

**Best Practices Cheat Sheet for English Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom**

Below you will find some quick tips and strategies for supporting English Language Learners (ELLs) in your classroom. These strategies and techniques will probably help all students in your classroom, not just the ELLs.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Modeling**  Model for students what they are expected to do or produce, especially when it’s a new skill or activity. Explain and demonstrate the learning action and goal. Share your thinking process with students. Show exemplar samples of what you expect to see from the students. | **Rate of Speech and Wait Time**  ELLs are thinking and producing in two (or more) languages. Speak slowly and articulately. Use hand motions and body language as much as possible. After you ask a question or prompt a response, provide enough time for students to process and answer. Wait for the 5th hand instead of the 1st. |
| **Use of Pictures and Other Non-linguistic Cues**  Use visuals, sketches, gestures, intonation, graphic organizers and other nonverbal cues to make both language and content more accessible to students. Teaching with visual representations of concepts can be extremely helpful for ELLs. Try to avoid “lecturing” for more than 10 minutes at a time. | **Verbal and Written Instructions**  Give verbal *and* written instructions – this is especially helpful for all students, not just ELLs. This will allow students to reference the written instructions in case they didn’t understand the verbal. It can also be helpful for ELLs to have sequenced, step-by-step instructions. |
| **Check for Understanding**  Regularly check that students understand the lesson – both the content and the procedure. Avoid asking “Are there any questions?” Instead, call on students to repeat to the class what needs to be done. For ELLs, develop a system or sign (green/red cards, thumbs up/down, etc) that they can use to communicate their understanding to you. Circulate the classroom to check-in on all students, especially ELLs. | **Sentence Starters and Paragraph Frames**  For writing and speaking activities, sentence starters and paragraph frames can be incredibly helpful for ELLs. For example, a sentence frame for parts of government would be “The three parts of government include…” A list of sentence starters can also be helpful for class discussions as well. ELLs can think more about the content and less about grammar and sentence structure. It takes some preparation and anticipation, but it will definitely help your ELLs participate more. |