



Working with Newcomer English Learners

October 2023



Things Successful Teachers Ask About Their Newcomer Students:

1. What language(s) does my student speak/ understand/ write?
2. What type of education have they received?
3. What is their reading and math proficiency in their primary language?
4. What is my student's life story?
5. What should I know about my student's family?



Remember:
it takes 5 to
7 years to
become
proficient in
a language.

PREPRODUCTION
(Silent/No English)

CHARACTERISTICS:
Students have very few oral skills and may only respond nonverbally by pointing, gesturing, nodding, or drawing.

APPROX TIME FRAME:
0 - 6 months

TEACHER PROMPTS:
Show me...
Circle the...
Where is...?
Who has ...?

VOCABULARY:
500 known words

ABLE TO:
Observe, Listen, Locate,
Label, Match, Show,
Classify, Categorize

1

EARLY PRODUCTION
(Receptive English Only)

CHARACTERISTICS:
Students listen with greater understanding and can produce a limited number of words, phrases, and simple sentences.

APPROX TIME FRAME:
6 months - 1 year

TEACHER PROMPTS:
Yes/No questions
Either/or questions
One or two word answers
Lists
Tables

VOCABULARY:
1,000 known words

ABLE TO:
Name, Recall, Draw, List,
Record, Point Out,
Underline, Organize

2

SPEECH EMERGENCE
(Survival English)

CHARACTERISTICS:
Students have better comprehension and produce simple sentences. Makes grammar and pronunciation errors.

APPROX TIME FRAME:
1 - 3 years

TEACHER PROMPTS:
Why ...?
How ...?
Explain ...?
Phrase or short sentence answers

VOCABULARY:
3,000 known words

ABLE TO:
Tell, Describe, Restate,
Compare, Question, Map,
Dramatize

3

INTERMEDIATE FLUENCY

CHARACTERISTICS:
Students demonstrate increased levels of accuracy and correctness and are able to express thoughts and feelings.

APPROX TIME FRAME:
3 - 5 years

TEACHER PROMPTS:
What would happen if...?
Why do you think ...?

VOCABULARY:
6,000 known words

ABLE TO:
Create, Contrast, Predict,
Express, Report, Evaluate,
Explain

4

ADVANCED FLUENCY
(Proficient English)

CHARACTERISTICS:
Students produce language utilizing varied grammatical structures and vocabulary, comparable to native speakers of the same age.

APPROX TIME FRAME:
5 - 7 years

TEACHER PROMPTS:
Decide if ...?
Retell ...?

VOCABULARY:
Content area vocabulary

ABLE TO:
Infer, Hypothesize,
Outline, Rewrite, Assess,
Critique, Summarize, etc.

5

Practical Tips for Assisting Newcomers

1. Speak clearly and at a natural rate, not rushed or too quickly.
2. Extend time periods for responding to prompts/ questions (“wait time”).
3. Avoid using idioms until students are more familiar with our culture & language, or if you use them, take the time to explain them.
4. Connect to background knowledge/ previous learning.
5. Provide ways for them to demonstrate their understanding of the content, which may not be from a traditional test.
6. Use visual aids: pictures, illustrations, graphs, pictographs, etc.
7. Let newcomers work with English proficient partners.
8. Read aloud grade level, complex text. Make sure the text is displayed in a way that all students can easily see it.



Practical Tips for Assisting Newcomers

Assess prior knowledge

Build background

Check for understanding

Deliver comprehensible
input

Engage and empower



Practical Tips for Assisting Newcomers

6 Teaching "Do's"

Allow ample time for processing

ELs need opportunities to process information.

Pause to have ELs collaboratively clarify new knowledge.



Differentiate

Keep the grade-level standards the same.

Differentiate the process, product, or topic to allow ELs to meet the standards.



Break tasks into steps

Break down all the parts of the assignment into manageable steps.

This scaffolds the engagement with the task while maintaining its rigor.



Teach with visuals



Cement concepts with images, videos, diagrams, & graphs.

Teach language



Use sentence starters & frames to teach academic language.

Use home language

Invite ELs to use their home languages to process new content & to be understood.



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