Helping English Learners in Grades 6-12 Meet Standards for Literacy

How Can We Help ELLs Access Complex Text?

Participant Activity Handout

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Attaining Core Content for English Language Learners (ACCELL) Instructional Model

The instructional model presented here is divided into two parts: The first part focuses on reading and oral language development, and the second part focuses on writing. Each part consists of as many lessons as are needed to cover the text (e.g., the whole text or an excerpt of the text selected for study) and the writing tasks associated with it. Each part of the unit is made up of different components (e.g., previewing the text, acquiring vocabulary, reading for key ideas and details, independent writing). Teachers have discretion in selecting the number of components that are taught during an individual lesson.

Lesson Components

In this section, we provide explanations of each of the reading components.

READING

- 1. **Pre-Assessing Comprehension:** During this component, students take a pre-assessment. Generally, only one pre-assessment is associated with a text, but teachers have the option of pre-assessing students prior to any new section of the text. Teachers can read the text aloud, or students can read independently or with a partner prior to answering the pre-assessment questions. The pre-assessment should consist of a very limited number of questions that focus primarily on key ideas and details. Results of the pre-assessment help teachers determine the level of scaffolding their students require. The pre-assessment gives students an opportunity to answer questions following a cold read—a skill they will need when they take other assessments (either curriculum-based measures or standardized tests). By comparing pre-assessment and re-assessment scores, teachers and students can evaluate the learning that has taken place.
- 2. **Previewing or Reviewing the Text:** During the first lesson, teachers should use questioning related to the title to introduce students to the text. Book covers and other illustrations can also be used to help introduce the text. In subsequent lessons, students will be given an opportunity to briefly review the text covered during the prior lesson.
- 3. **Reviewing Standards and Objectives:** By posting and reviewing standards and objectives, teachers can make students aware of the knowledge and skills they are expected to master during the lesson. This component of the model addresses the reading standards, as well as the speaking and listening standards and the language standards. The lesson may also focus on standards in other content areas. In all cases, the lesson should include language proficiency standards (which differ from state to state). The teaching plan should list all the standards that will be covered, but only a limited number of these standards should be reviewed with students for each lesson. It is recommended that students review the relevant standard(s), as well as the student

- objective. This will expose students to the actual language of the standard, as well as a more user-friendly version of that standard (in the form of a student objective, typically framed as an "I can" statement).
- 4. **ENHANCING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE**: Before engaging with the text, students may need background information to help them make sense of the text. Not all texts will require this component, however. The background information teachers provide should be applicable to the specific text being studied, as opposed to general information related to the text. It should not be a summary of the text, nor should it eliminate the need for a close reading of the text. Rather, it should provide cultural, historical, chronological, or spatial context for the text. For example, if students are going to read The Diary of Anne Frank, they may need background information about the treatment of Jews in Holland during the period in which Anne and her family were hiding. They might also benefit from a visual diagram of the living space, which would show that the Franks occupied a hidden, cramped attic at the top of an office building. During this component, concepts relevant to the text can also be explained, along with vocabulary that appears in the text and is germane to the concept. For example, for The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, students might learn about steamboats—and learn the words associated with steamboats that appear in the text—prior to reading the text.
- 5. **ACQUIRING VOCABULARY:** This component provides dedicated time for preteaching vocabulary and previewing the glossary. Conceptually complex words and phrases should be selected for preteaching. Words and phrases should be selected for inclusion in the glossary based on three criteria: (1) the word is important for responding to text-dependent questions; (2) the word is important for acquiring the skills indexed by the language standards (e.g., learning about figurative language); and (3) the word appears frequently in texts across content areas. This component involves two types of vocabulary instructional methods: teacher-directed instruction and student-directed learning. These methods are described in the section on instructional methods. ELLs need to know a large number of words in order to understand complex text, and teachers should therefore stress student-centered learning (using teacher-developed glossaries, dictionaries, and word-learning strategies). At every opportunity, teachers should use sound English-as-a-second-language techniques (such as briefly defining target words in context, using visuals that are at hand to explain word meanings, and using gestures to demonstrate word meanings).
- 6. **READING FOR KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS:** Although most of this component deals with key ideas and details, some of the questions address Language Use (determining or clarifying the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate). Teachers should read the text aloud to model fluent reading while students listen and follow along in their texts. Next, students will engage in independent or partner reading of the same section of the text. During this first independent or partner reading, students should focus on identifying key ideas and details. Teachers should pose a guiding question(s) for each section (or sub-section). After reading, students will work in pairs to respond to supplementary questions, which are

- intended to (1) help students uncover the meaning of the text, and (2) help them answer the guiding question(s). ELLs with lower levels of English proficiency should be given word banks, sentence starters, or sentence frames to help them respond to the questions. Numbering sentences can also provide additional support.
- 7. **ANNOTATING THE TEXT FOR KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS:** During this component, students will conduct a second close reading, annotating the text as they read. They will also have an opportunity to identify words that they still do not understand and/or parts of the text that they still find confusing. For the parts that are confusing, students should develop questions to gather helpful information related to the text that will help them understand its meaning. Following annotation, the teacher should engage students in discussion, so that they can help each other figure out word meanings and clarify confusing parts of the section of the text.
- 8. (& 9.) Revisiting Text for Craft and Structure or Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: During this component of the model, the teacher helps students acquire knowledge and skills associated with craft and structure and integrating knowledge and ideas. The teacher might explain the skill associated with the standard and model it for students, drawing on the section of the text for examples. The teacher should then give students opportunities to work in pairs and apply their knowledge to the text. ELLs with lower levels of English proficiency should be given sentence starters, sentence frames, and word banks to help them answer questions.
- 10. **Developing Language:** This component provides dedicated time for language development and is focused on the conventions of Standard English, knowledge of language, and vocabulary acquisition and use. Teachers can help students develop some of these language skills by teaching them how language functions in different contexts. Functional analysis—a method by which students deconstruct complex sentences to understand how the function of words contribute to meaning (e.g., who did what to whom?)—can be used for this purpose.
- 11. **Building Listening and Speaking Skills:** Although listening and speaking skills should be integrated into all reading and writing components of the instructional model through opportunities for partner talk and whole-class discussion, this component provides dedicated time to focus on these standards. Teachers can help ELLs develop listening and speaking skills by allowing them to work with a partner to prepare and present information to the class related to a close reading of the text.
- 12. **Re-Assessing Comprehension:** The final component of the reading section of this model is a re-assessment of comprehension. The questions for re-assessment should include the question used for pre-assessment, but additional questions that cover the entire text may also be included. Comparing students' performance on this re-assessment with their performance on the pre-assessment will help teachers (and students) evaluate how well students have mastered the relevant reading standards.

WRITING

In this section, we outline the writing components of the model. While engaged in close readings, students should be given opportunities for quick writes. The following components should be used after students have read the entire text.

- 1. **Reviewing Writing Standards and Objectives:** By posting and reviewing writing standards and objectives, teachers can make students aware of the skills and knowledge they are expected to master during the lesson.
- 2. **Preparing to Write:** It is important for ELLs to engage in the same writing activities as their English-proficient peers, although with additional scaffolding (depending on their proficiency levels). Prior to writing, ELLs should have the opportunity to generate ideas and organize their thoughts using a graphic organizer. They may also be provided with an opportunity to discuss their ideas (in their home language or in English) with a partner before they begin writing. ELLs with lower levels of proficiency should be given access to word banks and sentence starters or sentence frames.
- 3. **Writing:** ELLs should have access to a paragraph frame to help them construct their essay. ELLs with lower levels of proficiency should also be given access to word banks and sentence starters or sentence frames. They may also work with a partner for additional support. Students should be given opportunities to edit their writing to improve their grammar, and to share their writing with others.

Excerpt from *The Voice That Challenged a Nation: Marian*Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights by Russell Freedman¹

- [1] Despite cold and threatening weather, the crowd began to assemble long before the concert was to begin. People arrived singly and in pairs and in large animated groups. Soon the streets leading to the Mall in Washington, D.C., were jammed with thousands of people heading for the Lincoln Memorial.
- [2] The earliest arrivals found places as close as possible to the steps of the great marble monument. As the crowd grew, it spread back along the Mall, stretching around both sides of the long reflecting pool and extending beyond to the base of the Washington Monument, three-quarters of a mile away. Baby carriages were parked among the trees. Folks cradled sleeping infants in their arms and held youngsters by the hand or propped up on their shoulders. Uniformed Boy Scouts moved through the festive holiday throng handing out programs.
- [3] Anticipating a huge turnout, the National Park Service had enlisted the help of some five hundred Washington police officers. By five o'clock that afternoon, when the concert was scheduled to start, an estimated 75,000 people had gathered on the Mall. They waited patiently under overcast skies, bundled up against the brisk wind that whipped in from the Potomac River. They had come on this chilly Easter Sunday to hear one of the great voices of the time and to demonstrate their support for racial justice in the nation's capital.
- [4] Marian Anderson had been applauded by many of the crowned heads of Europe. She had been welcomed at the White House, where she sang for the president and first lady, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. She had performed before appreciative audiences in concert halls across the United States. But because she was an African American, she had been denied the right to sing at Constitution Hall, Washington's largest and finest auditorium. The Daughters of the American Revolution, the patriotic organization that owned Constitution Hall, had ruled several years earlier that black artists would not be permitted to appear there.

¹ Excerpt from *The voice that challenged a nation: Marian Anderson and the struggle for equal rights* by Russell Freedman (pp. 1–3). Copyright © 2004 by Russell Freedman. Reprinted by permission of Clarion Books, an imprint of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

- [5] News of the DAR's ban had caused an angry controversy and set the stage for a historic event in the struggle for civil rights. Working behind the scenes, a group of influential political figures had found an appropriate concert space for Anderson. Barred from Constitution Hall, she would give a free open-air concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.
- [6] Shortly before the concert got under way, the skies above Washington began to clear. Clouds, which had shadowed the monument, skittered away to the north, and the late afternoon sun broke through to bathe the reflecting pool and shine on the gaily dressed Easter crowd. Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes appeared on the speaker's platform. He introduced Miss Anderson, and she stepped forward to the bank of microphones.
- [7] The massive figure of Abraham Lincoln gazed down at her as she looked out at the expectant throng. Silencing the ovation with a slight wave of her hand, she paused. A profound hush settled over the crowd. For that moment, Marian Anderson seemed vulnerable and alone. Then she closed her eyes, lifted her head, clasped her hands before her, and began to sing.

Activity: Enhancing Background Knowledge

Directions: Refer to *The Voice That Challenged a Nation* excerpt. Describe any additional background knowledge that is important for understanding this passage. Identify methods for teaching the needed background.

Topics	Teaching Methods

Background Information on Selecting Vocabulary

Frequency

Resources to identify words for vocabulary instruction:

First 4,000 Words Project list

http://www.sewardreadingresources.com/img/fourkw/4KW_Teaching_List.pdf

Academic Word List Highlighter http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/alzsh3/acvocab/awlhighlighter.htm

Word Sift

http://wordsift.com/

Conceptual Complexity

Imageability

A word is easily *imageable* if little effort is required to form an image of it in your mind.

If you wanted to draw a picture of the word, how much context would be required? A word that could be drawn without context is easily imageable.

Easily imageable words: dinosaur, pencil, rain Somewhat imageable words: prevent, abandoned Not imageable words: spirit, promise, merely

Concreteness

A word is *concrete* (tangible) if its referent can be easily perceived through the senses.

How easily can you feel, smell, see, hear, or taste a referent of the word?

Very concrete words: eggs, throne, pencil, run Somewhat abstract words: expensive, peered

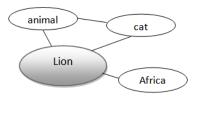
Very abstract words: era, indeed



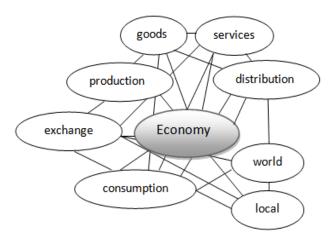
Relatedness

The degree to which understanding the word requires an understanding of related concepts is *relatedness*.

Words that have dense networks of other related concepts have high relatedness:



Low relatedness

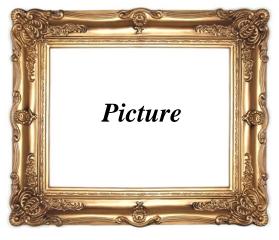


High relatedness

Creating Word Cards Sample: Extended Teaching of Vocabulary

Word (English)

Word (Spanish)



Sentence about the picture. Sentence frame for partner talk.

Teacher says

Picture. Look at this illustration, or picture.

Explanation. [Explanation of or question about how picture illustrates the word].

Let's talk about [word]. [Word] means [English definition].

[Word] in Spanish is [Spanish word].

Let's spell [word]. What word have we spelled?

Partner talk. Talk about [something that relates the word to students' experiences].

Text connection. In the story, [explanation of actual use in the text].

Creating Word Cards... (Continued)

- Use the template below to create a word card for *anticipate*.
- Use the example on the previous page of this handout as a model. Use online resources for pictures, definitions, and translations.

Word in English			Word in Spanish
	Picture		
(Sentence about the picture)			
(Sentence frame for partner talk)			
Teacher says			
Picture. Look at this illustration, or picture.			
Explanation. Let's talk about the word	·	means	
in Spanish is	It		(is/is not) a cognate.
Let's spell What word have we s	pelled?		
Partner talk. Talk about			
			d the help of some five hundred Washington police

Text: Book Finders

Finder	Possible Searches
Lexile Find a Book	Lexile level; Grade level by difficulty;
http://www.lexile.com/findabook/	Topic area
The Lexile Find a Book locates text using the Lexile framework. It provides measures of quantitative difficulty for many narrative texts (but not as many informational texts).	
Accelerated Reader BookFinder	Book title; Author; ISBN; Grade level; ATOS
http://www.arbookfind.com/	book level; Topic area
The Accelerated Reader Book Finder allows the user to search by book title, author, or ISBN, as well as interest level by grade or ATOS book level. Searches can be narrowed by topic and fiction or nonfiction. ATOS book level scores are provided for each book. Also included on the website are lists of leveled books that have received awards, are part of state lists, or are librarian picks.	
Questar Analyzer	Book title; ISBN; Publisher; Copyright date;
http://www.questarai.com/products/drpprogram/pages/textbook_readability.aspx	Degree of Reading Power level
The Questar DRP Analyzer provides a DRP level for a large number of textbooks. The tool allows the user to search by book title, ISBN, publisher, copyright date, or DRP score.	
NEWSELA	Lexile; Grade Level; Language; Topic/Subject
www.newsela.com	
NEWSELA is a website that provides nonfiction articles at high interest levels for students, each written at 5 different lexile levels. Articles are available in English and Spanish, and cover current events related to many different content areas.	

Text: Smartphone Apps for Finding Leveled Text

App and System	Developer	Price	Description
Level It Books/iPhone	KTL Apps	\$2.99	 Users can scan a book's ISBN code to view Guided Reading, Grade Level Equivalent, Lexile Level, and DRA levels for a book
			 View a new book of the day recommended by teachers.
			Loan and track classroom books using the "check out" and "check in" features.
			 Create and maintain student rosters for checking out books and maintaining reading levels.
			• It includes grade-level book lists with GLE, Lexile, GR, and DRA levels (not by subject).
Level Finder/iPhone	Brandie Collins	\$1.99	 Users can look up Accelerated Reader level (ATOS Book Level) for more than 126,000 books by book title, author name, AR level, or points.
			 Includes Information is included about AR points associated with each book and the quiz number for the book.
			■ This information is also available at http://www.arbookfind.com/ for free.

Qualitative Attributes That Make Text Complex²

Lexical Level

Words with multiple levels of meaning: Students may find multiple-meaning words difficult, especially when they encounter a word for which they know a different definition than what is meant in that context. Some multiple-meaning words are polysemes, or words with different, but related, meanings (e.g., *bank* meaning a financial institution and *bank* meaning to rely on). Other multiple-meaning words are homonyms, or words that look and sound the same but have completely different meanings (e.g., *bank* meaning a financial institution and *bank* meaning the side of a river).

Nominalization: English academic texts frequently feature nominalization, or the use of a verb, an adjective, or an adverb as a noun. This sometimes occurs with morphological changes (e.g., *legal* versus *legalization*) but can also occur without any changes to the word (e.g., *help* meaning to provide someone aid and *help* meaning the aid that one provides). Students may find it difficult to encounter other parts of speech used as nouns because it may appear as though the grammar of a sentence is other than what they expect.

Unfamiliar vocabulary: Because words carry meaning—both concrete and abstract—lack of vocabulary knowledge creates an impediment to understanding. Use of words and phrases that are unfamiliar to readers makes text more challenging. For ELLs, many more words and phrases are unfamiliar, which makes comprehending text more challenging for this group of students.

Use of language that is archaic: Words and phrases that are no longer in widespread use can make text more difficult because readers may be unfamiliar with their meanings. Examples include *ambodexter*, meaning to be able to play with both hands or to be untrustworthy, and *sinister*, which used to refer to something located on the left side.

Sentence Level

Figurative language: Figurative language increases the complexity of text. Use of idioms, personification, hyperbole, symbolism, irony, and other types of literacy devices can add to the levels of meaning and require more thought to understand. Text with a limited use of figurative language is typically easier to understand.

Significant use of nonstandard dialect: Books written in variations of nonstandard English—in order to portray more authentically the era in which they are set or the language used by the people or characters in them—may require more work for all students to

² Based on Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. (2012). Text complexity: Raising rigor in reading. Newark, DE: International Reading Association

decipher. For example, in order to fully understand *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain (1884), readers will need to understand the language used at the time and place in which the book is set, as well as differences in the language used by specific characters and how it reflects their race, education, or economic status.

Discourse Level

Texts with multiple levels of meaning: Not all texts are created equal. Some have more depth than others. Some texts convey a simple meaning that is evident at a surface level, whereas others may contain multiple meanings revealed at a variety of levels. Some texts are literal; others are metaphorical. For example, at the surface level, *Animal Farm* by George Orwell (1946) is about a group of animals that take over a farm and begin to rule themselves. But the surface-level story is simply a veneer for the underlying critique of the leadership that followed the Russian Revolution. The same range of levels of meaning can be found in picture books, chapter books, and trade books.

Distortions in organization of time: Texts that are organized chronologically or sequentially are less complex than those that employ some other organizational pattern. Although narrative texts typically follow a chronological pattern, literary devices such as foreshadowing or flashbacks cause distortions in time that make it more difficult to make sense of the text. Such distortions also occur in informational text when there are shifts in narrator, point of view, or voice. Variations in tense within a sentence or passage can add to text complexity. Using the historical present to describe past events, particularly in eyewitness accounts, creates a distortion of time that may make text more difficult to understand.

Specialized or technical knowledge assumed or required: When text presumes specialized or technical background knowledge, it is more difficult to comprehend. This difficulty is compounded if the text provides few clues or a limited explanation of the prerequisite knowledge.

Limited use of text features and graphics: Text features and graphics can provide readers with an alternative way to understand the information being presented. Examples of text features include headings and subheadings that can guide readers through information, signal words that convey text structure (e.g., *first, second,* and *third*), signal words that identify cause and effect (e.g., *because, since,* or *as a result*), structured overviews, and margin notes. Examples of graphics include graphic organizers (e.g., Venn diagrams), semantic feature charts, and visuals (e.g., pictures, illustrations, graphs, and maps). If there are no text features or graphics to provide guidance, text becomes more challenging.

Activity: Close Reading - Asking Supplementary Questions

Marian Anderson had been applauded by many of the crowned heads of Europe. She had been welcomed at the White House, where she sang for the president and first lady, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. She had performed before appreciative audiences in concert halls across the United States. (*Paragraph 4, Sentences 1-3*)

For the text above, create text-dependent supplementary questions for this guiding question:

Who was Marian Anderson? What were her accomplishments?

Ensure that the questions are

- Text dependent
- Sequenced to support understanding

<u>Incorporate strategies to make it easier for ELLs to answer your questions:</u>

- Define key words prior to asking the question
- Restate phrases or sentences that will help ELLs answer the question

Question Type	Question	Text-
		based?
Guiding Question	Who was Marian Anderson? What were her accomplishments? (Paragraph 4, Sentences	Yes
	1-3)	
1. Supplementary		
Question		
2. Supplementary		
Question		

Activity: Close Reading – Scaffolding: Response Frames

Create scaffolding frames for students of emergent, intermediate *or* advanced proficiency levels (i.e., sentence frames with or without word bank) for each of your supplementary questions from the activity on the previous page.

English Proficiency Level (please circle): EMERGENT INTER	MEDIATE ADVANCED
Word Bank	
	·
Question	Response Frame
1.	
2.	

Activity: Instructional Methods Review

Directions: Several methods have been used in this conference presentation that can be applied when adapting other lessons for ELLs. These methods are described in detail here. Read through the methods. Answer the guiding and supplementary questions.

Guiding Question

What are effective methods for enabling ELLs to meet language and content standards?

Enhancing Background

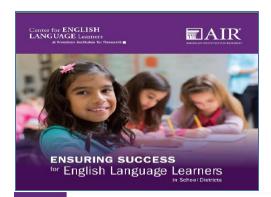
- Q: Why is it important to consider Background Information when expecting ELLs to comprehend text?
- Q: How do we determine the Background Information students will need to comprehend a text?
- Q: What are methods for providing Background?

Acquiring Vocabulary

- Q: What is the difference between extended and embedded vocabulary instruction, both in terms of vocabulary selection and vocabulary instruction?
- Q: What are some techniques for helping students acquire vocabulary?

Close Reading

- Q: Consider your classroom context. What methods will you use to help your students understand complex text?
- Q. What are some techniques for Developing Questions Related to Identifying Key Ideas and Details?
- Q. .What are some techniques for differentiating Close Reading tasks?



Our EXPERTISE

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION. Improve school readiness through curriculum and teacher training using COLLTS (Cultivating Oral Language and Literacy Talent in Students), a research-based program developed by AIR to prepare prekindergarten and kindergarten dual-language learners for mastering kindergarten English language arts standards.

K-12 CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION. Assist districts and schools as they implement curriculum and instruction to meet their states' challenging academic standards using AIR's Attaining Core Content for ELLs (ACCELL), a research-based framework for scaffolding core content for English language learners (ELLs).

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL SUPPORT. Review current programs and policies to develop resources and structures to improve ELL outcomes; for example, identify students who are struggling as well as those who are excelling; provide guidance on alternative assessments and accommodations to capture ELL learning; and ensure that teacher evaluation systems support effective teaching of English language learners.



The Center for English Language Learners at AIR is

committed to reducing the achievement gap and improving outcomes for English language learners by conducting rigorous research and connecting research to policy and practice.

Diane August, Ph.D., leads the center. She is supported by a skilled AIR team with experience working with numerous schools, districts, universities, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies to help English language learners achieve success.

Washington, DC: Diane August, Ph.D.; Ashley Simpson Baird, Ph.D.;

Lisa Tabaku, M.A.T.

California: Jennifer O'Day, Ph.D.

Chicago: Patricia Garcia-Arenas, Ph.D. Southeast Region: Heidi Goertzen,

Ph.D., Laura Golden, M.A.

Texas: Linda Cavazos, Ph.D.

For more information, contact ELLCenter@air.org

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