

Your Library Today



Mr. Breitsprecher's Edition

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Early Literacy & English Language Learners

The key to working effectively with children that are learning English as a second language (English Language Learners or ELL) is to recognize and value their experiences as enrichment.

There is a great deal of transference between different languages. While ELL students may need more time to read, write, and think in a new language – the language (s) that they hear and speak at home helps them get ready to learn English.

Pre-readers and emerging readers need early literacy skills to prepare them to successfully read. This is true regardless of the languages they hear and learn at home. Parents should be encouraged to read and speak to their child in the language that they are comfortable and proficient with, usually their native tongue.

When working with ELL students, support early literacy with minor adaptations to the usual strategies and activities we share with children.

Tips and Tricks: ELL

- When giving directions, demonstrate actions. Ask children to repeat directions aloud when they engage in the action.
- Pause, give children “wait and think” time.
- Paraphrase, restate directions in different ways. Watch for feedback that children understand.
- Read books with short, simple sentences. Have students repeat these phrases (examples above).
- Engage children with dialogic reading – using a book as a springboard into a conversation. One-on-one is ideal, but if not

Great Books: Repetition & Rhyme

- **1,2,3 to the Zoo by Eric Carle.** This counting book counts animals as they travel on the zoo train.
- **Brown, Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? By Bill Martin Jr.** The rhythmic, repetitive pattern of the text and the bold animal pictures makes this book an all time favorite.
- **Five Little Sharks Swimming in the Sea by Steve Metzger.** This silly book is filled with rhymes and funny text that will delight any preschool child.
- **Giraffes Can't Dance by Guy Parker-Rees.** A giraffe that discovers his own special dance and music teaches a funny and charming lesson about being you.
- **Green Eggs and Ham, by Dr. Seuss.** A great book with a limited vocabulary, lots of predictable repetition, and a wonderful cadence that makes this fun to read and share.
- **Is Your Mama a Llama? by Deborah Guarino.** The clever rhymes and illustrations will charm children and the adults who read to them!
- **Mermaid Dreams by Mark Sperring.** This sweet book is of a girl sharing the events of her day with her mother at bedtime. Don't miss the surprise at the end!
- **Over in the Meadow, by Ezra Jack Keats.** Charming illustrations depict the activities of animals in this familiar 1-10 counting, repetitive rhyme book.
- **The Napping House, by Audrey Wook.** A delightful story of cumulative rhymes, which builds vocabulary while holding a small child's attention.
- **Oink! Moo! How Do You Do, by Grace Maccarone.** A book of animal sounds, animated uncluttered pictures are a perfect accompaniment to the rhyming couplets of each page of this book.

possible, try grouping students by similar abilities.

- If ELL cannot be given special read-alouds, try to find ways to rehearse or prep the before group activities.
- Learn children's names, being careful to pronounce them correctly.
- Repeat chants, rhymes, finger plays/rhymes and sing songs.
- Use as many different, simple alphabet books as you can find.
- Read aloud often – children need to hear the written and spoken work. English is spoken very different than it is written.
- Find books that integrate all children's native cultures.
- Use manipulatives – string to shape into letters, food, anything that approximates letter shapes, and word and name cards.
- Keep ELL children up front and in

the middle of groups. Do not have them sit in back or off to the side.

- Use real objects to demonstrate words. If not possible, use pictures. Letting children handle and see things more-fully engages them.
- Carefully pronounce words, but accept children's approximations. English may use very different sounds than their native language.
- As you recognize the sounds that each student has a hard time pronouncing, accept alterations in pronunciation. Sounds like: s, sh, r, l, sh, ch, f, and v can be difficult for ELL children to differentiate.
- Charts to match pictures with words can be helpful. Consider making little pocket charts that students can keep handy and take home.