

Ten Things the Mainstream Teacher can Do Today to Improve Instruction for ELL Students

These tips were adapted from the *Help! They Don't Speak English Starter Kit for Primary Teachers* (1998) (developed by the Region IV and Region XIV Comprehensive Centers, the Center for Applied Linguistics, and ESCORT, a national resource center dedicated to improving the educational opportunities for migrant children) and from *Integrating Language and Content Instruction: Strategies and Techniques* (1991) by Deborah Short of the Center for Applied Linguistics.

- 1) Enunciate clearly, but do not raise your voice. Add gestures, point directly to objects, or draw pictures when appropriate.
- 2) Write clearly, legibly, and in print—many ELL students have difficulty reading cursive.
- 3) Develop and maintain routines. Use clear and consistent signals for classroom instructions.
- 4) Repeat information and review frequently. If a student does not understand, try rephrasing or paraphrasing in shorter sentences and simpler syntax. Check often for understanding, but do not ask "Do you understand?" Instead, have students demonstrate their learning in order to show comprehension.
- 5) Try to avoid idioms and slang words.
- 6) Present new information in the context of known information.
- 7) Announce the lesson's objectives and activities, and list instructions step-by-step.
- 8) Present information in a variety of ways.
- 9) Provide frequent summations of the salient points of a lesson, and always emphasize key vocabulary words.
- 10) Recognize student success overtly and frequently. But, also be aware that in some cultures overt, individual praise is considered inappropriate and can therefore be embarrassing or confusing to the student.