

ELL Teaching Philosophy

"Today we are going to go over this packet of information on the treble clef staff. You will be required to memorize all of the note names and we will have a quiz over it when you come to class next time. Your job is to listen quietly to all of the information and provide the answers when I ask for them." While this may have been the approach to teaching music twenty years ago, it definitely would not work for the students' (nor the teachers!) in my music classroom right now! The culture of our country is changing, and it's time we change our teaching approaches to match the needs of our students.

There are three basic needs to consider when integrating new ELL students into a classroom: safety, security, and a sense of belonging. As an ELL teacher, I plan to implement a safe environment into my classroom by making connections to home cultures/countries, using a variety of teaching methods/materials, and displaying connections to literacy in many forms. In order to effectively facilitate learning, the learning environment that I create will tie lessons to the students' lives, meet their needs, and will take into consideration the students' background knowledge. When the teacher knows how to motivate learners, connect to their cultures, and effectively teach the content, ELL students will become successful learners of the English language.

In order to effectively assess students, ELL teachers need to analyze learner needs through the use of home surveys, journals, and other appropriate assessments. They then need to use that information to develop the student's social and content-driven linguistic needs. The more a teacher knows about their ELL students, the easier it will be to determine which areas they are struggling with in order to meet both their present and future needs. By incorporating a student's previous language experiences into the classroom and by taking the time to learn about the ELL students' native language/country, connections/similarities between their native language and the English language can be made. This can help greatly when teaching the rule-filled, confusing English language.

Culture is also an important aspect of learning the English language, as it is the underlying aspect of what a student has previously experienced and learned. As the various textbooks have mentioned numerous times, curriculum, assessment, and instruction should scaffold from students' previous exposure to language to new contexts and components of the English language. The more opportunities students and their families have to share about their culture, the more they can relate and buy into the new culture of the English language.

The material that is used to teach English language learners is also extremely important. The material selected should be used to achieve a balance between communicative skills as well as to develop learners' knowledge and use of the English language. Materials should expose children to a literacy-enriched world. Activity centers with literacy props that reflect the child's home or community, vocabulary words posted in both English and the child's native language, and graphic and visual support for the English language learner will help to acclimate the student socially, adjust to the culture as well as the English language, and progress academically.

By offering numerous, meaningful, and functional print and literacy experiences, ELL students will increase their awareness of the functions of the English language and how it works. Inviting families into the school for social events, immersing students in a

variety of functional reading and writing experiences, and by providing opportunities for children to read and write at home with their families will all aid in the important connection a student needs in order to learn a new language. It's also important to allow the student to maintain/practice their native language in addition to learning a new language. The more background knowledge they have in their native language, the easier learning a new language will be.

The textbooks have stated that federal law requires that all English language learners be provided with an education that provides them access to the core curriculum for English language development. Therefore, it is important for teachers to focus on language proficiency and academic achievement when planning for and assessing ELL students. Language proficiency standards are to be used as the basis for measuring students' progress and proficiency, while state academic standards measure achievement in the English language. To help these students achieve these lofty goals, it is important to provide a wide variety of instructional techniques such as differentiated instruction, jigsaw, and content-based instruction as approaches for teachers to acknowledge, accommodate, and build upon a wide array of student differences in order to facilitate growth.

Overall, exposing and immersing students in the English language, increasing student confidence in the English language, and maintaining high expectations will aid in the successful transition from English language learners into confident English speakers. I can't wait to start implementing these techniques and procedures in order to make a positive impact on English language learners' experience with the English language.