

**Inside the School**

**Five  
Strategies to  
Use with English  
Language  
Learners**

By Joanna Marx-Talarczyk

**Special Report**

# Inside the School

## Inside the School Team

Bill Haight  
President

Diane Trim  
Editor and Content Manager

Joe Blewett  
Marketing Specialist

James Pederson  
Web Developer

Debra Lovelien  
Art Director

David Rice  
Technical Director

Mark Beyer  
Customer Service

Diane Heberlein  
Customer Service

Theresa Sandmire  
Customer Service

## Advisory Board

Amanda Barnett  
Middle school teacher, S. Carolina

Heather Warren  
Bilingual and Literacy Instructional  
Resource teacher, Wis.

Huckle Rahr  
Technical college instructor

Suzanne Zentner, Ph.D.  
Superintendent, Wis.

For More Special Reports Visit  
[www.INSIDEtheschool.com](http://www.INSIDEtheschool.com)

## Contact Information

Inside the School  
2718 Dryden Drive  
Madison, WI 53704  
800-433-0499 ext. 2  
[support@magnapubs.com](mailto:support@magnapubs.com)

Inside the School is a division of  
Magna Publications, Inc.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>5 Strategies to Use with English Language Learners.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Give students an opportunity to practice speaking .....	3
Give students an appropriate amount of wait time .....	4
Assess, give feedback and re-teach.....	5
Keep track of your data.....	6
Review and practice concepts.....	7

# 5 STRATEGIES TO USE WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

What is ESL? Who is an ELL? And what does it mean for a student to be ELD?

ESL—English as a Second Language—teachers Heather Warren and Kelly Jones have no problem defining these acronyms.

“[ELLs] are English Language Learners, those are students whose [home] language isn’t English,” Warren said. “ELD stands for English Language Deficient [...] oftentimes if they are deficient, that means that they need more support.”

Warren and Jones are both ELL teacher leaders and have nearly 20 years of experience teaching in ELL and bi-lingual classrooms. What follows are five strategies that you can easily incorporate into your teaching. These strategies work well with ELL students and are effective with native English speakers as well.

## **GIVE STUDENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTICE SPEAKING**

Oral language strategies can give students an opportunity to talk with each other and engage all students in the classroom.

“While we often think about designing oral language activities in order to practice new academic language,” Jones said, “research shows these strategies also give students natural ways to acquire everyday language.”

One activity is “A-B Talk.” One student is A and the other B. First A talks while B listens, without interrupting or sharing ideas. Then the students switch roles.

“I emphasize being an active listener without interrupting and it makes students accountable for speaking for a predetermined amount of time,” Jones said.

Everyday language, also called social language, includes language like “Whose turn is it?” or “Your time is up.” According to Jones, giving students the opportunity to use social language is just as important as the opportunity to use academic language.

“Often students will use their informal language as they move towards more academic language,” Jones said.

## **GIVE STUDENTS AN APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF WAIT TIME**

When ELLs listen to a question, they mentally translate that question into their first language. Then they think about their response in their first language; translate their response into English, and produce their answer in English.

“This takes a lot of time and, often, if students aren’t given enough wait time, they’ll simply say that it’s not worth it and they won’t think,” Jones said.

Rather than asking students to answer a question, ask students to raise their hand if they know the answer. This allows think time before giving the opportunity to answer. Another thing that works for Warren is counting in her head.

“That’s what keeps me busy and also keeps my mouth shut,” Warren said. “So I count in my head, one-one thousand, two-one thousand, and I actually go to twenty. Sometimes I speed up, but it’s really important for me to have an activity to do to monitor myself.”

## **ASSESS, GIVE FEEDBACK AND RE-TEACH**

Frequent assessments help teachers formulate feedback and focus on the concepts which they need to re-teach. According to Warren, frequent assessments, giving feedback and re-teaching lead to good instruction.

“This is a simple learning cycle,” Warren said. “What is important for us to keep in mind is that assessment is not a pen and paper test. The most useful and meaningful assessment are the formative ones, which occur before the test.”

Warren suggests giving students a question students have to answer on a small piece of paper before leaving the classroom, or an exit ticket, as a way to assess students; Another suggestion is to ask the students who understand the material to stand. Teachers can also walk around the room during A-B Talk and take notes about who’s talking and who’s not.

“Not only do you want to assess, but you want to make sure the students receive feedback,” Warren said. “So possibly the next day in class [...]you need to change your warm-up and you may want to engage students in more thorough discussion of your previous day’s objectives.”

## **KEEP TRACK OF YOUR DATA**

Keep a notebook for observations or jot things down in the lesson plan not only to assess content, but also language usage. Things to note could be whether or not a student is struggling to speak or what kind of academic language they are replacing with informal language.

*“It’s really easy, throughout the course of the day, to watch students and to think you know what they are doing,” Jones said. “But it’s hard sometimes to then go back and to really be reflective upon it unless you have some notes written down.”*

For Jones, having well tracked data helps her identify which students are struggling, remember those who impressed her in class, and monitor those who fall somewhere in the middle.

*“That allows you, when you’re creating your oral language strategies, to really think about what would be important for you to include,” Jones said.*

## REVIEW AND PRACTICE CONCEPTS

Use activities to facilitate review and practice. Some of Jones and Warren's favorite activities are Vocabulary Bingo and Concentration/Memory.

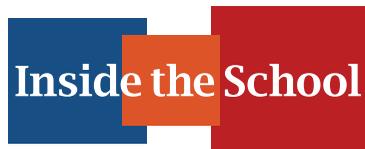
"That goes back to the old saying that you need to hear something eight million times before you subscribe to it," Warren said. "I'm making light of it, but it is very true. We all need to have frequent review and practice."

Warren suggests finding a few activities which are familiar and effective rather than trying to find a new activity everyday.

"Don't try to wow them with a new [activity] every time," Warren said. "We also hope that you understand that the strategies you already use and know are strategies that are good for your ELL students, too."

Teachers can apply these tips in their regular classrooms to better meet the needs of their ELL students. Incorporating oral activities into the lesson gives ELLs an opportunity to practice language while allowing the proper amount of wait time encourages them to participate. Keeping track of data enables teachers to better assess their students needs so that teachers can give more feedback and re-teach concepts which need to be reviewed. Practice allows students to absorb concepts.

These tips are not the entire answer to approaching ELL students, but Jones hopes that they will "ignite some conversations within your school community about how, together, you will address the needs of your English Language Learners."



2718 Dryden Drive  
Madison, WI 53704  
800-433-0499 ext. 2 · [www.InsideTheSchool.com](http://www.InsideTheSchool.com)  
[support@magnapubs.com](mailto:support@magnapubs.com)