

ELL EDUCATION DEPT. NEWSLETTER

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Dear Norwalk Educators,

Welcome to the ELL Education Department Newsletter! We will continue to offer useful information as you strive to meet the needs of your English Language Learners (ELLs), as well as, other students who need extra support. In this issue, we share a letter about the difficulties ELLs experience with grade level content materials. We decided to address this concern in several of our columns below. Please continue to write to us - we love hearing from you!

Ask the ELL Education Dept:



Dear ELL Teachers,

I am very frustrated. I have several ELLs in my class and they cannot understand the content materials. What should I do?? HELP!!

Concerned Teacher

Dear Concerned,

Your frustration is shared by many teachers in the district. Before you attempt to have ELLs read difficult content materials, it is important to prepare your ELLs beforehand. Here are some suggestions:

Prepare your students for reading by using pictures, photos, real objects, gestures, and graphic organizers. You can use the two websites suggested in this newsletter to help you, and/or google your topic to find simplified text or text in native language for your students to read before the lesson. Perhaps your students can work with partners or an aide to do these important pre-reading activities.

See the column "Classroom Tips" for ideas after your students have completed pre-reading activities.

Classroom Tips:



Graphic Organizers for Content Instruction

Content materials often contain text which is too wordy and complicated for ELLs. In order to make content-area information more accessible to ELLs, the main points of the content can be put into manageable chunks in a graphic organizer such as a web, Venn diagram, or chart. These are visual tools that help ELLs comprehend and organize the content.

You may be thinking, "Who has the time to do this?" How about this: Have your native English speakers fill in the graphic organizers for the ELLs! This activity will benefit the native English speakers by improving their skills in summarizing and interpreting text, and will benefit the ELLs by supplying them with a comprehensible "text."

Everyone wins!!

As their English proficiency improves, ELLs can be taught to fill in graphic organizers on their own to aide in their understanding and interpretation of content.

Articles/Resources:



An excellent article entitled, "What Does Research Tell Us About Teaching Reading to English Language Learners?" can be found at:

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/19757>

The article discusses the five "essential elements" of reading instruction - phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension - and how they apply to ELLs.

On the Web:



A great website for easily downloading a wide range of graphic organizers to help you with content instruction is:

<http://www.freeology.com>

Click on "graphic organizers" and then scroll down. You will find many graphic organizers from which to choose depending on your lesson and grade level.

Explore other parts of the site - there are many good resources for teachers (games, puzzles, worksheets, certificates, forms, posters, etc).

Thanks to one of our readers, Lisa Malizia, teacher at Fox Run Elementary School, for letting us know about:

<http://www.eslflashcards.com>

Use it to download free flashcards for teaching your ELLs basic vocabulary in a variety of categories.

District/Community News:



Saturday Newcomer Academy

Our free Saturday Newcomer Academy is in its fourth year! It takes place at Brookside School on Saturdays from 9:30am - 1:00pm (lunch included) and is open to parents who have been in the U.S. for about three years or less. Parents learn English and attend workshops given by various community agencies. In addition, they learn about the Norwalk Public Schools (conferences, CMTs, graduation requirements, etc). It is run by our new Bilingual Parent Coordinator, Annette Esposito. If you know of any parents of ELLs who might benefit, or if you have any questions, please call Annette at 854-4091.

Natalia Rodriguez Memorial Scholarship

We dearly miss Natalia, who served as our Bilingual Parent Coordinator for many years, helping hundreds of families from around the world, settle in our community. In her honor, we have established a college scholarship, to be awarded yearly to one ELL or former ELL from each of our three high schools. Applications will be available later this spring. A fundraiser is being planned for April 23 - watch for the invitation to follow in the next few weeks.