

Tier I Best Practices for Early Childhood English Learners/Classroom Strategies

Preschool ELs are still building a foundation for home language in order to form a firm foundation for English language acquisition, so they will need support in both languages. Teachers should utilize thoughtful, intentional teaching strategies and create classroom environments specifically organized to meet those needs. With scaffolded English support at school and native language support at home, children will be able to grow up in a bilingual environment which assists in developing:

- better working memory,
- enhanced executive function,
- greater ability to easily switch from one task to another,
- persistence in completing challenging tasks.

(NCSI, December 2017)

Suggested Best Practices for Early Childhood

| RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE | EXPLANATION |
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| Use both monolingual and bilingual books for the languages of the students in your classroom (including fiction and non-fiction audio books) | Audio books will aid students with pronunciation of words in other languages. In addition, the use of wordless books also assists students in understanding the way books progress from front to back and how they tell a story. |
| Label items in the room in all languages used by children in your classroom | Use index cards to write the names of classroom objects such as chairs, desks, pencil sharpeners, etc. and tape them to the objects. If possible, label the objects in all languages represented by the students in the class. A way to involve EL parents is to ask them to assist with labeling classroom items and for the proper phonetic spelling of foreign words. |
| Use music in different languages | Music's rhythm and repetition are dynamic tools in helping students acquire English language skills. When coupled with movement it is even more powerful in building understanding of English words. Families can be encouraged to share their favorite native-language folk songs, poems, and finger plays to be done with the class. |

| RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICE | EXPLANATION |
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| <p>Learn 10-20 key words/phrases in the child’s home language to help them feel welcome, safe and comfortable.</p> | <p>Learning a few common words or phrases in the EL student’s first language may make the child feel more comfortable as well as show them that you respect their language. Suggestions for key words/phrases to start with are: hello, my name is..., eat, drink, hurt, bathroom, your parents will be here soon, wash your hands, help, yes, and no. Additional language learning resources are available Resources for Teachers and Administrators in Appendix B.</p> |
| <p>Make use of a picture communication board and/or cards on an O-ring for needs or feelings</p> | <p>Words such as happy, sad, helping each other, cleaning up toys, going outside, solving a conflict, and other daily routines may be useful. Newcomer Communication Cards are available on the MDE English Learner page to help with implementation.</p> |
| <p>Build connections in math with what children already know for examples of counting, comparing quantities, ordering objects, creating and identifying patterns, identifying and comparing shapes, measuring and sorting</p> | <p>Using commonly recognizable materials and simple vocabulary will give students clues about the skills they are learning.</p> |
| <p>Learn one or two words in the child’s home language when introducing new concepts, to incorporate as the rest of the lesson is taught in English</p> | <p>This will help the child to learn simple vocabulary and when coupled with well-planned hands-on activities will help EL students learn concepts as well as simple vocabulary. Check with parents or others who know the language to ensure that you are using the correct word and pronunciation. Correct pronunciation is essential for early learners to aid in their language development in both home language and English.</p> |

For additional assistance on ways to implement strategies for early childhood English learners, visit the [National Association for the Education of Young Children’s](#) site.