

BEST PRACTICES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

MAHONING COUNTY EDUCATIONAL SERVICE CENTER

Dr. Brenda Custodio

Agenda for June 16, 2015

- Follow the Teresa Walter book, with focus on Chapters 1-3
- Culture and Cultural Diversity
- Language and Language Acquisition
- Literacy Development

- Tomorrow we will focus on Chapters 4 and 5, infusing the chapters with highlights from Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)
- Academic and Content Area Development
- Assessment and Evaluation



How prepared were you to teach ELLs when you graduated?

Fill in the top box on page 3:

**What do you already know
about culture and cultural
diversity as it relates to
teaching?**

What you need to know about your students and how you get the information.

- Primary or home language of student
- Educational background of student
- Immigrant, refugee, native-born?
- Home culture/religion
- Family situation
- Physical and emotional health issues
- Personal interests/skills
- Where can we find out this information?
 - Parent/family
 - Student
 - Cum folder/enrollment records
 - School nurse/other school personnel
 - Community groups
 - Personal research

I have come to a frightening conclusion.
I am the decisive element in the classroom.
It is my personal approach that creates the climate.
It is my daily mood that makes the weather.
As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a
child's life miserable or joyous.
I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of
inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal.
In all situations it is my response that decides
whether crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and
a child humanized or dehumanized.

Haim Ginott, *Between Teacher and Child*

The Hidden Curriculum

Leanna Trail

- **Attitudes:** We need to demonstrate that we support diversity and value every child, with actions and words
- **Environment:** The classroom needs to be student-centered and welcoming. It should reflect the lives and cultures of the students.
- **Materials:** Students should have access to books, photos, and objects that represent their home cultures as well as the new culture.
- **Classroom organization:** Variety of activities and group work to give students frequent opportunities to communicate in appropriate ways.
- **Topic relevance:** Topics should relate to student lives when possible.

Refer to the list on p. 11 on ways to make a classroom more “Culture Friendly”.

* Which of these do you or your school already do?

* Which could be easily implemented?

* Do you believe this is important? Why or why not?

What agencies are available in your area to support your efforts to learn more about your diverse populations?

What types of connections do your schools already have with these groups?

Learning a New Language

- **What do we know about learning a new language?**
 - Much of what we know came from three main researchers: Stephen Krashen, Jim Cummins, and Virginia Collier
 - Second language acquisition research is relatively new, within the last fifty years.
 - SLA is based on certain principles:
 - **Language is meant to be used**
 - **Language and culture are interrelated**
 - **Language changes over time**
 - **Language skills are interdependent (reading, writing, listening, and speaking)**
 - **First language skill is a foundation for second language learning**

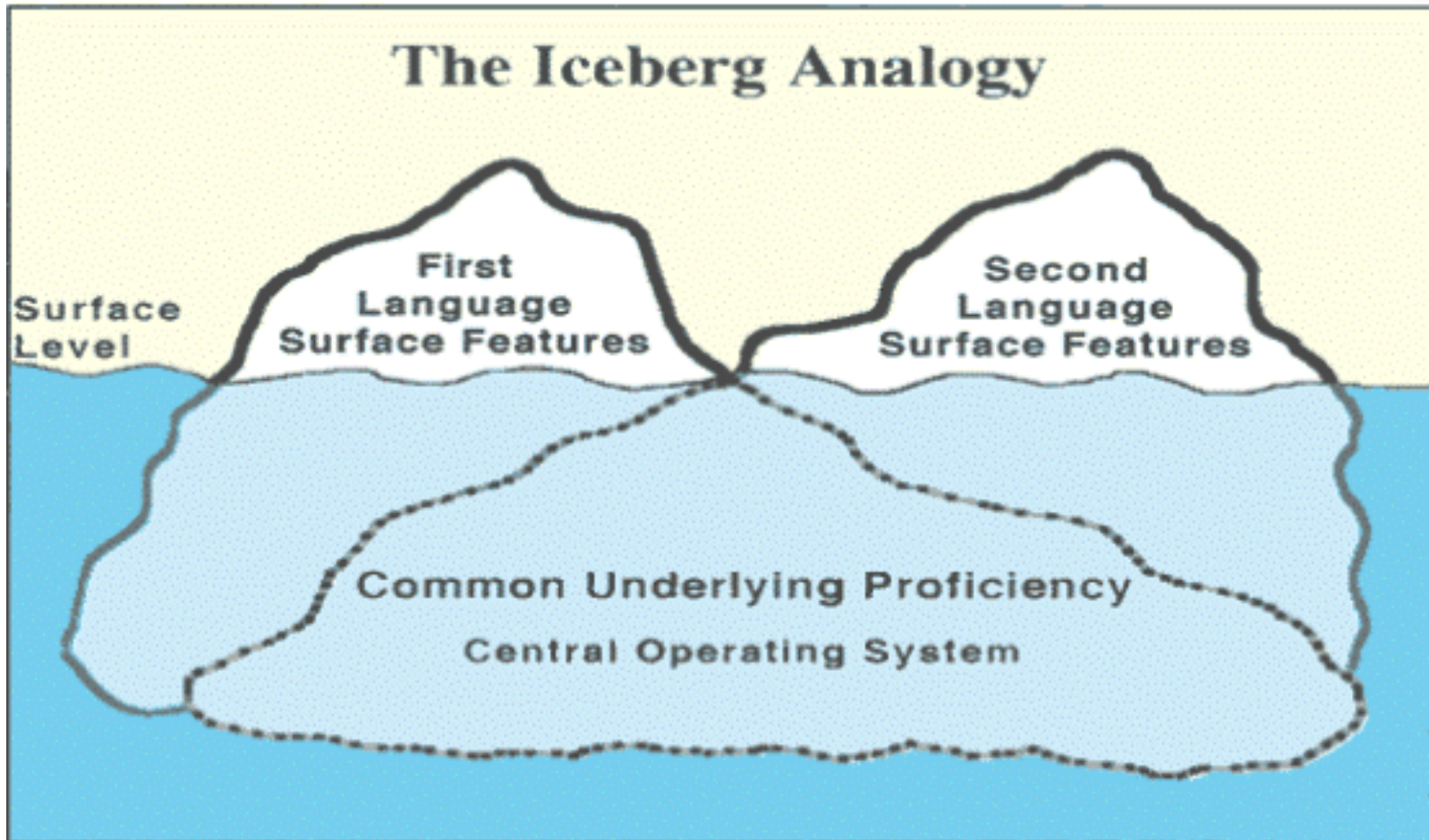
Theories of Stephen Krashen

- Five major hypotheses of his Monitor Model
 - **Monitor Theory:** We have a “black box” in our head that helps us understand complex grammar and syntactic rules.
 - **Acquisition v. Learning:** Language needs to be acquired, not just learned.
 - **Comprehensible Input:** We learn best when the new information is delivered at just a slightly higher rate than what we already know. ($i + 1$) [Refer to page 33 for examples.]
 - **Natural Order:** Language is generally learned in a certain sequence or order
 - **Affective Filter:** We have a barrier that we hide behind when learning, and learning occurs best when that barrier is minimized.

Theories of Jim Cummins

- **How long** does it take to learn a language?
 - Researched children learning English or French in Canada
 - He found that speaking a new language only took about **2 years**
 - He called the conversational ability **Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)**
 - Found that on average it was taking **4-7 years** to reach average proficiency in reading
 - He called the reading and writing skills **Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency or CALP**

Iceberg Theory



Cognitively undemanding

simple language, everyday structures, familiar topics

Context-embedded

Face-to-face, gestures,
facial expression,
concrete objects of
reference

Context-reduced

Lack of non-verbal cues,
Abstract language

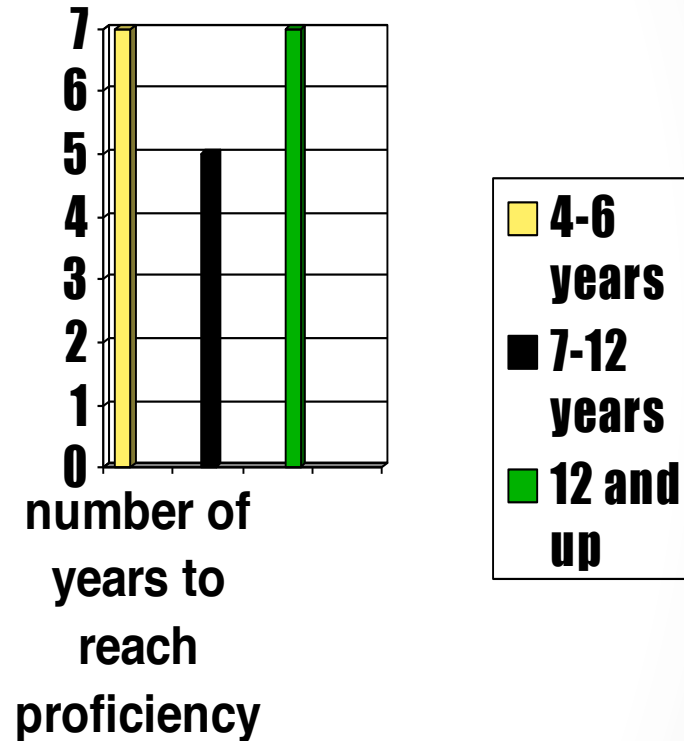
Cognitively demanding

Field specific vocabulary, complex language structures
abstract concepts, new ideas

Use this grid and the one in the book on page 23 to complete the Four Quadrant Activity

Studies of Collier and Thomas

- Four to six years old
 - 7-10 years
- Under 12, 2 years of education in home language
 - 5-7 years
- Over 12, instruction in English only
 - 7-10 years



Look at the chart on pages 26-27. It shows what students can typically do at each level of English language proficiency, as well as suggestions for instruction. This chart can help with instructional decisions throughout the year.

A planning guide flow chart for helping teachers create and implement effective standards-based lessons is found on page 41.

Literacy Development



This morning we learned that there are two types of English language proficiency: BICS and CALP.

What do these acronyms represent?

How long do they take to develop?

As teachers, which one is our main focus?

This afternoon, we will concentrate on how to build reading and writing skills

- Learning to read and write in a second language is **not that different** from the process used in English
- Students who can read and write in their **first language** will usually make progress in English much **faster** than children who are not literate in their first language
- The major barrier for most ELLs is their limited **vocabulary**, which prevents comprehension
- While knowledge of phonics and phonemic awareness is critical, an **overemphasis** on this area in instruction actually **slows development**

What do good readers do?

- Interact with the text (**questioning**, predicting, **challenging**)
- **Visualize** the text while reading
- Relate prior knowledge to text and use it to **make inferences**
- Synthesize information between texts
- Read with a purpose
- **Distinguish main idea and details**
- **Monitor their own comprehension**
- Keep on reading when confused, with the idea that they will understand eventually

Items in bold are difficult for English language learners.

So how can teachers help ELLs build critical skills?

There is no one perfect strategy or technique, but using what the author calls a “Balanced Literacy Approach” combines the most promising practices.

“A balanced approach to literacy combines rich language and literacy experiences with explicit literacy instruction in decoding and encoding.”

Promising Practices Include:

- Phonics / Phonemic Awareness
- Word Study / Vocabulary Development
- Read Alouds
- Shared Reading
- Think Alouds
- Guided Reading
- Language Experience Approach
- Independent Reading
- Reading Workshops
- Directed Reading and Thinking

Vocabulary Instruction

- Limited vocabulary is the major obstacle that limits comprehension for English learners.
- It is critical that the students develop their oral and their reading vocabulary **simultaneously**. Time is not on their side!!

Three tiers of vocabulary words

- Tier One—typical conversational words, non-academic terms such as car, movie, house, television, etc.
- Tier Two—common academic terms used across subjects, such as define, examine, division, and journal.
- Tier Three—words specific to a particular subject such as mitosis or autocracy

MULTIPLE MEANING WORDS

- Many of the words used in classroom settings have multiple meanings
- Students may know the typical Tier One meaning, but get confused on the Tier Two or Three Level
- With a partner, complete the multiple meaning word chart, listing as many of these words as you can think of.
- Share unusual meanings for these words with the group

Fluency

- For most native English speakers, fluency comes when they can decode quickly (second or third grade)
- For ELLs, they may be able to decode very well, but not have the oral vocabulary to support comprehension
- Fluency for many ELLs comes with or even after comprehension develops
- For many ELLs, their aural skills outpace their reading skills
- Having students read aloud can also be beneficial, if the passage is at their level

Comprehension

- “ELLs who struggle with comprehension may read more slowly, have a hard time following a text or story, have a hard time picking out important events, and feel frustrated. They may also have problems mastering new concepts in their content-area classes or completing assignments or assessments.”
 - Reading 101 for ELLs, Colorin Colorado.org

What Teachers Can Do to Increase Comprehension

- Read aloud to students
- Select motivating and culturally relevant books
- Use pre-reading activities to assist students to focus on topic, make connections, and establish a purpose for reading
- Draw attention to text features
- Model good reading strategies
- Train students to analyze as they read
 - from What's Different About Teaching Reading to ELLs

Reading Aloud



ADVANTAGES OF HEARING TEXTS READ ALOUD

- Allows children to enjoy a story that might be too difficult for them linguistically
- Provides a model for good reading
- Provides a model for spoken English
- Generates interest in other literature
- Introduces new vocabulary, language structures, or concepts

PLANNING THE READ ALOUD

- Choose the book to be read aloud.
- Decide whether to read a portion or all.
- Select a focus. You may use read alouds to introduce:
 - a topic
 - a theme
 - a story
 - a literary device
 - an illustrator
 - a new genre
 - an author
 - a language point

SETTING THE SCENE

- Read the title. Show the cover illustration.
- Ask the children to predict what they think the book may be about.
- Introduce the author and illustrator.
- Remind children of other titles by same author.
- Help the children to make links between real life experiences and and their reading experience.
- Provide necessary background information.

READING THE TEXT

- Read with as much expression as possible.
- Model good reading procedures.
- Demonstrate the use of book features such as book jackets, table of contents, index, glossary, etc. in non-fiction books.
- Stop and explain, ask questions, and point out details as appropriate.

SHARED BOOK EXPERIENCE

- Read together with the class a familiar story
- Choose a popular rhyme, song, poem, fairy tale well-known to the class
- Works best if a copy of the text is available in “big book” size
- During the re-reading, have students participate as much as possible
- Can be followed by an extension activity



- Think Alouds
 - Can be used for reading or for writing
 - Can be used by the teacher or the student
 - Can be aloud or in the mind (after being shown how)

Think Alouds: For Reading and Writing

- **When to do a Think Aloud—**
 - To show students how to find answers to questions
 - To find details to support predictions or statements
 - To help share emotions created by a text
 - To demonstrate how to find the meaning of vocabulary words or difficult to understand passages
 - To talk through areas of confusion
 - To demonstrate the thinking process used in the creation of a written product
 - To explain how a conclusion was reached, in a text or in a written piece

Sample sentence starters:

- This word probably means . . .
- I think the main character probably will . . .
- I don't understand why . . .
- I need a sentence that explains . . .
- What I want to say is . . .
- From this picture, I think that . . .
- This passage reminds me of . . .
- The details that support this statement are . . .
- I need to reread this part because . . .

GUIDED READING

- Can be used to:
 - introduce an author
 - introduce a theme
 - explore a theme
 - discuss an author's craft or style
 - discuss an illustrator
 - focus on text for writing model
- discuss literary devices
- explore relationship between text and illustration
- compare two or more texts
- focus on a reading strategy
- focus on a language convention or point

VALUE OF MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS

- Allows students to “see themselves” in literature
- Enables students to discuss controversial or sensitive diversity topics in less personal manner
- Introduces students to beliefs and lifestyles of others
- Once the setting and characters are established, the student can concentrate on the events and the new vocabulary and concepts.

GROUP READING: SCAFFOLDING LITERATURE

- Pre-reading activities should activate prior knowledge
- Present text in manageable chunks
- Begin with a teacher read aloud to set stage for text
- Use peer assistance when possible:
 - partner reading
 - reciprocal reading
- Audiovisual support aids in comprehension
- Use multimodal extension activities:
 - art, music, drama