

Late From the Start: Assessing EL Reading in English

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AGENDA



- EL reading challenges
- The phonological awareness gap
- EL performance on oral reading assessments
- Reading improvement matrix
- Two scenarios: your recommendations

EL Reading Challenges

- Elementary ELs face multiple challenges in learning to read and meeting grade-level reading benchmarks
- Oral skill development in ESL supports, but does not teach foundational reading skills
- It is difficult to catch up after third grade
- Phonics instruction for ELs is patchwork
- If ELs need Special Education, earlier is better

By the Numbers

- According to MADESE: 97,334 or 10.2% of Massachusetts students are ELs
- 54,702 or 5.7% of this number are elementary EL students
- All grades participate in annual ACCESS (K-5) and MCAS (3-5) testing
- At the elementary level, most districts use standardized reading assessments

The Basis of Reading Assessments

Elementary public schools in Massachusetts use formative oral and standardized reading assessments based on the National Reading Panel study (2000; 2017). These five areas are considered critical to reading comprehension:

- Strong receptive and expressive language
- Well-developed phonological and print awareness
- Knowledge of letter–sound relationships (decoding)
- Large vocabularies
- An ability to comprehend what they read
- The ability to read naturally and effortlessly (fluency).

Learning to Read: Reading to Learn

- Although students continue to build their reading skills throughout their education, they are expected to have acquired foundational skills by third grade.
- Students who have not acquired the prerequisites by the end of third grade are at risk of school failure.

Not So Fast

- Grades 1-2 and Grades 3-5 ACCESS Scores show 55% and 58% growth in ELP levels
- On MCAS Reading and ELA, over 60% of elementary EL students got scores of PM or NM; not proficient at grade level
- On NAEP: Massachusetts 4th grade ELs scored 4% below basic reading scores
- On district measures of reading a large number of ELs score below grade level

District Assessments

- Grades K & 1 typically assess phonological awareness, letter/sound ID, recount of predictable text
- Grades 2 & 3: phonics and spelling patterns, fluency, recounting with more detail, and basic inferences
- Grades 4 & 5: academic vocabulary, summary, independent reading, comprehension, inference, author's purpose, close reading

Foundational L2 Reading Skills

Learning to read for the first time in a second language requires:

- oral language and vocabulary development
- Development of phonemic awareness and the alphabetic principle
- An ability to decode words, automaticity, and fluency
- Motivation, confidence, success

WIDA vs. Reading Assessments

- The WIDA Can-Dos/ACCESS use a functional language lens to help students develop English across language domains with a primary focus on social and academic oral English
- Reading Assessments assume grade-level oral English skills, and use these skills to assess growth in discrete and holistic reading abilities

Best Practices for Assessing Reading in L2?

- Reading assessments are normed for native speakers of American English.
- ELs start behind native speakers of English and are expected “catch up”.
- Pre-school and home support for reading are assumed to be critical to growth in reading skills
- Does instruction support the assessment?

Platform 9 and 3/4

- The pace at which ELs meet grade level benchmarks on reading assessments that require “strong receptive and expressive language” will not be as fast as native speakers of English
- How do we know they are below benchmark?
- What is the “just right” pace for learning to read in L2?

Important Caveats

- Assessments of phonological awareness and early phonics can be predictive of reading difficulties for both L1 and L2 learners.
- Early intervention is critical to acquisition of foundational reading skills for struggling students
- We can place students at greater risk of academic failure if we wait for them to acquire English
- Features of early language acquisition can look similar to language disabilities

LD or Language Acquisition

Behaviors Associated w/LD	Behaviors when Acquiring L2
Difficulty with phonological awareness	Difficulty with sounds not in L1
Slow to learn sound/symbol correspondence	Confusion with sounds not in L1 Difficulty pronouncing sounds not in L1
Difficulty remembering sight words	Difficulty remembering sight words when word meanings are not understood
Difficulty retelling a story in sequence	May understand more than can convey in L2
Confused by figurative language	Confused by figurative language

Phonemic awareness



Sounds Not in L1



Gaps

- Newcomers who begin in later grades also need phonics instruction
- There are gaps in assessments, instruction, and instructional capacity
- Students can also arrive after foundational skills are taught in their grade level
- Foundational skills alone won't make ELs competent readers in English

Phonics Gap

- ESL teachers are not typically trained in teaching phonics or decoding skills in their graduate programs
- They may have studied pronunciation or contrastive phonetics and phonology
- WIDA focuses on functional language acquisition, not discrete reading skills
- Students who do not have good phonics or decoding skills in L1 can struggle in L2

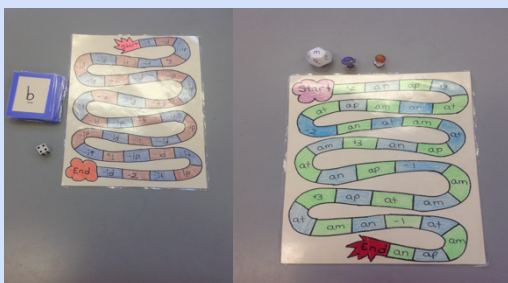
ESL Teachers Support Reading Skills

- Teaching expressive and receptive language is in our wheelhouse
- Students can improve phonemic awareness and acquire vocabulary through shared classroom reading experiences and routines, songs, chants, and rhymes, TPR
- Realia, visuals, matching, picture books, recount, questions, and repetition support ELD and reading skills

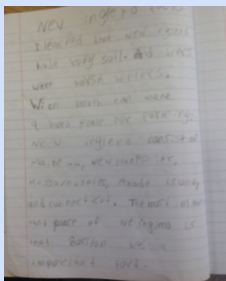
Supporting Reading Assessments

- Determine and teach pre-requisite skills responsive to the student's needs for decoding and word reading
- Teach pronunciation of sounds not in L1 with mirrors and visuals. Practice with minimal pairs.
- Teach the pronunciation as well as spelling of vowels and vowel teams.

Make a Phonics Game



Phonics Affects Writing Skills



New Ingerld colnis
I learned that New ingerbr
hase very sail. And trees were
harsh wenters. Wien noreth
can make a hard plase for
farming. New inglend consist
of Maine, New hamPshier,
Massachusetts, Rhode island,
and connecticut. The most
importent peace of Ne ingiens
is Bosstan was important port.
wen whent hear frist it is very
hard.

BAS and Oral Reading Assessments

- Practice oral recount multiple times and build in teacher and/or partner practice in recount in multiple instructional sessions
- Practice fluency at the phrase and sentence level as well as through Reader's Theatre and expressive reading
- Practice responding with sentence starters or restating the questions used in assessments
- Use scaffolds during assessments

Bridging the Gap

- ESL, classroom, and reading teacher collaborate to set reading goals
- Present the student's background and plans for family communication
- Set weekly or monthly reading goals for struggling students based on ELP and gaps
- Practice the language and skills used in reading assessments

Focus on Improvement

- Identify the area of need and the resources to help the student
- Be explicit about what the student is working on
- Praise progress
- Balance discrete skill work with other reading skills
- Encourage the student and family to read in L1 and L2

Your Turn!

- Read the Scenario
- Use the matrix
- What are your recommendations for this student's Fall reading goals?

Phonemic Awareness

- Repetition
- TPR—sounds or words with movements
- Mirror practice for sounds not in L1 or minimal pairs
- Matching games for letter ID, blends
- Match and say with pictures
- Songs, chants, rhymes, poems
- Predictable conversations
- Choral reading with predictable text

Decoding

- Teach or review the alphabet and sounds out of order; focus on vowels for older students and predictable L1/ L2 differences
- Segmenting, blending, addition, deletion through practice and games
- CVC, sight words, s, -ed, prefixes, suffixes,
- Cognates
- Syllables and stress in English

Fluency

- Teach punctuation and pausing
- Model and teach reading in word phrases
- Tape themselves reading and listen with fluency rubrics
- Expressive reading, poetry, Reader's Theatre
- choral reading
- partner reading

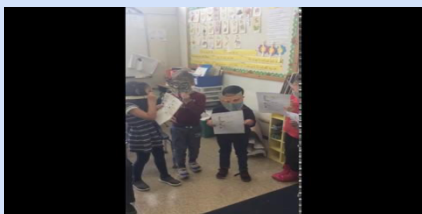
Vocabulary

- Pre-teach (7-Step, visuals, sentence frames)
- Have students notice pre-taught vocabulary in the text
- Have students use vocabulary to describe events, discuss characters, or explain nonfiction texts
- Have students write the vocabulary in sentences or paragraphs about the text

Comprehension

- Have younger students tell and predict the story through the picture walk
- Have the students listen and sequence pictures from the story
- Have students recount the story with sentence starters and sequence markers
- Ask for further predictions
- Ask why they think something about the text
- Encourage connection to self or other texts

Reader's Theatre



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