is the most structured approach for ensuring every student has a turn, and it's valuable for accountable participation. The flip side of this structure is it does not encourage students to respond to one another in a natural conversation.

Pass the Stick in Context: To build community, use the pass the stick strategy with getting-to-know-you questions like "What is one thing people may not know about you?" or "What is your favorite song?" Pass the talking stick and give all students an opportunity to share or pass when the stick comes to them. Start the year asking surface-level questions about favorites, and build toward deeper questions to check in with students' emotions, reactions to a current event, or priorities in the world. To review key concepts at the end of any lesson, use the pass the stick strategy to have students reflect in small groups, "What is one thing you want to remember from this lesson?" If you are reading this chapter with colleagues, try the pass the stick strategy to each reflect, "What is one strategy you want to try in your classroom?"

Concise directions and relevant examples make research-informed strategies easy to integrate into everyday teaching.

Color-coded tabs and margins help you flip to what you want when you need it: Essentials (Blue), Engagement Strategies (Purple), Support Strategies (Orange) and Lesson-Ready Resources for Academic Literacy Goals (Green).

NOTES

Flip-to support strategies help you build academic language with academic literacy.

Strong visuals model impactful strategies in relevant literacy contexts.

Emphasis on using (and losing) scaffolds strategically helps to accelerate high-level learning and foster student independence.

6.1 LINGUISTIC FRAMES

WHAT AND WHY?

A linguistic frame, also known as a sentence frame or response frame, is a partially completed sentence or paragraph that students "fill in" in their oral or written responses to a task. A linguistic frame guides students to use a specific sentence structure and vocabulary when they converse with peers or write in response to a task.

EXAMPLES OF LINGUISTIC FRAMES

I disagree with the idea that _____ because _____.

That's an interesting point. However, you might consider _____.

I agree with your idea that _____. However, I propose _____.

In the article "_____," the author argues that _____.

The most important message in _____ by _____ is _____.

WHEN TO USE LINGUISTIC FRAMES

Use linguistic frames when they help students deepen their thinking and precision with language. Don't use frames when they limit student thinking or language use. Flip to Chapters 9–12 for specific examples of linguistic frames you can use to scaffold students' conversations before, during, and after reading academic texts.

Differentiation charts show how to personalize supports to reach students across all levels of language proficiency and literacy learning.

EXAMPLES OF HOW TO DIFFERENTIATE USING LINGUISTIC FRAMES

	Steps to Use the Scaffold	Example
BRIDGING — Light or No Support	Engage without linguistic frames. Listen closely to language choices. Only as needed, provide frames or word banks that elevate and extend students' use of academic language to express what they have already communicated in their own words.	In a language arts task to justify inferences with text evidence, a teacher listens to student conversations. She notices that students make claims and read text evidence but don't often explain the evidence. She provides frames and encourages this next-level skill: When the author wrote "_____," this shows that _____. The quote "_____" reveals that _____.
EXPANDING — Moderate Support	1. Post *multiple* response frames that are appropriate for the communication task. 2. Introduce the frames and read them together. 3. Listen as students talk with peers, and provide modeling or feedback as needed. 4. When you hear students communicate effectively without using the frames, create new frames to validate and illuminate these additional possibilities for language use.	In a language arts task to justify inferences with text evidence, a teacher posts four frame options for students: One example from the text that demonstrates this is _____. Here on page ___ the author wrote "_____." This shows that _____. I know this because _____.
EMERGING — Substantial Support	1. Write one linguistic frame. 2. Read it aloud while pointing to each word. 3. Model one correct response orally and write it under the linguistic frame. 4. Guide students in chorally reading the frame and the model. 5. Structure think-pair-share to have students each create and share their own sentence using the frame. 6. If needed, provide a word bank or bank of phrases students can use to complete the frame.	In an explicit language lesson with emerging ELs, the teacher says, "Today we are going to learn to ask permission in the classroom using the question frame 'May I please _____?' Let's read it together. One question we ask in the classroom [hold up a dull pencil] is 'May I please sharpen my pencil?' Let's read the question together." Students read and say chorally with the teacher, "May I please sharpen my pencil?" Then, the teacher says, "Now you make a request to a partner using the frame 'May I please _____?'"

11.2 JUSTIFY CLAIMS WITH TEXT EVIDENCE

PURPOSE: I support my claims with evidence to strengthen the power of my voice and help others understand my perspective. Justifying claims with evidence is a skill that helps me speak and write with influence in and beyond school.

EXPECT

What students will know and be able to do:

	LITERACY GOALS	LANGUAGE FOR SUCCESS
Support	I can **support** my thinking with evidence and explanation.	I can explain my ideas in conversations with peers and also ask questions to encourage peers to justify their ideas (e.g., "How do you know?").
	I can quote or paraphrase relevant **text evidence**.	I can write with expository organization to support my claims with evidence and explanation.
	I can **explain** how the text evidence supports my inference.	I can use transitions and referents to connect ideas across sentences.

Literacy and language objectives align with college and career readiness standards.

ENGAGE

What students do to learn and demonstrate current understandings about justifying a claim: Use this routine every time students reread a text to make inferences, draw conclusions, or respond to any open-ended task that requires students to make and justify claims. Watch students during these tasks as a formative assessment before, during, and beyond teaching the skill.

Use a three-step task to engage students:

1. *REREAD:* After reading a text (or excerpt) for literal comprehension, students reread it to make inferences or draw conclusions. This can be a broad task (e.g., making an inference) or a focused task guided by a specific question (e.g., "What is the theme?").
2. *ANNOTATE:* Write inferences in the margin or on a self-stick note. Underline clues in the text that support the ideas.

High-level tasks help you put the goal into action to engage all students and gather formative data.

246   EL Excellence Every Day

FOCUS	CONVERSATION PROMPTS	POSSIBLE LINGUISTIC FRAMES
Support With Text Evidence	How do you know? What evidence supports your idea? What clues gave you that idea?	One clue that shows me this is _____. I know this because I read _____. One detail that **shows** this is _____. The author **demonstrates this point** when (paraphrase text evidence).
Explain Your Thinking	What do you mean by that? Please explain how that evidence supports your idea.	This quote shows that _____. This means that _____. The quote "_____" **illustrates** that _____. It is **evident** that (repeat claim) when (describe a specific event or detail in text).

More than 200 prompts and linguistic scaffolds facilitate academic conversations that deepen language and literacy learning.

WORD BANKS

Nouns to Reference a Text

text	poem
passage	stanza
story	line
paragraph	

Every literacy goal includes a rich menu of lesson-ready supports and a personalization guide to help you reach every unique learner every day.

SCAFFOLD EXTENDED CONVERSATIONS

To foster extended conversations and make supporting ideas central to your task, post questions partners can ask one another to elicit more information, such as "How do you know?" and "Tell me more." Flip to "Linguistic Frames for Conversations" (3.8, p. 70) for many examples of prompts and questions students can ask. Read these chorally with students and encourage them to use these in their conversations to ask one another for evidence and explanation to support their ideas.

CORWIN
A SAGE Publishing Company

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

18 19 20 21 22 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

I spend a lot of time in schools with large numbers of English learners. The range and depth of learning in these settings can be enormous. And yet, as most teachers know all too well, the challenges can also be enormous. Teaching English learners who have widely varying collages of interests, backgrounds, and language proficiencies is the most challenging thing a person can do. We need resources that clearly and quickly help us to meet these diverse instructional needs every day in every classroom. *EL Excellence Every Day: The Flip-to Guide to Differentiate Academic Literacy* is such a resource.

This guide offers a suite of practices and strategies that help teachers to maximize the learning of language and content by English learners and the rest of the class. Powerful instruction, however, cannot thrive without a solid foundation of mindsets and principles, which are clearly described and connected throughout this guide. Mindsets include viewing students' differences as assets rather than liabilities, expecting excellence from every student, and continually reflecting on how students are learning as a result of instruction. Principles include engaging students to intrinsically motivate authentic learning, supporting the development of students' academic conversation skills, and strategically differentiating the scaffolding of language and content learning. While these ideas could fit into several books, *EL Excellence Every Day* adeptly weaves them together in this highly practical guide for real and busy teachers.

Many new content and language standards have entered the scene, all of which place extra high language and content demands on English learners. The increased emphasis on using more complex texts, for example, means that we must sharpen and strengthen our teaching practices for helping students understand and use the language in challenging texts for constructing meaning. Language develops when students engage in learning activities that encourage the transforming ideas and applying them in new ways, engage students in meaningful dialogue with one another, and ask them to be critical consumers of information. This guide provides clear ways for designing and supporting such activities, and it describes how to formatively assess student work in order to know where students are and where they need to go with respect to language and content.

When we attempt to address the complex challenges of teaching diverse English learners across a wide range of grade levels, content areas, and students, there are no simple solutions. But over time we can and must build up unique solutions for each of our settings, based on research, reflection, trial and error, and expert resources. Fortunately, *EL Excellence Every Day* is an expert resource that helps us to clarify the challenges and sculpt the solutions that are needed across a variety of classrooms.

—Jeff Zwiers

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Where do you get such great ideas?" a teaching colleague once asked me. "In meetings like these," I said. "From teachers like you." Thousands of classroom teachers, administrators, students, parents, educational researchers, and authors make up the ecosystem that shapes my thinking and book. I am grateful to all of you for your influence and voices in this important conversation.

I especially want to thank systems leaders and teachers across the United States and Canada whom I am honored to serve in my consulting work, and my former colleagues and students in Houston, Redwood City, South San Francisco, and Roseland school districts. Our collective work has fueled both my sense of the urgency to write this guide and my clarity about how to shape the contents to realize our shared vision for EL students.

A humble thank you to the many authors and researchers I cite within this work. Keep researching and writing, as I love learning from you. Jeff Zwiers, thank you for influencing my work on conversations, and for your beautiful foreword. Thank you, Zaretta Hammond, for your insightful feedback and collaboration.

Bill Singer, Erin Earnshaw, and Kim Edwards, thank for opening your classroom doors to ongoing co-teaching and photo shoots. Thank you to Erin and her student Ariel Woodson for the exemplar in this text. To my friend Penny Hastings, thank you for helping create beautiful anchor charts.

To all reviewers named on the next pages, thank you for your valuable insights throughout the writing process. Thank you, also, to Venus Cenizal, Kim Nguyen, Ann DuBois, Dr. Marlene Bautista, and Cristina Huizar for your contributions to our focus group at the C.A.B.E. conference.

Thank you Goretti Barragan Hamlin and Angelica Salas, for your feedback on my Spanish dedication. Like many ELs, I especially appreciate peer feedback and encouragement before I take the risk to publish in a second language.

To my editor, Dan Alpert, I appreciate your editorial expertise and your heartfelt presence that always inspires me to be my best self. Thank you to my dream team at Corwin and SAGE: Maura Sullivan, Lucas Schleicher, Scott Van Atta, Mia Rodgriguez, Melinda Mason, and Amy Schroller, for collaborating to bring all the elements of design and content into synthesis. Betsy Lane, thank you for being my go-to copy editor and editing my book proposal, the catalyst for this work!

I appreciate Lisa Tamayo, Deborah Sandweiss, Caroline Hinkle, Taya Hall, Clare Venet, and my community of friends and family for fueling me and helping me find balance. Bill Singer, I am grateful for our shared adventures growing together as multilingual learners, teachers, and parents of our beautiful boys. Alec and Mateo, les amo muchisimo. Thank you for reminding me every day that each student in our schools is precious and unique.

PUBLISHER'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Para Humberto Ballesteros y Juana Cruz Pérez.

Cuando llegué a México de otro país y cultura,

su familia siempre me hizo sentir como en casa como parte de la familia.

Gracias por inspirar el trabajo que me ha apasionado.

For Humberto Ballesteros and Juana Cruz Pérez,

When I arrived in Mexico from another country and culture,

your family always made me feel at home like part of the family.

Thank you for inspiring my life's work.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tonya Ward Singer is a language and literacy consultant who helps K–12 educators transform teaching for equity and EL achievement. Teachers and administrators describe her work as groundbreaking, dynamic, practical, relevant, and impactful.

Tonya's bestselling book, *Opening Doors to Equity: A Practical Guide to Observation-Based Professional Learning,* empowers teachers to engage in courageous, job-embedded professional learning. *Opening Doors to Equity* was a Learning Forward Book Club selection and recognized by the U.S. Department of Education via Teach to Lead's Leadership Lab.

Tonya has co-authored EL and literacy curricula for major publishers and publishes creative writing in literacy journals and performs on the spoken-word stage. With more than 20 years of experience in education, Tonya has taught at multiple grade levels and served districts as a reading specialist, an EL specialist, and a facilitator of transformative professional learning.

A parent, poet, and lover of the High Sierras, Tonya is fluent in Spanish and can negotiate the price of a tomato in Mandarin Chinese. Connect with Tonya on Twitter @TonyaWardSinger or via her website www.tonyasinger.com.

SECTION I

ESSENTIALS
FOR EL EXCELLENCE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Every teacher is a language teacher . . . We need to bring all teachers to the table when it comes to designing curricula, assessments, and instruction for ELLs."

—Leslie Nabors Oláh (2008)

WHY THIS BOOK?

How do I reach every child? I am driven by this question, and have been since the very first day I became a teacher decades ago. I teach because I want to make a difference. I teach because I love the "aha" moments when a student suddenly understands or excels in a new way.

No matter what I teach or who is in my class, there is always a universal truth: Students are unique. Students come to me with a wide range of interests, abilities, strengths, and

challenges. They learn in different ways. No one lesson or strategy is ever the perfect solution for every child.

This is what I love about teaching. It's also what can make me feel overwhelmed when I am the only teacher in a whole class of students trying to personalize teaching for every child. The need to differentiate teaching is real in any classroom, whether or not we have English learners (ELs) in our class.

For that reason, you will find the strategies in this book valuable for helping you reach *all* students.

That said, this book is about more than just good teaching. It specifically empowers you with the most effective, research-based instructional practices to help you ensure ELs thrive with rigorous academic language and literacy learning.

HELPING EVERY TEACHER EXCEL TEACHING ELS

Three in four U.S. classrooms have at least one student who is an English learner. Even in schools with EL specialists, ELs spend the majority of their instructional day with core teachers. EL excellence with rigorous content learning requires *every* teacher to be an effective teacher for ELs.

In my international work as a literacy specialist, EL specialist, and professional learning leader, I see a need for what I have created in this book. It is a breakthrough guide, unlike any EL strategy book to date. Here are four reasons why:

- **PRACTICAL:** Unlike other EL books that focus on theory, this book emphasizes daily action. The flip-to organization helps you apply research-based approaches to everyday teaching.

- **RIGOROUS:** Unlike EL resources that water down academic expectations, this book helps you raise expectations while personalizing teaching to ensure ELs (and all students) thrive.

- **INTEGRATED:** Unlike EL resources that emphasize EL strategies in isolation, this book helps you integrate EL strategies into core literacy routines to meet college and career readiness standards.

- **STRATEGIC:** Unlike EL resources that prescribe strategies as the solution, this book helps you use (and lose) strategies in a reflective process of inquiry about impact.

Based on your role, you will appreciate this book for different reasons.

CORE TEACHERS: You want to find the strategies you need, when you need them. I wrote this flip-to guide to make your job easier. It doesn't add to your plate but helps you amplify the impact of what you teach every day.

EL TEACHERS: This book helps you build academic language directly aligned to the types of listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks that are often most challenging for ELs in core classrooms. If you co-teach and collaborate with core teachers, this book

helps you get specific together about goals, where ELs are in relationship to those goals, and what specific strategies to use to ensure their success.

TEACHER LEADERS AND COACHES: You want to empower your colleagues with strategies and pedagogy to raise student achievement. Use Sections I–III to build teaching capacity in strategies to value, engage, and support ELs with rigorous learning. Use Section IV as a flip-to reference to address your highest-priority literacy goals.

ADMINISTRATORS: You want to prevent long-term ELs. You want to increase student engagement, raise literacy achievement, and ensure all learners thrive with collaboration, critical thinking, and other 21st century competencies. Engage teachers in using Chapters 2–7 to build essential mindsets and strategies to engage and support ELs. Use Section IV as a go-to resource to address high-priority goals for EL achievement through rigorous expectations, active engagement, data-driven differentiation, and reflection to refine teaching for impact.

TEACHER EDUCATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: You want to ensure every new educator is fully prepared to thrive teaching English learners and Standard English learners. Use this book to help preservice teachers translate theories of language acquisition into classroom-based mindsets and actions. Facilitate collaborative opportunities for teacher candidates to use this resource to co-plan, co-teach, co-observe, and co-reflect on impact to build both their acumen with strategies *and* their self-direction as lifelong learners to always use formative data to refine teaching.

WHO ARE ELS?

An English learner is a student who speaks another language besides English and has yet to demonstrate full proficiency in English on local measures of English proficiency. Students classified as "EL" are as diverse and different from one another as any students in your classroom. ELs come to school with a wide range of home languages, cultures, and proficiency levels in English. Some ELs speak no English; others have high levels of oral proficiency and only need support with academic language and literacy to thrive in schools. Other terms we often use to communicate the diversity within school EL populations include the following:

- **NEWCOMER:** An EL new to U.S. schooling with emerging English proficiency.

- **RECLASSIFIED FLUENT ENGLISH PROFICIENT (R-FEP):** An EL student who was reclassified to fluent based on local criteria including multiple measures such as an English proficiency exam, writing samples, standardized tests, and/or teacher discretion.

- **LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNER (LTEL):** A student who has been in U.S. schools for six or more years and has not been reclassified to R-FEP. Note this definition varies by region. LTELs, and students at risk of becoming LTELs, make up a significant percentage of the EL population in many regions. In California, for example, where LTEL is measured as 7+ years in California schools, 74 percent of secondary ELs are LTELs (Californians Together, 2015).

- **STANDARD ENGLISH LEARNER (SEL):** A student fluent in an English dialect with rules of grammar and syntax that are different from Standard English. African American Vernacular English, Chicano English, and Hawaiian Pidgin are three examples of primary languages that are cultural and linguistic assets for SELs in the United States.

- **STUDENT WITH LIMITED OR INTERRUPTED FORMAL EDUCATION (SLIFE):** This term refers to a small percentage of the EL population who have limited or interrupted formal

schooling in their native language and are below grade level in most academic skills. Reasons for limited formal schooling vary widely by students who may be refugees, migrant students, or students who have had limited opportunities for schooling in their home country due to location, poverty, or other variables.

- **SEAL OF BILITERACY STUDENTS:** Many schools, districts, and states in the United States now award a Seal of Biliteracy to recognize students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation. Both ELs and students who begin school only speaking English can strive for this accomplishment! Dual-language learners are students learning in two languages on a path toward biliteracy.

WHAT IS ENGLISH PROFICIENCY?

English proficiency is what we call the continuum of how well a student understands and communicates in English. Imagine a color spectrum from light blue to medium blue to dark blue with every subtle shade of blue in between. Language proficiency is a similar concept, only instead of color it is a continuum of many subtle shades from no comprehension or use of the language to full academic proficiency to communicate effectively listening, speaking, reading, and writing in any context.

How we measure or label English proficiency varies by school district, region, and country. For ease of communication in this book, I'll refer to stages of English proficiency as three general levels:

- Emerging
- Expanding
- Bridging

If these terms are different from the ones you use, don't worry, as the general concept of chunking proficiency into broad stages is the same. Figure 1.1 is a quick guide to help you connect terms for proficiency levels in this book to ones you might use.

FIGURE 1.1

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY LEVELS

This Book	California ELD Standards	WIDA	ELPA21	Texas ELPS/TELPAS
Bridging	Bridging	Reaching	5	
		Bridging	4	Advanced High
Expanding	Expanding	Expanding	3	Advanced
		Developing		
Emerging	Emerging	Emerging	2	Intermediate
		Entering	1	Beginning

Note: ELD = English Language Development, ELPA21 = English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century, ELPS = Texas English Language Proficiency Standards, and TELPAS = Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System. WIDA is the name of the organization formerly known as World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment.
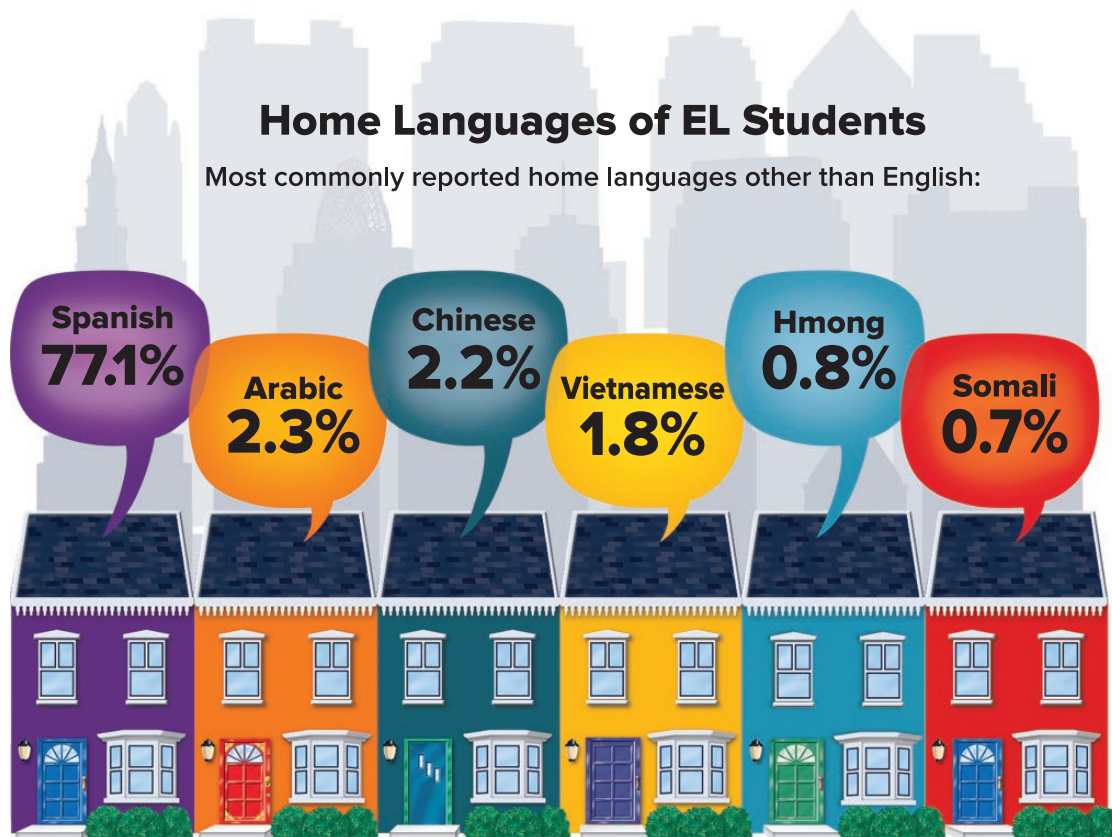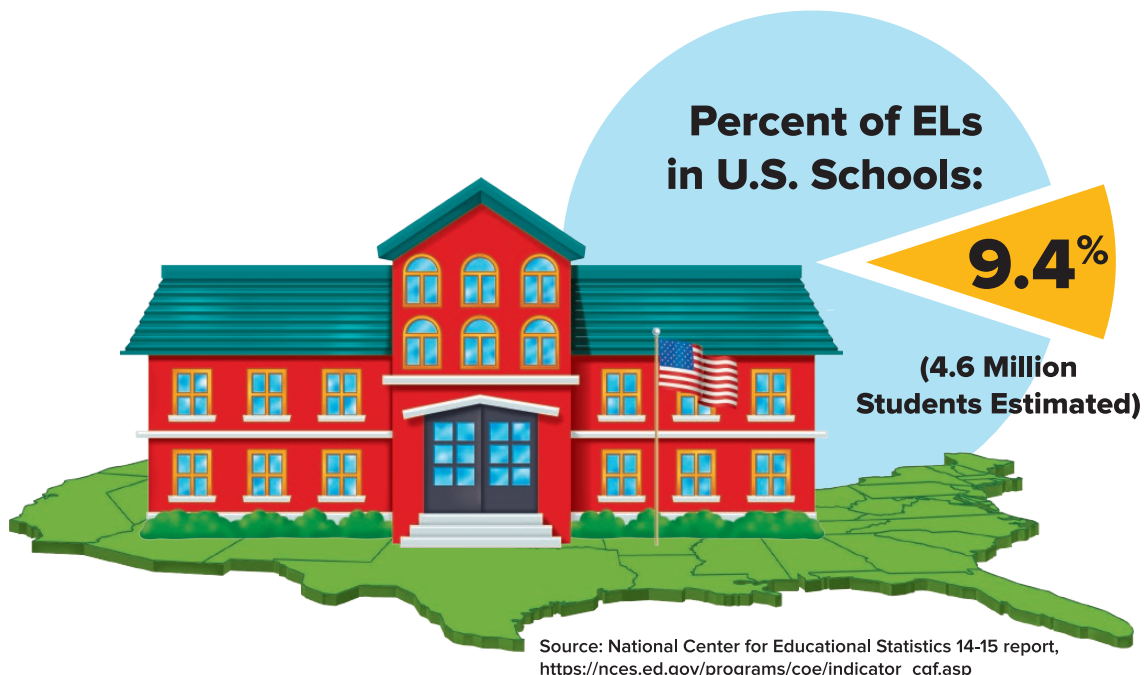
Percent of ELs in U.S. Schools:

9.4%

(4.6 Million Students Estimated)

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics 14-15 report, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp

Home Languages of EL Students

Most commonly reported home languages other than English:

Spanish 77.1%

Arabic 2.3%

Chinese 2.2%

Vietnamese 1.8%

Hmong 0.8%

Somali 0.7%

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics 14-15 report, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp

Birthplace of EL Students in U.S. Schools

KEY: Born in USA | Foreign Born

82% 6-12 **18%**

55% K-5 **45%**

Source: Cited as a national estimate on this Public Policy Institute of CA article from a Texas study Flores, S. M., Batavola, J. & Fix, M. (2012). The Educational Trajectories of English Language Learners in Texas (Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute.)
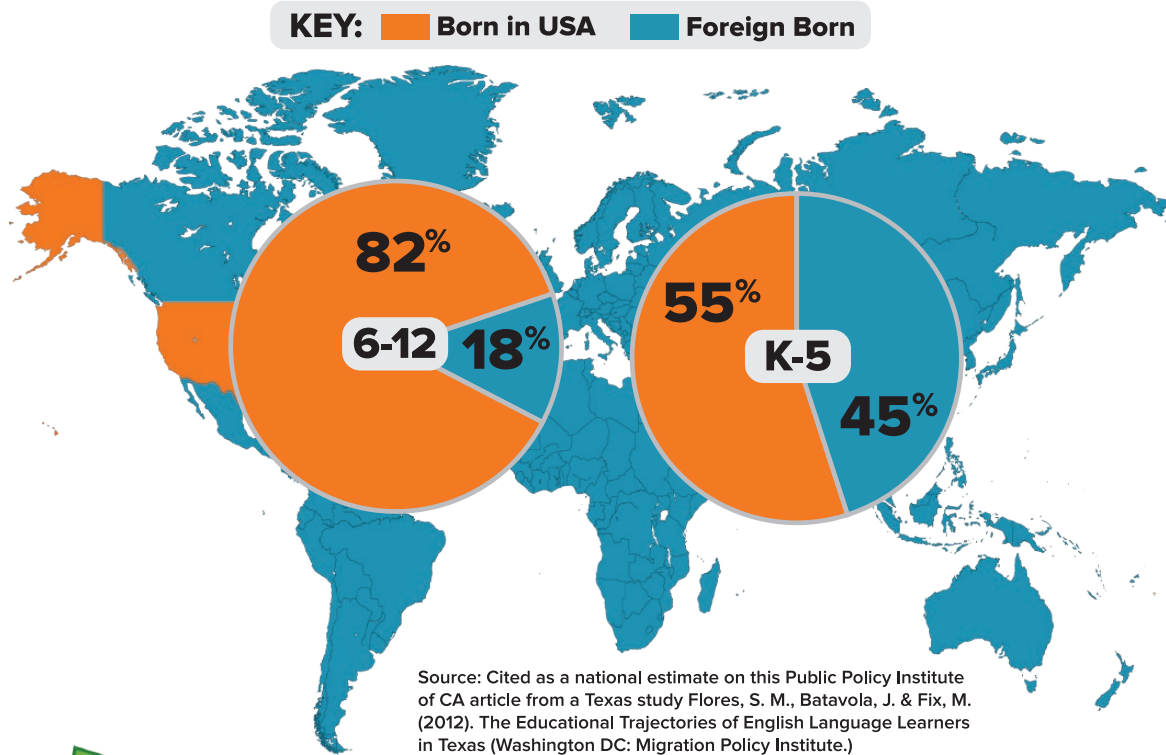
Percent of EL Students
(6th–12th grades in California)
Identified as Long-Term English Learners:

74%

Footnote: California is the first state to quantify the Long-Term EL population.
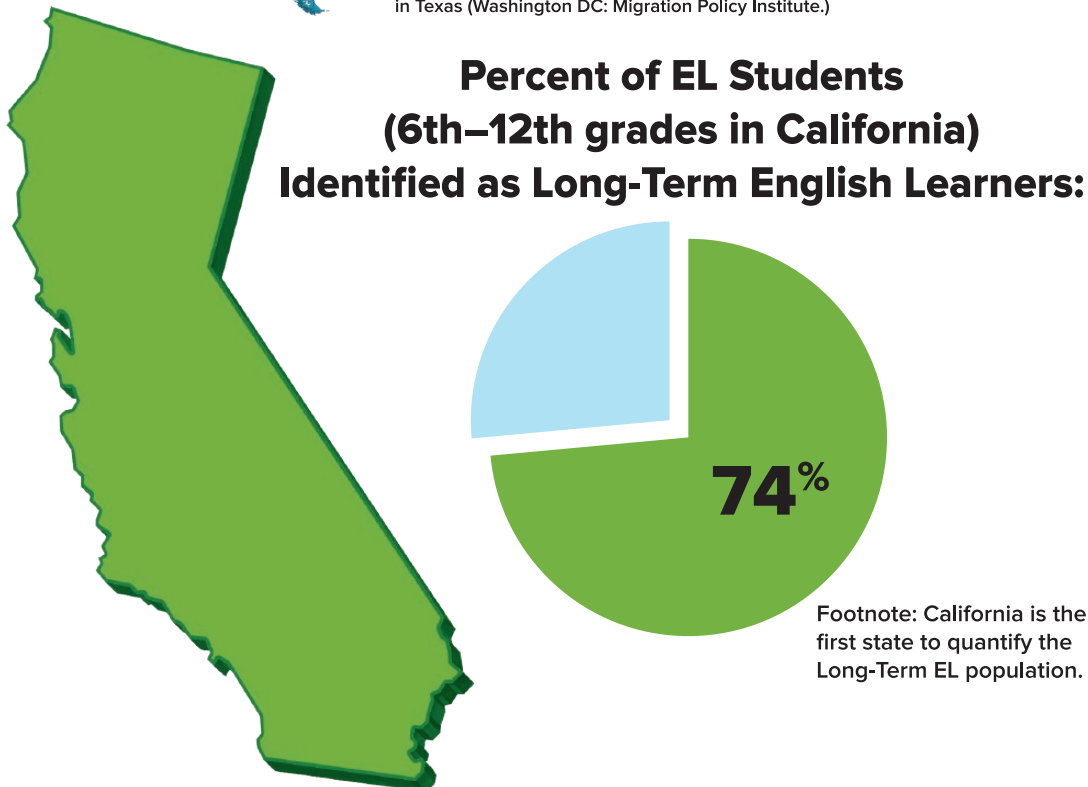
LANGUAGE ASSETS: The term *English learner* refers to English proficiency level only. It doesn't tell us anything about how many other languages a student speaks, understands, reads, or writes. Some ELs are bilingual. Other ELs are trilingual! Some ELs are academically proficient at grade level in their primary language. Some ELs are experts at translating on the spot, a complex and creative skill. Some ELs have oral fluency in another language but don't have academic literacy in that language as they have only attended school in English.

In an ideal world, schools help every student be fluent and literate in multiple languages. I certainly wish my local K–8 school provided my own monolingual sons the opportunity to build literacy in multiple languages. I grew up monolingual with a deep desire to be able to communicate in Spanish. U.S. schools didn't help me realize this vision, but thankfully I had the opportunity to immerse myself in Spanish-speaking communities in the United States and to live and work in both Mexico and Guatemala long enough to think, dream, and express in two languages. I am grateful I lived and worked a year in China, long enough to learn basic communication in Mandarin Chinese—and to experience what it is like to be an outsider to the dominant culture, illiterate in the dominant language of my environment. I became multilingual to expand my world, connect to people with different backgrounds, and see beyond the norms of my home community. Imagine if every child had the opportunity to build such global competency in school!

Research shows that effective bilingual programs are among the most powerful ways to ensure ELs thrive with academic English and rigorous core assessment in English (Thomas & Collier, 2002). Bilingual programs that are systematically and strategically structured to reflect the best practices in the field do not slow English literacy or language learning at all. On the contrary, they accelerate it.

Even if you, like most U.S. teachers, teach ELs in an English-only context and only speak English, you can still build on your EL students' language assets. In Chapter 2 and throughout this guide, you'll find strategies to value and build on students' primary language(s) in your everyday teaching.

EVERY STUDENT IS UNIQUE

Every classroom population is unique. Every school population is unique. When we communicate with broad labels like "EL," our classrooms include a wide range of students:

- Students who speak English as their only language (EO)
- Students enrolled in Gifted and Talented Education (GATE)
- Students with individualized education programs (IEPs), enrolled in a resource specialist program (RSP), or receiving special education (SPED)
- Students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (students from low-income households)
- Students whose families move across state and national borders for work (Migrant Education Program participants)

When we look beyond labels to get more personal, our classrooms include a wide range of unique personalities, interests, experiences, strengths, and needs. Students often fit the criteria for more than one acronym (e.g., EL and GATE) and defy the definition of each broad category in their own unique ways.

WHAT ABOUT MY STUDENTS WHO AREN'T ELS?

This is a great question most core teachers ask when we talk about EL instruction. It's important because most core classrooms include both ELs and non-ELs.

A common assumption is that to use EL-specific strategies we need to work with ELs in a separate group and get the rest of the students to do something on their own. That's one approach but not the one I emphasize here. In this book, I emphasize teaching the entire class to the high-level expectations of your content and literacy standards and then personalizing instruction based on the unique strengths and needs you identify as students engage in your lessons.

It is not productive to assume that one strategy must be used for all ELs and not for other students. Collaborative conversations, for example, benefit *everyone* every day. Linguistic scaffolds, such as linguistic frames (aka sentence frames), can benefit some ELs and hinder others. It all depends on the task and the students. The key to effective teaching of ELs (and all students) is engaging students in a productive challenge, observing them, and then designing or refining teaching to meet their needs.

You will notice that even though this book emphasizes ELs, many of the specific scaffolds and strategies will be valuable for helping *all* students grow their skills with academic literacy and communication:

- Students not yet at grade-level expectations in literacy
- Students new to making and justifying academic claims
- Students who are silent in class or dominate conversations
- Students who use informal language in academic communication
- Students needing more precise word choice or sentence variety
- Students who benefit from peer conversations to build background, deepen understandings, and build proficiency articulating complex ideas

It is likely that every student in your classroom will benefit from strategies and scaffolds in this book. It is also likely that when you pay close attention to your goals and your students, you notice that ELs and non-ELs may need the same lesson or support. Other times you notice that some ELs need specific attention in one area that other ELs don't need. What support is needed will always change based on the goal, the students, and what they have just learned.

This is why I don't answer the question "What about my students who aren't ELs?" with a specific instructional recipe. Instead, I honor your professionalism as a teacher to reflect continuously on the following questions: What are my goals? What can my students understand and do related to my goals? What instruction and supports will I provide to ensure student success? This flip-to guide helps you engage in this continuous process of reflective teaching to ensure all students, including all ELs, thrive.

TEACHING BEYOND THE "EL" LABEL

Categories such as "English learner" help us group similar needs together and also are often very limiting. When we overgeneralize what students need based on the categories

we assign to them, we typically end up teaching in the dark. By "teaching in the dark," I mean we make an assumption and teach to the assumption, not to the students. Assuming, for example, that because a student is EL we must always teach that student using a specific EL strategy is problematic. It's like teaching with a blindfold.

This is why this book, first and foremost, helps you personalize teaching to reach and teach the unique *individuals* in your classroom. Yes, this book will help you integrate the most high-impact strategies for EL achievement into your daily teaching. However, don't expect any one-size-fits-all directives to teach students based on a general label like "EL." We are going to engage all students, watch all students, and in this context get specific about how to help each and every unique EL thrive in your classroom.

CORE PEDAGOGY FOR EL EXCELLENCE

Six essential verbs shape the core pedagogy and organization of this book. The six foundational mindsets and actions are as follows:

1. **VALUE:** Relationships are at the heart of effective teaching. Effective teachers of ELs foster relationships with ELs based on mutual respect. One way to value ELs is to see students' multilingualism as an asset, not a problem. We value ELs when we recognize that different cultures, languages, and experiences are not inferior to our own and when we are interested in learning the diverse assets each student brings to school.

2. **EXPECT:** Students rise (or fall) to the level of a teacher's expectations. Low expectations for ELs and students of color are a reality we must be proactive to address. We make high expectations a reality when we value ELs, have clear success criteria, and use supports strategically to help ELs thrive with high-level learning.

3. **ENGAGE:** No matter how dynamic our lessons, if ELs are in sit-and-get mode, they will not deeply learn content or academic language. Effective teachers use a variety of strategies in every lesson to actively engage ELs and all students including relevance, peer conversations, and actions (e.g., movement, annotation, and writing).

4. **OBSERVE:** As we engage students, we observe what they do and listen to what they say to learn more about their thinking, strengths and challenges with our content, and language goals. We use every task as an opportunity to gather formative data. When students are silent, unengaged, or struggling, we reflect to change our approach. When students thrive, we notice their strengths and build on them in subsequent lessons.

5. **SUPPORT:** Effective teachers use supports strategically to engage and challenge ELs. Being strategic is essential and requires paying close attention to students to notice the strengths and challenges they bring to each task. Using real-time data to choose or lose scaffolds is at the heart of effective teaching with ELs.

6. **REFLECT:** Effective teachers own their impact and continuously reflect to refine how they teach so that all students succeed. Owning impact is the most important mindset for equity and means that when a student struggles, a teacher reflects, "What will I change about *my* instruction to ensure this student succeeds?"

Using these verbs in synthesis is important, as together they shape the continuous process of teaching for impact. Figure 1.2 represents the mindsets and reflective teaching cycle that are essential to ensure everyday excellence for ELs—and all students.

Using this cycle, effective teachers continuously reflect on the following questions:

- **EXPECT:** What are my goals for student learning?
- **ENGAGE:** How will students demonstrate success?
- **OBSERVE:** What can students now understand and do related to my goals?
- **SUPPORT:** What instruction and scaffolds will I provide to ensure student success?
- **REFLECT:** How did my instruction impact student learning? How will I adapt my approach to ensure every learner thrives?

The verb *value* is not a separate step but the ever-present climate we create by valuing all students in our classroom for the assets they bring including their home language(s), cultural backgrounds, and unique experiences. See Chapter 2 for specific actions to create a climate in which every EL feels valued as a scholar capable of excellence. Creating such a climate is as important to learning as oxygen is to breathing. Without it, any instructional approach you use will likely fail.

FIGURE 1.2

ESSENTIALS FOR EL EXCELLENCE EVERY DAY

EXPECT EXCELLENCE
ENGAGE › OBSERVE
REFLECT ‹ SUPPORT
VALUE EL ASSETS

MORE THAN "GOOD TEACHING"

This cycle represents good teaching for *all* students, not just ELs. This emphasis is intentional because effective teaching for all students is the foundation of effective teaching with ELs. In addition to good teaching, ELs need teachers who understand the assets multilingual students bring to their learning and who can build on ELs' linguistic, cultural, and academic strengths. ELs need core teachers who understand the linguistic demands of the texts and tasks they teach and who can use scaffolds and conversation structures to effectively teach content *and* academic language in tandem.

This book emphasizes these EL-specific essentials in the context of the reflective teaching cycle for three important reasons:

1. **It's effective**—High expectations, active student engagement, and data-driven reflective teaching are consistently highlighted in research as essential for instructional improvement (Carrasquillo & Rodríguez, 2002; Darling-Hammond & Schon, 1996; Rosenthal & Jacobsen, 1968). EL strategies used without a data-driven reflective teaching process can actually hinder ELs by watering down expectations or creating dependent learners.

2. **It's connected—**Core literacy teachers, first and foremost, teach all students core literacy. Whether a teacher has one EL or many, the most useful EL strategies are those that directly align with what teachers teach every day. Sections I–III of this book introduces core strategies, and Section IV helps you apply them to specific literacy goals.

3. **It's practical**—The flow of this go-to guide fits naturally with the planning and instructional flow reflective teachers use every day. You can find what you want, when you want it, to both strengthen your reflective teaching for all students *and* meet the needs of ELs.

HOW THIS GUIDE HELPS YOU EVERY DAY

In the context of helping *all* students thrive with your core content, this book helps you excel in reaching English learners. This is a flip-to guide to reference when planning and teaching every day. Here's what you'll find:

Section I: ESSENTIALS FOR EL EXCELLENCE

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION Learn the core pedagogy for EL excellence and how to use this guide.

Chapter 2: ESSENTIAL MINDSETS Learn three essential mindsets, how we can get stuck, and strategies for immediate action.

Section II: ENGAGE

Chapter 3: ENGAGE EVERY EL Flip to strategies in this chapter to make collaborative conversations and accountable participation central to daily teaching.

Section III: SUPPORT

Chapter 4: SUPPORT ELs STRATEGICALLY Learn how to support language and concepts strategically without lowering expectations. Gain strategies and a flip-to guide to differentiate with ease.

Chapter 5: BUILD BACKGROUND Use this flip-to chapter to find strategies to connect to students' prior experiences, pre-teach vocabulary, and build conceptual understandings before any lesson.

Chapter 6: SCAFFOLD LANGUAGE DURING A TASK Use this flip-to chapter to find strategies to scaffold students' language use (vocabulary, grammar, or text-level organization) during any speaking or writing task.

Chapter 7: TEACH LANGUAGE BEYOND A TASK Use this flip-to chapter to find mini-lessons to deepen students' understanding of how English works.

Section IV: APPLY STRATEGIES TO DIFFERENTIATE ACADEMIC LITERACY

Use this flip-to section to apply the essentials for EL excellence to differentiate close reading, conversations, and writing with text evidence.

Chapter 8: MAKE EL EXCELLENCE ROUTINE Learn a four-step close reading routine to use with any classroom text.

Chapter 9: ANTICIPATE Use Chapters 9–11 to differentiate each step of the routine based on your literacy goals and your students.

Chapter 10: READ TO UNDERSTAND

Chapter 11: READ TO ANALYZE AND INFER

> **Flip-to Tip:**
> Anytime you are planning for a specific literacy goal (e.g., asking questions, identifying main ideas, or justifying claims with text evidence), flip to the table of contents after the green "IV. Apply" tab. Choose your priority and flip to it to find a wealth of ready-to-use tools that make teaching for EL excellence a breeze.

MAKING EL EXCELLENCE ROUTINE

In my work leading professional learning, I see what you see every day: the challenge of applying theory to daily teaching. It's easy to learn new strategies. It's hard to make them central to how we teach every day.

There is also a challenge of initiative overload: too many different demands on teachers coming from too many different directions. It's human nature to get excited about a new silver-bullet solution (e.g., strategy, curriculum, training, or initiative) and much more challenging to synthesize what we know to strategically address the needs of students in our unique teaching contexts.

I address both of these challenges in this flip-to guide by applying my favorite high-level thinking skill: synthesis.

A SYNTHESIS OF BEST PRACTICE

I designed this guide to synthesize research-based practice into user-friendly resources that help you easily enhance what you already teach via a dynamic integration of the following:

- High expectations and critical thinking
- Effective pedagogy for all students
- Effective pedagogy for ELs and SELs
- Designated and integrated language development
- Culturally proficient practice
- Effective use of formative data
- Differentiation to personalize teaching
- Reflective teaching

A SYNTHESIS OF PRIORITIES

In addition to synthesizing best instructional practices, I've intentionally narrowed the focus of instruction in this guide to go deep with two high-priority goals for students:

1. Collaborate in Conversations
2. Make and Justify Claims With Text Evidence

Collaborative conversations are a top-priority strategy to ensure excellence for ELs and build student competencies in collaboration and communication essential for achievement in and beyond school. This guide both teaches collaborative conversation strategies (Section II) and gives you conversation tasks and scaffolds for every literacy goal (Section IV).

Making and justifying claims with text evidence is a high-priority skill for career and college readiness for all students and is embedded with many linguistic challenges for ELs.

Academic argument is at the intersection of the English language arts, math, and science standards (Cheuk, 2013). This makes it an especially high-impact area of emphasis to deepen student and teacher learning across all content areas.

Section IV helps you build student capacity for academic argument through core routines and a flip-to guide to the many subskills of this higher-level literacy goal. Flip to Chapter 11 for an example of how to find specific goals and strategies to help you empower ELs and all learners to make claims (p. 236) and how to help students justify claims with evidence (p. 246). By design, these aren't just strategies in isolation, but a synthesis of strategies organized to help you apply best practices to help your unique students thrive with high-priority academic literacy goals.

WAYS TO USE THIS FLIP-TO GUIDE

You don't have to read this book from cover to cover. I recommend reading Chapters 1 and 2 and then flipping to other chapters as you need them. Here are five great entry points for using this book:

1. **ESSENTIAL MINDSETS.** Do you want to create a classroom and school culture that values diversity and makes high expectations a reality for every EL and every student? Read Chapter 2.

2. **ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES.** Do you want to learn ways to structure active engagement and academic conversations in your classroom? Read Section II or flip to any strategy in the purple pages to enhance active participation and student conversations in you next lesson.

3. **STRATEGIC SUPPORTS.** Do you want strategies, lessons, and scaffolds to help students learn core concepts, language, and literacy? Read Section III or flip to any strategy in the orange pages when you need new tools to help your students thrive.

4. **LITERACY GOALS.** Are you looking for ways to help ELs (and all students) excel with a specific literacy goal like justifying claims with text evidence? Flip to the chapter in Section IV that aligns with your goal for a wealth of resources organized to make planning and differentiating a breeze.

5. **STUDENT NEEDS.** Listening to student conversations, watching students annotate texts, or reading students' writing, you notice specific areas where they need additional support. To address specific literacy needs, flip to the appropriate chapter in Section IV to find support for both the literacy goals and aligned language goals.

COLLABORATIVE WAYS TO USE THIS GUIDE WITH A TEAM

Any teacher can use this book alone, and the impact amplifies when you use it with a colleague, a team, or a whole school community. Reflect on the entry points listed above and determine your goals together. The following approaches are four great ways to use this book in collaboration with colleagues:

1. **LEARN MINDSETS OR STRATEGIES TOGETHER:** The first four chapters are great for building background together in essential mindsets and strategies. Choose a relevant section or chapter and use the following sequence:

    A. Read.

    B. Discuss. What's most effective? What do you already do? What do you want to try?

    C. Collaborate to plan ways to apply at least one specific strategy to your teaching in the coming week.

    D. As students engage, watch to gather additional formative data.

    E. Meet to compare notes on impact and adapt your approaches together.

2. **PLAN LESSONS TOGETHER:** When planning literacy lessons, choose the chapter in Section IV that best fits your goals and choose strategies within that chapter to integrate into your teaching. When planning *any* lesson, use Chapters 3–7 as flip-to resources for strategies to engage and support ELs.

3. **ANALYZE STUDENT LEARNING TOGETHER:** Prioritize a goal in Section IV. Plan any "ENGAGE" task in Section IV. As students engage, film one pair in conversation or take notes on what they say and do. Choose one or more questions from the "OBSERVE"

questions to focus your observation. Collaborate to compare videos or notes and analyze together with these questions:

- What do we notice students saying and doing relative to our goals? Do we agree on what we see? What trends do we notice in the data?

- When there are successes, what instruction do we infer helped students reach this goal?

- When there are challenges, what instruction will we provide to help students build on what they know to excel at higher levels?

4. **SOLVE A STUDENT LEARNING CHALLENGE:** Together you've identified a challenge or your students' experience with academic literacy or language. You now want to collaborate to plan instruction you anticipate will specifically address their needs. Here's how to use the book in this process:

   A. Identify a challenge you want to solve together and discuss the strategies you anticipate will help students thrive.

   B. Flip to the sections of this book that are most relevant to your challenge and identify at least one specific strategy or lesson you will all try in the coming week.

   C. Collaborate to plan how you will use that strategy and/or to observe as one teacher tries it with a class.

   D. As students engage, watch to gather additional formative data.

   E. Meet after trying the plan with students to reflect on impact and adapt your approaches together.

To deepen your collaborative approach, please read my book *Opening Doors to Equity: A Practical Guide to Observation-Based Professional Learning* (Singer, 2015). It will give you all the tools you need to facilitate peer observation inquiry, a powerful approach to collaborating to plan, teach, observe, reflect, and refine teaching together to solve any learning challenge you prioritize.

REFLECT ON CHAPTER 1

- Who are the ELs in your teaching context? What are the diverse assets different ELs bring to your school? What do you know, or want to learn, about their language proficiency levels, home cultures, and prior educational experiences?

- What are the six verbs in the core pedagogy for EL excellence every day (p. 10)? Which are most central to how you now teach? What is one essential you want to learn more about or make a higher priority?

- How will you use this guide? Will you read it from cover to cover or flip to the sections you need as you need them? Will you read it alone or in collaboration with other colleagues? What do you most look forward to in this guide? Dig in!