Special Considerations

Teaching the Program in Multi-age Classrooms

If you are teaching a multi-age class, we recommend that you choose the level of the program that is appropriate for the majority of your students to use throughout the school year. Since the program provides instruction through read-aloud texts selected to be accessible to a wide range of students and includes time for Individualized Daily Reading practice and individual conferences, all of your students will be able to develop comfortably as readers even if the lessons are designed for students at a lower or higher grade level.

Support for English Language Learners (ELLs)

The Making Meaning program helps you implement effective teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs). English Language Development (ELD) strategies are an inherent part of the program’s design. In addition, through ELL Notes, we provide you with suggestions for modifying the instruction to enhance support for ELLs.

While the Making Meaning program is an effective tool in teaching comprehension to ELLs, it is not intended to stand alone as a comprehensive linguistic development program. It is assumed that additional support in second language acquisition is occurring for ELLs outside of this program.

ABOUT TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION TO ELLs

One myth about teaching ELLs is that good teaching alone will meet these students’ linguistic and academic needs, and that they will simply “pick up” the language in the typical classroom context. While “good teaching” (using developmental, research-based instructional strategies) certainly benefits students learning English, it is important to build on each student’s specific academic and linguistic strengths and plan instruction based on his or her needs. The first step is to develop an accurate picture of each child’s level of English language proficiency and his or her previous academic experience.

STAGES OF SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Learning a new language is a developmental process. The table on the next page outlines the generally accepted stages of acquiring a language and the characteristics of students in an
immersion classroom at each stage. In an immersion classroom, the students are instructed in their second language (English) for all subjects. Progress from one stage to the next depends on a wide variety of factors, including cognitive and social development, maturity, previous academic experience, family education, home literacy practices, personality, cultural background, and individual learning styles.

### Stages of Second Language Acquisition

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<tr>
<th>Developmental Stages of Language Proficiency (under immersion)</th>
<th>Student Characteristics</th>
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| **Stage 1: Receptive or Preproduction (can last up to 6 months)** | Often nonverbal during this period  
Acquires receptive vocabulary (words and ideas that children “take in” or learn before they begin to produce words verbally)  
Conveys understanding through drawing, writing, and gesturing  
Gradually becomes more comfortable in the classroom |
| **Stage 2: Early Production (can last 6 months to 1 year)** | Comprehends simple language  
Communicates with one key word and short phrases  
Verbally labels and categorizes  
Listens more attentively  
Begins to use present tense  
Writes words and some simple sentences |
| **Stage 3: Speech Emergence (can last 1 to 3 years)** | Has good comprehension of conversational language  
Sequences stories using words and pictures  
Is challenged by figurative language  
Speaks and writes simple sentences |
| **Stage 4: Intermediate Fluency (can last 3 to 5 years)** | Has excellent comprehension  
Uses newly acquired vocabulary  
 Speaks, reads, and writes more complex sentences  
Participates in academic discussions  
Makes few grammatical errors  
May continue to be challenged by idioms and figurative language  
Demonstrates higher-order skills, such as analyzing, predicting, debating, etc. |
| **Stage 5: Advanced Fluency (can last 5 to 7 years)** | Has near-native fluency  
Demonstrates excellent comprehension  
Continues to develop academic vocabulary  
Continues to speak, read, and write increasingly complex sentences |
CONSIDERATIONS FOR PAIRING ELLs

A key practice in the *Making Meaning* program is to have students work in unit-long partnerships. Random pairing is suggested as a way to ensure equity by reinforcing the value of each child in the classroom (see “Random Pairing” on page xxvii). However, when considering the needs of English Language Learners, it may be advantageous to partner these students in a more strategic way. You might pair a beginning English speaker with a fluent English or multilingual speaker. It can be effective if the multilingual partner shares the ELL’s primary language, but we recommend prudence in asking the more fluent English speaker to serve as translator. Another option is to place ELLs in trios with fluent English speakers to allow them more opportunities to hear English spoken in conversation. In this case, it is important to make sure that all three students are participating and including one another in the work.

HOW THE MAKING MEANING PROGRAM SUPPORTS ELLs

There are several effective English Language Development instructional strategies integrated throughout the *Making Meaning* program. These strategies help make the content engaging and comprehensible, support the students at their individual levels of language proficiency, and help the students see themselves as valuable members of the classroom community. The strategies included are shown in the chart below.

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### English Language Development (ELD) Strategies in the *Making Meaning* Program

| Creating a respectful, safe learning community | Active, responsible learning  
High expectations for classroom interactions  
Explicit classroom procedures and routines  
Explicit social skills instruction  
Regular discussions to reflect on classroom values and community |
| Cooperative learning | Cooperative structures (“Turn to Your Partner” and “Think, Pair, Share”)  
Ongoing peer partnerships  
Opportunities to express thinking orally and listen to others’ thinking  
Discussing reading with partners  
Sharing work and reflecting |
| Authentic communication | Whole-class, small-group, and partner discussions about interesting and important texts and topics  
Opportunities to respond to or engage with a text in a variety of modalities (discussion, writing, drawing) |
| Vocabulary development | Opportunities to preview and discuss read-aloud texts before lessons  
Building academic vocabulary |

*continues*
English Language Development (ELD) Strategies in the Making Meaning Program (continued)

| Language-rich environment | Rich, meaningful literature  
Engaging texts and book art  
Daily opportunities for listening, speaking, reading, and writing |
| Scaffolded instruction | Explicit teacher modeling  
Rereading text  
Prompts to begin responses  
Drawing on prior knowledge and experience  
Building background knowledge |
| Critical thinking | Questions that prompt higher-order thinking  
Exploring and responding to different viewpoints  
Generating independent thinking |

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING ELLs

In addition to the practices embedded in the Making Meaning lessons, ELL Notes provide specific suggestions for adapting instruction to meet the needs of English Language Learners. In addition, you can implement a number of general strategies to help ELLs participate more fully in the program. These include:

- **Speaking slowly.** Beginning English speakers can miss a great deal when the language goes by too quickly. Modifying your rate of speech can make a big difference in helping them to understand you.

- **Using visual aids and technology.** Photographs, realia (real objects), diagrams, and even quick sketches can help to increase a student’s comprehension. When giving directions, physically modeling the steps and writing them where the students can see them while saying them aloud are effective ways to boost comprehension. Audiovisual resources, such as recordings of texts read aloud, author interviews, and interactive versions of read-alouds can also be helpful.

- **Inviting expression through movement and art.** Having students express their thinking through movement and art can be enormously powerful. Drawing, painting, dancing, mimicking, role-playing, acting, singing, and chanting rhymes are effective ways for students to increase comprehension, build vocabulary, and convey understanding. The Total Physical Response (TPR) method developed by James Asher helps children build concepts and vocabulary by giving them increasingly complex verbal prompts (stand, sit, jump, etc.) that they act out physically and nonverbally (see the Bibliography on page 652).

- **Building vocabulary.** ELL vocabulary is highlighted for most read-alouds in the program, and we recommend that you introduce this vocabulary (discuss it, act it
out, draw it, etc.) and define it before and during the reading. In addition, you might brainstorm words related to particular read-alouds or themes. The students can then illustrate each word and post the illustrations next to the printed words, creating a visual chart to refer to as they read or listen to the read-aloud.

- **Preteaching.** It is a good idea to preteach concepts with ELLs whenever possible. This can mean previewing vocabulary, doing a picture walk of a story, or looking at realia or photographs before a lesson. Preteaching in a student’s primary language can be particularly effective—teachers, instructional aides, parents, or other community members can be enlisted to help. Some of the *Making Meaning* read-aloud books are available in Spanish. For a list of these titles, visit Center for the Collaborative Classroom’s website (collaborativeclassroom.org).

- **Simplifying questions.** Open-ended questions are used throughout the *Making Meaning* program to elicit language and higher-order thinking from students. These questions are often more complex in structure than closed or one-word-answer questions. While all learners, including ELLs, benefit from the opportunity to consider such questions, you might modify complicated questions into simpler ones to increase comprehension and participation by your ELLs. The table below lists some suggestions for simplifying questions.

### Suggestions for Simplifying Questions

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<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
<th>Original Question</th>
<th>Simplified Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use the simple present tense.</td>
<td>What was happening at the beginning of the story?</td>
<td>What happens at the beginning of the story?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use active rather than passive voice.</td>
<td>How was the window broken in the story?</td>
<td>Who broke the window in the story?</td>
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<td>Ask who/what/where/when questions rather than how/why questions.</td>
<td>How are you and your partner working together?</td>
<td>What do you and your partner do to work well together?</td>
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<td>Avoid the subjunctive.</td>
<td>After hearing this part of the book, what do you think raptors might have looked like?</td>
<td>The part of the book we read today describes raptors. What do you think raptors looked like?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide definitions in the question.</td>
<td>Why is the old woman so reluctant to name the dog?</td>
<td>The old woman is reluctant; she does not want to name the dog. Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide context clues as part of the question.</td>
<td>Why is Sally Jane’s visit to the reservoir important?</td>
<td>At the end of the story, Sally Jane visits the reservoir and thinks about what her mother said. What is important about that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicit nonverbal responses. (Stages 1–3)</td>
<td>What do you see in this picture that tells about the words?</td>
<td>This picture shows the sentence “I like to paint.” Point to the paints. Point to the paintbrushes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elicit responses of 1–2 words or short phrases. (Stages 1–3)</td>
<td>What do you think will happen when Peter puts the snowball in his pocket?</td>
<td>Peter puts the snowball in his pocket. Is that a good idea?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
• **Assessing comprehension.** When students are in the preproduction and early production stages of language acquisition, it can be hard to assess exactly what they understand. It is important not to confuse lack of verbal response with lack of understanding. Rather than force ELLs to produce language before they are ready (which can raise anxiety and inhibit their progress), you can assess nonverbal responses while the students are actively engaged by asking yourself questions such as:

- Do the student’s drawings and written symbols communicate thinking or show evidence of my teaching (such as completing a sentence frame and illustrating it appropriately, or including a beginning, middle, and end of a story)?
- Does the student nod, laugh, or demonstrate engagement through other facial expressions?
- Does the student pick up academic and social cues from peers?
- Does the student follow classroom signals and routines?
- Does the student follow simple directions (such as “Please get out your pencils”)?
- Does the student utter, chant, or sing some familiar words or phrases?

**ADDITIONAL MODIFICATIONS FOR ELLs**

The additional English Language Development strategies outlined below can help you better meet the specific linguistic needs of your ELLs. These strategies can be implemented in small groups with your English Language Learners.

**Read-aloud Lessons**

- **Preview vocabulary.** Ask ELLs to draw or act out vocabulary and encourage them to give examples.
- **Take a picture walk.** Give ELLs an opportunity to become familiar with the illustrations in a text and make predictions to increase comprehension.
- **Modify cooperative structures.** Provide question prompts for verbal ELLs to use in partner conversations (for example, “Ask your partner, ‘What will happen next?’”) and allow nonverbal ELL students to gesture, draw, act out, or write their ideas for their partners.

**Strategy Lessons**

- **Use multiple modalities.** Encourage ELLs to use drama, drawing, realia, and writing to practice comprehension strategies.
• **Create visual aids.** Use chart paper or otherwise visually record the important parts of class discussions.

• **Review vocabulary.** Emphasize vocabulary and story language to help ELLs make sense of a text and use vocabulary meaningfully.

Guided Strategy Practice Lessons

• **Role-play or reenact parts of the text.** Encourage ELLs to demonstrate comprehension through active means.

• **Use journals.** Ask ELLs to draw or to draw and label in their reading journals to express their ideas. Have them share their drawings or writing with a partner as a “rehearsal” before sharing with the class.

• **Use visualizing.** Provide opportunities for the students to create and describe mental images from a text as a way to enhance their comprehension.

Independent Strategy Practice Lessons

• **Review the strategy.** While the students are working independently, have ELLs work in small groups to reinforce the strategy. Check in with the groups to assess the students’ comprehension.

• **Have pairs or small groups share.** Have ELLs work in pairs or small groups to present their ideas to the whole class.

• **Prepare for class discussions.** Support participation in class discussions by giving ELLs time to “rehearse” what they want to share. Encourage them to share examples from a text or their own pictures or writing.

Individualized Daily Reading (IDR)

IDR is an excellent opportunity to provide ELLs with targeted comprehension support. Here are several ways to differentiate instruction during IDR:

• **Provide audiobooks.** Provide a variety of audiobooks so ELLs can listen to a story, hear standard pronunciation, develop story language, and increase their understanding.

• **Use partner reading.** Have ELLs read a book with a partner.

• **Respond to literature.** Ask ELLs to draw or write a response to the text they are reading independently (for example, draw the main character or write a sentence describing the problem in the story).

• **Offer one-on-one support.** Enlist instructional assistants, student tutors, student teachers, primary-language speakers, and parents to read with ELL students during IDR.