**Tips for Content Teachers Who Teach English Language Learners**

***It is important to remember that English Language Learners have something to offer, but need support to be successful. They need to be challenged so that learning is meaningful to them and it is important to teach them as you would any other student with special needs.***

***The goals for content teachers are to incorporate the following strategies and approaches into your current teaching; not to instruct ELLs separately.***

***Essential Question: How can I make content, assessment and instructions in my class comprehensible?***

* Use **visuals** as much as possible. This includes photos or pictures (on the SMART board) or even more rustic, hand drawn sketches on the blackboard/white board. Photos or pictures help for content and for giving instructions.
* **Teach the language of your subject**, particularly the academic words. Students will pick up ‘social English’, known as BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) fairly easily (in 1-3 years), however, academic English, known as CALPS must be explicitly taught. This language is only learned through books or in academic lectures; it is not often in everyday spoken English. More subjects, such as math, are leaning towards teaching content words explicitly. This is not meant to be taught to ELLs in isolation; all students can benefit from an introduction or review of language. It can enhance whole-class literacy and understanding of language. Students who are familiar with words can provide the definitions, which can raise their confidence and enhance their own speaking and higher order speaking skills. At the beginning of each unit or lesson, a review or introduction of target vocabulary is recommended.
* Partner the ELL with a compassionate ‘**buddy**’ who can explain instructions or content. This person can make sure that the ELL is on task. This can help a teacher who is busy with the many diverse learners in their class and the ELL might feel less intimidated asking questions of a same age peer.
  + **Culture note**: some students have been taught to never question the teacher. Questions are seen as challenges and might be viewed as disrespectful.
  + If possible, partner the student with someone who speaks their first language. Translation can be very helpful.
  + Some students may not be comfortable being partnered with someone from the opposite gender. Although they have to learn to work together in Canada, the idea of a buddy is to ensure that they are fully comfortable asking questions.
* Allow students to use **simpler versions of text** or alternate notes, books or novels that are easier to read and contain more visuals. Our ELL room has resources that teachers can borrow, such as ELL versions of literature and simplified science units. Contact ext. 349 or email; [JRaymond@srsd119.ca](mailto:JRaymond@srsd119.ca) for more information. Our library also has a section of simplified reading for content classes.
* **Reduce or change expectations** for ELLs. They do not have to achieve the same expectations as ‘mainstream’ students.
* **Reduce or adapt lessons and assignments** for ELLs. They do not have to and beginners should not do the exact same assignments as the rest of the mainstream class. For example, if the class is writing an essay, ELLs might
  + write a paragraph
  + provide labeled pictures
  + fill in a gapped text
  + write point notes

**The important goal**: did the ELLs comprehend and learn the essence of what you are trying to teach? Consider what you want them to learn and what is a reasonable goal for them.

* **Do not mark them down for small grammar or spelling mistakes**. This can frustrate the student and might cause them to be discouraged and give up. Grammar and spelling will come with time and practice. You can point out grammar/spelling trends and provide some assistance to help them with common mistakes, but please do not mark every little error.
* Allow for **more time on assignments and exams**.
* Allow students to **take exams or complete difficult assignments with EAL support staff.**
* Allow students to **access and use their first language**. For example, if they have to write something, encourage them to write out their thoughts in their first language and then translate as best they can. This allows them to organize their thoughts regarding content first.
* Allow students to **discuss and answer/topic with in their first language with a same language partner**, if possible.
* Use **support strategies** such as scaffolding, fill in the blanks (with word choices and visuals), all students to label pictures (but provide a list of words) etc.
* Attempt to **engage the class in meaningful assignments** that ELLs can also relate to. *For example, if you are* ***teaching statistics/graphing in math****, why not have the class take a survey and graph the various languages in our school*. You could make this a meaningful assignment by telling the class that the school really needs this information. This engages the whole class.
* Consider whether examples you use are **meaningful** to an ELL student and might impact their answers/learning. *For example, if you write a test that refers to ‘ginger ale’ consider that they might understand the course content, but do not know what ginger ale is*. Try to use words and examples that are as universal as possible. If this is not possible, point out the words to the students, pre-teach them and/or provide a clear visual. The student may not ask what the word means because they assume this is something they should know for the test.
* **Do not assume the ELL knows school procedures or classroom rules**. They might be new to Canada and may have limited prior schooling or very different cultural approach to education.
* Give ELLs **time to reflect**. It might work to give them a **reflection journal or notebook**. This is a book that they can jot notes in before answering orally in class (in first language or English). They can also record new vocabulary. ***You may want to use the reflection journal as a participation assessment tool.***
* Consider assessing or marking the **best of three assignments**, for example. Or have them choose an assignment/assignments to edit and redo for marks at the end of the semester.
* Consider allowing the **student to choose which assignment(s) they want to be assessed** at the end of the semester.
* Consider **assessing a portfolio for assessment and giving students the opportunity to revise and edit** work to submit in the portfolio.

Contact Julie Raymond or Alanna Banman for further questions regarding English Language Learners.