

## **TEACHING BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER (ELL) STUDENTS: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS**

**1. Create an emotionally positive classroom climate.** This type of setting enables children to feel worthwhile and cared for, despite their cultural differences. To make the classroom welcoming and accepting place to English Language learners one could:

- Label different items throughout the classroom
- Learn a few phrases in the child's native language
- Create opportunities for success and praise students frequently
- Provide supportive feedback rather than continual correction

**2. Provide conditions similar to those under which children first learn a language:**

- Simplify grammar
- Provide numerous opportunities to interact with individuals who are more proficient in the language
- Do not expect children to produce language before their development allows
- Do not criticize language mistakes

**3. Make sure that instructions and objectives are understood by every student.**

Every student should understand what the goals and assignments are for the class. These should be clearly announced, and afterwards the teacher should make sure that the students understand what they are working on. Not understanding a task will cause a student to fall behind their peers and may cause frustration with similar assignments.

**4. Don't force English Language Learners (ELL) to interact in English at first.** It is important not to force student to speak English before they are ready. Although they may be quiet, they are taking in English, and should start speaking once they feel more comfortable with some vocabulary and language rules.

**5. Use an assortment of visual aids.** This may include nonverbal gestures, flash cards, posters, pictures (software such as Boardmaker by Mayer-Johnson may be helpful), charts, Venn diagrams, flow charts, timelines, etc.

**6. Have students participate in hands-on activities.** These sorts of activities allow ELL students to be more involved, as they do not rely as heavily on language. Some examples might include drawing/designing something, performing an experiment, etc.

**7. When possible, give students a choice in how to present material.** All students (but especially ELL students) might benefit from being able to choose how to express their knowledge of material. Being able to choose how the assignment is done may also generate more enthusiasm toward that assignment. For instance, perhaps an artistic child would prefer to make a diorama instead of writing a traditional book report.

**8. Emphasize cooperative learning.** Children of different cultures will have opportunities to learn together, and to know each other as learners and as people. **Allow students to work in groups.** Students from cultures that emphasize collectivist approaches may be more comfortable working with others than working individually.

**9. Promote positive peer interactions among students in your class.** If needed, devote class time to developing social skills and to role-playing various positive interactions. Conduct class meetings which emphasize the interplay of the members of the classroom community.

**10. Foster perspective taking in your class discussions.** Encourage students to see issues from multiple perspectives. This process enables students to respect and to view more favorable other points of view, including those of culturally different students.

**11. Familiarize yourself with basic cultural differences.** You might begin by talking to parents of children in your class. Often, parents will allude to the way they were brought up, including how they were expected to behave in school. Use this information in your teaching environment. Work together if classroom rules are different from home rules, and explain the reason for the differences.

**12. In general, be sure that your own behavior does not exhibit bias or favoritism in any way.** Give all students the same amount of respect and encouragement.

**13. Create a physical environment that affirms differences.** This can be done by using pictures, posters, art, books, maps, flags, etc.

**14. Emphasize unity through human similarities to reduce racism, prejudice, and discrimination.**

**15. Maintain high expectations for all students.** Often children with accents or dialects are considered to be less academically competent. This misconception can have unfortunate effects. Children who are expected to fail often do. Genuinely believe that all students can learn and achieve.

**16. Recognize achievements in all students.** Do not over-identify particular students' work as exceptional when other students also have outstanding work. However, it is important not to praise students for low quality work just to make them "feel good."

**17. Show interest in every student.** This may increase motivation for students to perform well academically, while also allowing the students to realize that they are individuals with different cultures. Understanding the lives of your students outside class helps to also apply academic material to various cultural events and lifestyles.

**18. Welcome parent volunteers into your classroom.** Culturally different parents will have the opportunity to see how you conduct your classroom, and their children will see them as valued and accepted members of the school community.

- 19. Ask students to share their experiences.** Encourage them to speak from their own experiences and share information about their family's ethnic background to increase cultural awareness.
- 20. Become acquainted with community resources (people and organizations) in the area that can provide knowledge about nations or ethnic groups.**
- 21. Use ethnographic procedures to learn about culturally diverse students.** Observe students in settings outside your classroom.
- 22. When holidays are approaching, make sure to include a variety of holidays and celebrations in your curriculum.** For example, the winter months can prove very helpful for introducing students to the values of the African community by learning about the celebration of Kwanzaa, the Jewish community by studying Hanukkah, and the Christian community by studying Christmas. Researching these holidays from a historical perspective is a nice way to incorporate the lessons into a Social Studies curriculum. This is also a wonderful opportunity to get parents involved, because many of them will gladly take pride in their culture and volunteer their time to share the culture's reasons for the celebration. Take care that these lessons are not presented as religious, but more as cultural lessons.
- 23. Learn students' names and pronounce them correctly.** Recognize names with unique meanings.
- 24. Use a communication style that is consistent with the values of students' cultures.** For example, Mexican-American children need to teacher to establish a carino, or caring relationship, with them. Reinforcing norms of politeness and respect, as defined by the child's culture, is effective in creating this environment, which leads to more learning. Each culture has its own learning style and standards. Taking the time to identify these different styles will help you tailor your curriculum to your students.
- 25. Evaluate teaching materials for bias, and adjust materials accordingly.** For example, if studying famous scientists, include a racial mix, a nationality mix, a gender mix, etc. By discussing the differences in each person's backgrounds, students will end up seeing the similarities of strength, perseverance, and dedication to one's work. The cultural differences will become less important, and will therefore reduce the amount of cultural tension among the students in the classroom.
- 26. Have literature from different cultures and ethnicities, and time-periods available for free reading.** Lists of multicultural books, listed by grade level, are available from IRA, as well as numerous other services. Include examples of different family styles in reading materials. Not everyone lives in traditional families. Also, try to avoid stereotypes in reading materials.
- 27. Because the background knowledge of each child is different, do not assume that all of the children will have heard of a "common" topic before.** For example, some

children may not be familiar with various farm animals, while others may have had no experience with city transit services. When reading different texts, discuss the topic to develop a basis for learning. The ETR (experience-text-relationship) method, which emphasizes discussion of background knowledge prior to reading, has proven effective with culturally different students.

**28. Be aware of cultural differences as a source of problems in learning to read.**

Accents and dialects seriously affect a child's ability to read and write, especially in the early stages of these processes. Students should not be interrupted during the oral reading process; corrections are best done after the reading is over. When a word needs to be sounded out, it may not sound the way the child usually says it. Find ways of accommodating for these differences, like discussing the appropriate times and places to speak standard (businesslike) English.

**29. Take your class into the community.** One way to emphasize the validity of diverse cultures is to participate in the local community. Planned field trips and interviews of local community members are two examples of community involvement.

**Resources:**

- Bennett, C. (1995). *Comprehensive multicultural education: Theory and practice*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Burnette, J. (1999). "Critical Behaviors and Strategies for Teaching Culturally Diverse Students." *ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education*. Reston, VA
- Coelho, E. (2004). *Adding English: A Guide to Teaching in Multicultural Classrooms*. Toronto, Ontario: Pippin Publishing Corporation.
- Davis, B. G. (1993). Diversity and Complexity in the Classroom: Considerations of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender. *Tools for Teaching*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Frisby, C. (1997). Ethnic and racial diversity. In G.G. Bear & K.M. Minke (Eds.), *Children's needs II: Development, problems, and alternatives*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Gardner, P. (2001). *Teaching and learning in the multicultural classroom*. London, Eng: David Fulton Publishing.
- Miranda, A. (2002). Best practices in increasing cross-cultural competence. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes, *Best practices in school psychology IV*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
- Rasool, J. & Curtis, C. (2000). *Multicultural education in middle and secondary*

*classrooms: Meeting the challenge of diversity and change.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

*Tips for Teaching ELL's : Strategies for Promoting Success for the Second Language Learner in Grades K-12.* Retrieved October 20, 2007, from [www.celt.sunysb.edu/ell/tips.php#Optimal\\_Conditions\\_for\\_Second\\_Language](http://www.celt.sunysb.edu/ell/tips.php#Optimal_Conditions_for_Second_Language)

Wardle, F. (2000). *Counseling Multicultural/Multiethnic Children.* Columbus, OH.

Zehler, A. (1994). *Working With English Language Learners: Strategies For Elementary and Middle School Teachers.* Retrieved October 20, 2007, from [www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/pigs/pig19.htm](http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/pigs/pig19.htm)

[www.edchange.org/multicultural/papers/buildingblocks.html](http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/papers/buildingblocks.html): The First Steps of Creating a Multicultural Classroom.

[www.ericdigests.org/1995-2/diversity.htm](http://www.ericdigests.org/1995-2/diversity.htm): Valuing Diversity in the Classroom.

[www.prel.org/teams/multicultural-ed.asp](http://www.prel.org/teams/multicultural-ed.asp): Multicultural Education Resources.

[www.everythingsl.net/inservices/holding\\_effective\\_parent\\_meeti\\_68636.php](http://www.everythingsl.net/inservices/holding_effective_parent_meeti_68636.php):

Holding an Effective Meeting with ESL Parents

[www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com): Boardmaker

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