

Video Transcript

Part 2 Tutorial: California's Values for Educating English Learners

Hi, I'm Pam Spycher from WestEd and I'll be your guide for this tutorial. For English learners, a content-rich curriculum also needs to be consistent with what we know from the research on English learners, which shapes our shared values. These are some of the values called out in the California ELA/ELD Curriculum Framework, which provides guidance on implementing the California Common Core State Standards for ELA/Literacy and the California ELD standards.

The first value — Valuing Language and Culture as Assets — signals that English learners should receive instruction that values their home cultures and primary languages as assets and builds upon them for new learning.

Ensuring Equity in Intellectual Richness means that English learners benefit from the same high expectations of learning established for all students and that they routinely engage in intellectually rich tasks across the disciplines.

Building Content Knowledge and Language in Tandem signals that English learners engage in instruction that promotes content and language learning *in tandem* in all disciplines.

Attending to Specific Language Learning Needs means that English language learning is fostered when targeted language instruction builds *into and from* content learning and attends specifically to English language proficiency levels and prior educational experiences in the primary language and English.

Integrating Domains of Communication signals that we need to support English learners to develop full proficiency in English in the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, consistent with expectations for all students. These domains are not taught in isolation, but rather, in an integrated way.

When we think about scaffolding, we need to remember that English learners thrive in instructional environments where teachers intentionally support them to fully engage with intellectually challenging content with strategic support. Scaffolding is tailored to student needs with the ultimate goal of student autonomy.

English learners' progress in developing content knowledge and academic English are best evaluated with intentional, appropriate, and valid assessment tools that take into account English language proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds.

And finally, we all know that nobody can do this work alone. English learners' positive educational experiences and academic success is a responsibility shared by all educators, families, and communities. I'm going to briefly discuss these shared values.

The first one has to do with viewing the cultural and linguistic resources students bring with them to school as assets, valuable in their own right and also as resources for learning new language and ideas. There are many ways schools and individual teachers can value home language and culture.

One way is through dual language programs where students have an opportunity to become fully biliterate in both their primary language and English. Research evidence indicates that bilingual programs where biliteracy is the goal promote literacy in English, as well as primary language and literacy.

For all students, bilingualism is a cognitive and linguistic asset. Developing the language used in the home by parents, grandparents, or other relatives also promotes healthy self-image, pride in one's heritage, and greater connection with one's community. This cultural awareness and appreciation for diversity is, in fact, critical for *all* students to develop in order to prepare to be global-minded individuals.

However, most of California's English learners are not enrolled in bilingual programs, but teachers can still provide primary language support, which fosters the development of English. This can be as straightforward as drawing students' attention to cognates, or words that look and sound similar in two or more languages and mean the same thing. For example, the word for furious in Spanish is furioso. But if an English learner who speaks Spanish is not aware of cognates, they may miss that.

Primary language support can also mean allowing students to use their primary language for conversations or for other literacy activities to support their understandings in English.

All students bring to the classroom "funds of knowledge" – or cultural and experiential knowledge that is important in its own right and also useful for school learning – as Moll and Gonzalez have demonstrated. When teachers are aware of the "funds of knowledge" their students bring with them, they can create "zones of possibilities," in which academic learning is enhanced by the bridging of family and community ways of knowing with the school curriculum.

Collaborating with parents and communities is also essential for fully supporting all students to fulfill their full potential. Some of this involves working with parents to understand and navigate through the American educational system, which may be an unfamiliar entity, but all of it involves approaching our relationships with parents and families as a partnership.

Ensuring equity and access to an intellectually rich curriculum involves both the content students have full access to and the way in which this content is taught.

Tasks need to be responsive to English learners particular language learning needs and also to cultural and linguistic diversity. Tasks also need to attend to motivation and engagement, be interactive, and include many opportunities for students to discuss their ideas.

In addition to high-quality English language arts and mathematics instruction, an intellectually-rich curriculum must include equitable access to science, history and social studies, the arts, and other subjects.

Being fully immersed in a range of disciplines is necessary not only for cognitive development. It's also critical for language development. From a language perspective, it's impossible to fully develop advanced English in a curriculum that does not include all of the core disciplines. Students cannot develop the language of science or history, for example, if they are not fully immersed in those subjects.

Furthermore, it's highly beneficial when English learners can see themselves reflected in the curriculum. This could mean that in history, for example, teachers attend to the historical contributions of people who share their students' cultural backgrounds. Or it could mean studying meaningful topics for particular groups of English learners, including topics such as immigration.

Ensuring that English learners have full access to the arts is critical. Through theater, poetry, music, dance, painting, etc. , students can expand their world view, learn more about themselves, and feel more engaged in school.

This means that schools and districts need to think carefully about how they structure the day so that English learners have full access to a full and balanced curriculum. This may mean making changes in how the school day is structured.

That was a lot of information. Please pause this video and take a moment to think about how this new learning relates to what you already know, as well as any potential challenges and opportunities you see. Jot down some ideas or just share what you find with a colleague nearby.