CHAPTER 11

Effectively Supporting Language Learners

EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTING LANGUAGE LEARNERS

This Chapter covers the following Core Competency:

21: Ability to effectively support English learners

Overview

According to the US Census, over 45% of people living in San Francisco speak a language other than English at home. **FORTY-FIVE PERCENT!** The Bay Area is host to people who speak literally hundreds of different languages and dialects. In fact, we are one of the most linguistically diverse regions in the nation!

If your program is not currently addressing the needs of English language learners, now is the time to start. This Chapter will cover three ways you can begin to support your multi-lingual program population by offering suggestions on how to:

1. **Create a program that is welcoming to participants who speak multiple-languages**
2. **Adapt activities to help English language learners participate fully**
3. **Add direct English instruction to your menu of program offerings**

For more information and resources on working with English Language Learners afterschool, visit the California Afterschool Network's resource page located at www.afterschoolnetwork.org/resources-o

You can also find information on laws, resources, and who to contact for support on the SFUSD website at www.sfusd.edu/en/programs/english-language-learners/overview.html

QSA SECTION 11

In our program, the program environment is conducive to non-English speakers and staff adapt activities to be accessible to English Learners

In our Program...	Low Quality Indicators	Approaching Quality Indicators	Quality Indicators
The program environment is conducive to non-English speakers	❑ Staff have no experience working with non English speakers or English language learners and are baffled by their learning process/ needs Staff and youth speak louder to participants, or get closer to them	❑ Staff check for understanding before moving into next activity ❑ Instructions are charted, spoken, and include pictures or modeling whenever possible ❑ Staff break activities into smaller parts ❑ Staff are aware of current theories of language use and acquisition, including English as a second language	❑ Staff or community volunteers are available to translate instructions and written materials into home languages ❑ Staff communicate at least monthly with families about English learners' needs and accomplishments ❑ Staff support families to understand school and medical systems to ensure youth are informed and healthy
Staff adapt activities to be accessible to English Learners	❑ English language learners are left out of activities. ❑ Appropriate modifications are not attempted.	❑ Instructions are charted, spoken, and include pictures or modeling whenever possible ❑ Staff break activities into smaller parts ❑ Staff respond to attempts at language by extending their words without correcting them (e.g. if the child says "doggy," say "Yes, the little black dog is wagging his tail")	❑ Staff connect with English language learners teachers from the school day to learn of strategies that work with a particular student ❑ Some staff can speak to youth in their home language ❑ Staff respond to English language learners' behavior with understanding of their possible meanings, e.g. tries to comfort children and find causes for and solutions to their problems

QSA SECTION 11

In our program youth interaction is supported and youth are provided safe opportunities to practice English

In our Program…	Low Quality Indicators	Approaching Quality Indicators	Quality Indicators
Youth interaction is supported	❑ There is little or no interaction between English language learners and English speaking participants	❑ Youth are paired with strong English speakers to support their progress and participation ❑ Youth are encouraged to connect with strong English speakers through informal interactions during activities	❑ Staff hold a facilitated discussion with program participants to explore strategies to create an inclusive community when one member is learning English
Youth are provided safe opportunities to practice English	❑ Youth are teased when they mis-pronounce a word or use language incorrectly ❑ Hate speech and racial slurs are used casually ❑ English language learners students are not given time to express ideas when time is short	❑ English language learners students have their own clubs where they practice presenting, speaking and expanding vocabulary ❑ Staff ensure no teasing or name calling happens during programs ❑ Programs blend academic and enrichment activities that allow youth to expand vocabulary and make connections, such as book clubs, hosting a talk show, drama groups, spoken word poetry	❑ Youth and staff demonstrate appreciation of English language learners' efforts to integrate new words into their vocabulary ❑ 1:1 English practice sessions are held for youth to dialogue about a variety of topics to connect social English to Academic English ❑ Homework tutoring is done in both English and home languages to separate content mastery from English mastery

TIPS

Create a multilingual environment

- ❑ Translate materials and meetings

- ❑ Put program signs up in multiple languages

- ❑ Hire multilingual staff

- ❑ Offer foreign language classes or activities

- ❑ Allow youth to speak their home language

- ❑ Keep in mind that youth who are learning English are probably also learning simultaneously about American culture and customs. Help ease homesickness and confusion by comforting and explaining things to participants who seem overwhelmed or confused.

Make sure all youth are included

- ❑ Modify activities so that even participants with very limited English language exposure can participate

- ❑ Create activities that allow for maximum interaction between participants

- ❑ While Spanish and Chinese will most likely be the dominant languages used by your participants, don't forget about all of the other languages spoken here!

Offer direct instruction

- ❑ Provide one-on-one tutoring or small group activities for your English language learners

- ❑ Provide English classes for participants' families

- ❑ Center your instruction on participants' and families' immediate needs and interests

- ❑ Provide free resources (books, movies, magazines) in English to help encourage interaction with the language

HOW TO

Build a Multiple-Language-Friendly Environment

1. Hire multilingual staff

Make it a priority to hire staff who are able to speak the languages of your participants. Not only will this help with communication within your program, it offers youth role models who they can easily understand. Your multilingual staff can also help with recruitment and family interactions as they may better be able to pick up on cultural and subtle language differences that may pass unnoticed by monolingual staff.

2. Translate all materials, signage, and parent meetings

It may seem obvious, but every time you send out an English-only newsletter, permission slip, or notification, you are creating an obstacle for participants who do not speak English. Although it may seem like just a "quick note", the amount of stress it can cause a family to try to find someone to translate your notification and help take action will hinder your attempts to create an environment that truly welcomes and values everyone. Conversely, every attempt you make to put these correspondences into participants' home languages will bring you one step closer to creating a sincerely inclusive program.

3. Show an interest in participants' home languages

Nothing says that you value someone's home language more than making an attempt to learn it yourself! Even if you only manage to learn how to say "good afternoon", participants and families alike will be tickled and excited by your attempts. Make a point of asking for vocabulary lessons from participants and their families, and try to learn a new phrase or work each week.

Likewise, you can host mini "learn to say..." lessons each week, where your group attempts to learn a phrase or word in as many languages as possible. Learning to count, colors, greetings, or other commonly used words are good places to start. Post the new words or phrases up in your program area (ask participants to write out the words, especially if they are not in characters you are accustomed to writing!)

What Should I Have in My Toolbox?

☐ Multilingual staff or volunteers
☐ Access to translators or use translate.google.com

$

I have a tight budget, what is this going to cost me?

☐ Nothing but your effort

HOW TO

Adapt Activities to Support English Language Learners

This How To covers several ways that you can adapt activities to support the English language learners in your program.

1. Know Where They're At
Before getting into the details of how to best support participants who are learning English, it is important to understand how a second language is acquired. Although there are multiple theories on language acquisition, one way of looking at language learners is that they go through five phases of language acquisition (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). See the table below for a quick overview of what this might look like for your participants.

(Source: **Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners Facilitator's Guide** by Jane D. Hill and Cynthia L. Björk)

Knowing where your participants fall on this spectrum can help you determine what types of modifications to make to activities as outlined later on in this chapter.

Stage	Characteristics	Approximate Time Frame
Preproduction	The student Has minimal comprehension. Does not verbalize. Nods "Yes" and "No." Draws and points.	0–6 months
Early Production	The student Has limited comprehension Produces one- or two-word responses. Uses key words and familiar phrases. Uses present-tense verbs.	6 months–1 year
Speech Emergence	The student Has good comprehension. Can produce simple sentences. Makes grammar and pronunciation errors. Frequently misunderstands jokes.	1–3 years
Intermediate Fluency	The student Has excellent comprehension. Makes few grammatical errors.	3–5 years
Advanced Fluency	The student has a near-native level of speech.	5–7 years

HOW TO

Adapt Activities to Support English Language Learners
...continued

2. Modify Activities

Keeping in mind the various levels, here are some examples of how you can modify what you ask of a participant based on where they are in their language development. (Source: **Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners Facilitator's Guide** by Jane D. Hill and Cynthia L. Björk)

If you are reading a book with your group and you have an English language learner in the mix, you can help that youth participate by...

Preproduction: Asking questions that the participant can answer by pointing at pictures in the book ("Show me the wolf," "Where is the house?").

Early Production: Asking questions that the participant can answer with one or two words ("Did the brick house fall down?" "Who blew down the straw house?").

Speech Emergence: Asking "why" and "how" questions that the participant can answer with short sentences ("Explain why the third pig built his house out of bricks." Or, "What does the wolf want?").

Intermediate Fluency: Asking "What would happen if..." and "Why do you think..." questions ("What would happen if the pigs outsmarted the wolf?" "Why could the wolf blow down the house made of sticks, but not the house made of bricks?")

Advanced Fluency: Asking the participant to retell the story, including main plot elements but leaving out unnecessary details.

Giving participants who are learning English a few extra minutes to gather their thoughts before responding to any of the above questions can also help them better communicate. Ask them a question, move on to a few other participants, and then return for their answer.

3. Review Vocabulary Before an Activity or Assignment

It is also important to note that while participants may communicate easily with you or their peers in the hallways or on the playing field, they may struggle when it comes to doing their homework or discussing their school-subjects. This is because English language learners often pick up BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) before they develop CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency).

Because of this, helping your participants learn the vocabulary they will need for a given homework assignment or activity can be a highly effective way to support them. Picture dictionaries, looking words up on the internet, or simply reviewing the words with them verbally or in context sentences are all useful ways of building vocabulary.

4. Include Visuals, Written Instructions, and Verbal Instructions

Some English language learners may understand written English better than spoken English. Others may learn best if they are reading the material. Still others may find pictures or visual demonstrations beneficial. Make sure you are using multiple strategies when introducing projects, explaining game rules, or leading activities.

5. Provide Feedback

Correcting an English language learner's grammatical errors may make the person feel self-conscious and hinder their efforts to communicate. One way of helping your language learners pick up on good grammar is to repeat their incorrect sentences back to them – correctly. Here's an example:

Participant: She have my pen.
You: She *has* your pen? Do you need me to help you get it back?

6. Pair them Up

Imagine how it feels to be in a program and not understand what is going on around you! Pairing a participant who is learning English up with a participant who is English proficient (e.g. a native speaker or more advanced English language learner), can help the participant feel less lost. It is a good first step in helping the participant feel more welcomed in the program and reduce some of their worry about being left out because they cannot follow what is being said.

What Should I Have in My Toolbox?

❑ Picture Dictionaries

$

❑ Dictionaries are available from $15 on Amazon

I have a tight budget, what is this going to cost me?

HOW TO

Provide Direct English Instruction/Language Support

Learning English as a Second Language (ESL) is different from learning English as a Foreign Language. Think about it. If you went to France to teach English (as a foreign language), your students would leave your classroom and go right back to speaking French until your next class meeting. In an ESL situation however, your English language learners are already in a predominantly English environment – an environment with which they need to constantly interact - making their needs outside of the classroom very different from those of your French students.

Providing direct English instruction to your English language learners, therefore, is best approached by looking at what parts of learning English will be most useful to them RIGHT AWAY. This, of course, will be different for each participant, so make an extra effort to choose topics and activities that hold a lot of interest for the individual members of your group. You will find you are most successful and that participants are most motivated to learn English if they are excited about the activities you are doing with them.

Quick Tip: Keep the "direct instruction" part of the lesson short, or eliminate it all together. Introduce the vocabulary, phrases, or topic you will be covering (write it down and review), and then jump right in to letting them try things out and practice!

Below follow some examples and suggestions.

For Preproduction participants (those with limited English exposure), focus on learning words and phrases they will need every day. Some activities may include:

- Practicing answering basic personal questions (name, age, grade, school)

- Learning to ask for and follow directions (bring a map of San Francisco, since this is the town they need to learn to get around in, or, better

yet, head outside and see if they can find landmarks that you designate by asking people for directions)

- Foods (a lot of foods here are probably new to them). Talk about ingredients, learn how to cook American dishes (or dishes from their home country!), order at a restaurant... and learn all the related vocabulary as you go.

For Early Production participants (those with a bit more English exposure), focus on building vocabulary in a broad range of subjects. Some activities may include:

- Talking about and reviewing vocabulary related to school subjects

- Listening to and interpreting popular music lyrics

- Watching movies and discussing them

- Reading comic books or magazines and talking about them with you

- Learning about, sharing, and comparing American culture and their home country culture (they may be coming from all over the world!)

For Speech Emersion participants (those with 1-3 year of English exposure), focus on increasing their ability and the complexity of what they can read, write, and speak. Some projects you might want to undertake with them include:

- Creating a 'zine or blog with photos that they take and short essays

- Giving pre-prepared short oral presentations or acting out theatrical scenes

- Interviewing one another (in English!)

- Making short movies about a topic that interests them

HOW TO

Provide Direct English Instruction/Language Support

For Intermediate and Advanced Fluency participants (3-7 years of English exposure), focus on building advanced syntax and more complex vocabulary. Some ideas for activities could include:

- Writing and reading poetry and learning about English "figures of speech" (check out YouthSpeaks.org)

- Writing song/rap lyrics that rhyme, and recording their music

- Reading popular novels and discussing them in a "book club" format

- Reading the newspaper and discussing articles that catch their interest

What Should I Have in My Toolbox?

- ❑ Lesson ideas can be found on websites such as www.ESPprintables.com

- ❑ Access to equipment to help create projects (recording equipment, video cameras, computers, etc.)

- ❑ Equipment can be expensive, but you may be able to get donations, work it into your annual budget, or find low-cost alternatives like phones or computer web-cams.

$

I have a tight budget, what is this going to cost me?