

Leading Teachers to Delve into Language and Scaffold Writing

LwL Project goals

- Facilitating learning that integrates discussions, reading and writing
- Engaging students in positive and culturally and linguistically responsive learning
- Supporting students to learn about how language works to make meaning
- Scaffolding deeper learning and academic language development



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One of the things that we have been working on for a while is truly getting solid on instruction with our English learners (ELs) and really employing the most high-leverage strategies to help our ELs attain proficiency with academic language. Before Leading with Learning, we didn't really have a solid instructional sequence to guide our teaching. We were totally missing the part about analyzing text structure and delving deeply into the language of different text types. We would do things like, look at sequence using first, next, then, last. Now, with the Teaching and Learning Cycle and the work we've done with Leading with Learning, we've learned how to go really deeply into the language of different texts.

We now realize that in order to get students to produce certain types of writing, teachers need to study the structure of language and how different texts are organized.

The Teaching and Learning Cycle helps guide teachers' planning. In order to get your students to be able to write independently using academic language, the Teaching and Learning Cycle helps tremendously. If the goal is for your students to write an argumentative piece, for example, the Teaching and Learning Cycle can guide students through that process. We start by building background on the topic that students will later write about. We explore the language within that type of text structure. Once students get to explore the language of complex texts, they're able to construct texts jointly with the teacher and with each other, and this process leads them to writing academic texts independently.

That beautiful cycle has been huge. Our teachers have gone so far with it – it's been amazing. My fourth grade teachers were in awe of the level of writing that their English learners could produce. One of my teachers said, "I've always heard

about English learners making great gains, but I've never seen it work this well ever in my 20 years of teaching." That was huge for us – we celebrated students' gains and the level of writing the students were able to produce.

Using different pedagogies to support academic language acquisition

Leading with Learning has helped us figure out which pedagogies to use for which purposes. The keystone pedagogies that teachers learned through this project get to the critical elements that our English learners need, such as the deconstruction of language and knowing how English works and how to use language for different purposes. If you want students to write a certain way, you've got to study the structure of that kind of writing. You've got to study how the author transitions from one thought to the next, the whole part two of the English Language Development (ELD) standards – how English works.

For example, we've learned how to use text reconstruction, one of the keystone pedagogies, to be able to analyze text structure and talk about how the text works. We've also delved into the ELD standards. Because of our involvement in this project, we've gotten to know the ELD standards and what they look like in the classroom, as well as the English Language Arts/English Language Development ELA/ELD Framework. That has been very powerful professional development for our teachers.

Looking ahead

This work has had a big impact on our English learners and our teachers' professional development – teachers now deeply know how to teach language and how to teach writing. The impact is only going to get better as we delve deeper and implement the Teaching and Learning Cycle to its fullest in the coming year. I have seen the impact that this approach has had on our long-term English learners in particular – we ended the year with the vast majority of our English learners showing great gains in academic language proficiency. That's huge for us, and we are very excited.

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