

Newsletter

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN OUR CLASSROOMS

If you teach, it will come as no surprise to you that the number of English language learners (ELLs) in U.S. classrooms has risen dramatically over the last decade. But just how dramatically? According to *Education Week's 2009 Quality Counts*—its annual progress report on K–16 education—during the ten-year period between 1995 and 2005, the number of ELLs nationwide rose by a staggering 57 percent. In fact, English learners are the fastest growing population in our schools. Of particular note is the geographical distribution of these new learners: increasingly, they're showing up in classrooms far outside the country's major urban centers, in states like Arkansas, Nebraska, Indiana, and Colorado.

On the whole, schools are struggling mightily to meet this new set of challenges, often stymied by budget constraints and a shortage of adequately trained teachers. As a result, English learners trail significantly behind their native English-speaking peers in both reading and math proficiency. Many ELLs who do well in the first few years of school begin to fall behind after fourth grade, when academic English pertaining to content areas comes heavily into play. More alarming, researchers have found that the high school drop-out rate for English learners is three times that of native English speakers.

Still, the news isn't all gloomy. In New York City, for instance, progress is being made. According to Mary Ann Zehr, writing in *Quality Counts*, the number of ELLs in grades 3–8 who scored as “proficient” on the state's math exam rose from 16.7 percent in 2003 to 58.6 percent in 2008. Nearly as striking was the climb in reading proficiency scores, from 3.9 percent to 22.6 percent over the same five-year period. A city official quoted in the article cites extensive professional development as a key to these gains, along with providing ELLs access to the regular core curriculum.

Concern about how best to serve ELLs is no longer confined to a few isolated areas of the country, or a small group of specially trained teachers. Today these students

are sitting in mainstream classrooms all across the nation, and educators everywhere are being called upon to help them succeed.

NEW SCHOLASTIC RESOURCES FOR TEACHING ELLs

In [*Side-by-Side Learning: Exemplary Literary Practices for English Language Learners and English Speakers in the Mainstream Classroom*](#) Arizona State University education professors **Carole Edelsky**, **Karen Smith**, and **Christian Faltis** show you the power of “inquiry-based learning” in the classroom. They explain how to utilize hands-on, project-based activities that enhance the language and literacy skills of both English language learners and English speakers as they work side by side in the mainstream classroom—even in those using mandated programs. The accompanying 19-minute DVD with downloadable forms lets you see the approach in action. (Grades 3–6)

In [*Teaching English Language Learners: Strategies That Work*](#), **Katherine Davies Samway** and **Dorothy Taylor** offer hundreds of detailed ideas, strategies, and tips for bringing our diverse English language learners successfully into the mainstream. In two separate books, one for K–5 teachers and one for teachers in grades 6 and up, Samway and Taylor identify more than 80 specific classroom situations—from social issues like communicating with parents and handling teasing by other students to teaching challenges like helping English learners follow directions and build vocabulary. The authors provide frank, accurate, and insightful information you can put to use in your classroom right away. (Grades K–5 and Grades 6 & Up)

OTHER ELL RESOURCES

In [*English Language Learners: The Essential Guide*](#) by **David Freeman** and **Yvonne Freeman**, two professors of ESL and bilingual education share their years of experience and study to help you find what works when teaching the three types ELLs—the newly arrived with adequate schooling, the newly arrived with limited schooling, and long-term English learners. The authors provide the essential information mainstream teachers need in order to work effectively with all English learners by showing them how to put current second-language theory into practice in the classroom. (Grades K–12)

James Crawford and **Stephen Krashen** are heavyweights in the field of English Language Education. In [*English Learners in American Classrooms*](#), they pose and expertly answer 101 questions relating to practice and policy, organized in an easy-to-navigate Q&A format. This helpful and concise resource addresses all the most pressing questions, including the differences between academic and conversational English and the ways in which literacy transfers from one language to another. An indispensable guide to the many complex issues involved in ELL education. (Grades K–12)

In [*Easy Ways to Reach and Teach English Language Learners: Strategies, Lessons, and Tips for Success With ELLs in the Mainstream Classroom*](#), **Valerie SchifferDanoff** asks, “How can we help ELLs not only adapt and adjust to life in our classrooms—but

genuinely thrive?” She shares her many success strategies for including English learners in meaningful instruction and classroom life right from the start. This guide also offers lessons adapted for students at different levels of English mastery, as well as charts and tips for immersing students in classroom routines. (Grades K–5)

Margaret Bouchard’s [*Comprehension Strategies for English Language Learners*](#) shows you how to meet the dual challenge of helping non-native speakers acquire language skills while learning important content. This collection of research-based strategies will give you the tools to enable English learners at different proficiency levels to read and comprehend content area text. Lessons are accompanied by explanations of supporting research as well as suggestions for modeling and graphic organizers to guide students. (Grades 4 & Up)

ALSO OF INTEREST

Luisa Pérez-Sotelo and **Eileen Hogan** help you overcome the barrier with your Spanish-speaking students and their families with [*The Essential Spanish Phrase Book for Teachers*](#). This handy guide provides indispensable tools like English-Spanish translation charts and helpful lists of idiomatic expressions, cognates (i.e., words occurring in both languages that have similar spellings and pronunciations), and vocabulary that is pertinent to a variety of school situations. (Grades K–6)