

# IU8 ESL CONSORTIUM NEWSLETTER



Appalachia Intermediate Unit 8  
4500 6th Avenue  
Altoona, PA 16602  
Phone: 814-940-0223  
Fax: 814-949-0984

Curriculum, Training and  
Development Services

Kay Meyers  
Assistant Executive Director  
(814) 940-0223 x 356  
akm@iu08.org

Laura Toki  
Assistant Director of Curriculum  
(814) 940-0223 x338  
toki@iu08.org

Leonard Shurin  
Curriculum and Staff Development

WE'RE ON THE WEB!  
[www.iu08.org](http://www.iu08.org)

## Helping LEP Students Adjust to the Classroom

Content area teachers often ask, "What can I do to accommodate an ELL?" Here are some excellent techniques to use.

LEP students are faced with the challenge of learning English as well as the school culture. Teachers can help them adjust to their new language and environment in the following ways:

### **Announce the lesson's objectives and activities.**

It is important to write the objectives on the board and review them orally before the class begins. It is also helpful to place the lesson in the context of its broader theme and preview upcoming lessons.

### **Write legibly.**

Teachers need to remember that some students have low levels of literacy or are unaccustomed to the Roman alphabet.

### **Develop and maintain routines.**

Routines will help LEP students anticipate what will happen (e.g., types of assignments, ways of giving instructions) without relying solely on language cues.

### **List and review instructions step by step.**

Before students begin an activity, teachers should familiarize them with the entire list of instructions. Then, teachers should have students work on each step individually

before moving on to the next step. This procedure is ideal for teaching students to solve math and science word problems.

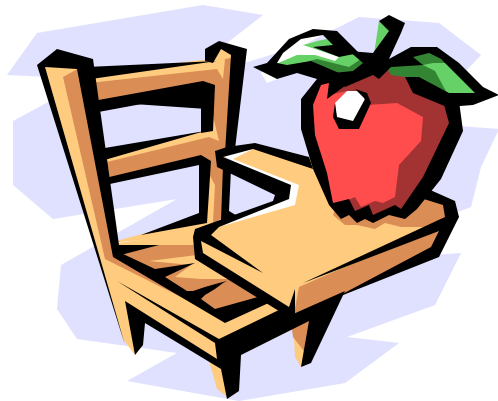
### **Present frequent summations on the salient points of the lesson.**

Teachers should (1) try to use visual reviews with lists and charts, (2) paraphrase the salient points where appropriate, and (3) have students provide oral summaries.

### **Present information in varied ways.**

By using multiple media in the classroom, teachers reduce reliance on language and place the information in a context that is more comprehensible to the students.

Be sure to list adjustments or accommodations for ELLs in your lesson plan book as required by state and federal law.



**Special Hint: Try Group Work!**

## Frequently Asked Questions

Over time, I have noticed that a number of questions have been asked by educators or districts as they work diligently to create an ESL program in their school or district. The intent of this article is to provide you with the answers to the questions that are most frequently asked. As more and more questions are asked, I can update you on the answers I provide. Hopefully, you can learn from someone else's thoughts as well.

**Question #1:** Is PDE going to extend the date of September 1, 2004 as the deadline to have an ESL program specialist employed in a school district?

**Answer #1:** PDE has made a commitment to the Education Law Center, based in Philadelphia, and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), to hold to the September 1, 2004 deadline. Given that, it is unlikely to change.

**Question #2:** Can we schedule our ESL classes after the school day is over?

**Answer #2:** The ESL class is a core curriculum. It replaces English classes. It cannot be scheduled after school any more than a science or math class would be scheduled after school. It **must** be scheduled during the day. Additionally, scheduling ESL classes after the day would deny an ELL participation in after-school activities.

**Question #3:** Our English teacher (or Spanish or French teacher) is also our ESL teacher. When the ELL is in that class, doesn't that count as the ESL class?

**Answer #3:** An ELL must be in a class specifically and clearly designated as an ESL class. Additionally, you cannot pay a teacher as an English teacher, or Spanish, or French teacher when he or she is teaching ESL. The teacher must be paid out of the ESL budget. It is possible to leave the ELL in English class if an ESL teacher is brought in for the entire class period to teach the ESL stu-

dent along with English teacher. This is called a **push-in** program, and would mean that two teachers are in the same room.

**Question #4:** We have been told that our school must have a special orientation for ELLs. Why can't we just have the ELL student go through the regular student orientation without creating a special one?

**Answer #4:** The first few days in a new school are crucial to the success of an ELL. The ELL has different needs and problems that traditional students do not. PDE expects that the school will have an orientation designed specifically to assist the ELL feel welcome at the new school.

**Question #5:** We see our ESL teacher as a tutor who will assist the content area teachers by helping those teachers with assignments, tests, vocabulary, etc. when teaching an ELL. Content area teachers would simply send their assignments to the ESL classroom when the ESL teacher is working with the ELL. Can we do that?

**Answer #5:** The ESL teacher may serve peripherally as a resource for the content area teachers, but the ESL teacher is not responsible for doing any of the work of the content area teachers. The content area teachers are responsible for providing modifications and accommodations to their teaching methods, teaching techniques, classroom materials, and assessments so as to provide a learning environment suitable to the English proficiency level of the ELL. The ESL teacher is to provide instruction in English reading, writing, listening and speaking. The ESL teacher must not be teaching content area subjects any more than a social studies teacher would be teaching physics or chemistry.

**Question #6:** We have heard of school districts across the state that ignored the ESL requirements, and they have had no problems. Is this true?

**Answer #6:** Over the last few years, eleven school districts in Pennsylvania that have been out of compliance with ESL requirements have suffered consequences, which have included court costs and fines, loss of administrative credentials, and other sanctions.

**Question #7:** Previously, we were told that our ESL curriculum was due at PDE by August 15, 2003. This was cancelled. However, have they set a new date?

**Answer #7:** As of this printing, no new deadline has been set.

**Question #8:** A non-profit organization has brought an ELL to our district. This organization has offered to pay for the child's education, since by her background she is obviously a non-English speaker and would not be here except for this organization. What do I do?

**Answer #8:** The district cannot accept payment for the child, anymore than the district can charge for a public school education. The ESL program is an unfunded mandate and the district by law must have a line item budgeted to cover ESL costs. The only thing that can be required of a child is proof of residency and proof of immunizations. It does not matter if the child is an illegal alien or not. The district cannot ask for a birth certificate, a social security number, or a green card.



## Frequently Asked Questions (cont'd.)

**Question #9:** What is meant by age-appropriate placement?

**Answer #9:** The ELL must be placed age-appropriately. For example, if the ELL is 12, he or she would be in seventh grade, regardless of the child's proficiency level.

**Question #10:** My first grade teacher would like to fail her ELL student. She says it would be good for him and that his father approves. Can we fail this student?

**Answer #10:** A teacher cannot fail an ELL if the cause is due to lack of English proficiency.

I hope these questions and answers assist you when creating your own ESL program.



## When are Special Education Referrals Appropriate?

Specialists assume that approximately the same proportion of very bright individuals, cognitively limited individuals, language disabled individuals, etc. will be found in any population. Statistically, about 12% of the language minority population in the United States may require special education. In some school districts, language minority students are over-represented in special education, while in other districts there may be an under-representation of handicapped language minority students.

### The Prereferral Process

This is a screening and intervention process that involves identifying problems experienced by students in the regular classroom, identifying the source of the problems (students, teacher, curriculum, environment, etc.) and taking steps to resolve problems in the context of the regular classroom. This process seeks to eliminate unnecessary and inappro-

priate referrals to special education.

### Assessment and Referral

A referral to special education should happen only after all other avenues have been explored, and you conclude that the child's needs cannot be met by the regular education program. Confirmation of a handicap and identification of its specific nature are provided by a comprehensive assessment of the student. All referrals of LEP students to special education should include the results of tests in the child's native language and in English, and all records and reports on which the referral is based. Verify the appropriateness of the school's curriculum, the qualifications and experience of the teacher, and the appropriateness of instruction provided to the student (e.g., continuity, proper sequencing, the teaching of prerequisite skills). Document the child's problems across settings and personnel and provide evidence that the child's difficulties are present in both languages, and that he or she has not made satisfactory progress despite having received competent instruction. However, because many of these children are los-

ing or have not fully developed first language skills, it may be difficult to ascertain that the learning difficulty exists across languages. The ESL teacher, bilingual education teacher, and classroom teacher who work regularly with the LEP student will have the most important school-based observations and input in the assessment process. This, coupled with input from parents and guardians, becomes the foundation for the assessment process.

