

ESL Classroom Differentiation Guide

Anchor Charts – Using charts around the classroom allow ELLs an independent reference. ELLs are less likely to ask questions, so this provides a resource to use when needed. Ex. timelines, compare/contrast words, organization of a 5 paragraph essay, procedures for the chem/bio lab, etc.

Audio/ Visual Supports – A picture is worth a thousand words. (turn on closed captioning in videos)

Backward Design – What is the most important information that the ELLs should know at the end of the chapter or unit? Pick one, two, or three concepts and emphasize this content in classroom discussion, homework, and reading assignments.

Graphic Organizers – For Everything! Organizing writing, reading comprehension, historical timelines, bio/chem labs, etc. (venn diagrams, flow charts, maps, concept maps)

Outlines – Provide ELLs an outline of your notes from the lesson or lecture. This helps them to determine the important information from the lesson.

T-Charts – Demonstrate how to take notes with a T chart. Main idea is written on the left side, supporting details and examples on the right side.

Wait time - Wait longer than is comfortable until someone answers. Explain to the students that everyone needs to be engaged in classroom discussions (new ELLs may be mentally translating questions and answers)

Grouping Strategies - Try to use heterogeneous grouping strategies so ELLs have stronger English speaking peers as models. ELLs are more likely to take language risks in small groups rather than in front of the whole class.

Content Word Wall – Applicable to every subject area. Create a portion of the classroom where words are posted with pictures (if applicable) and a brief explanation of the word. Post words in an organized manner (eg. steps in a process or when introduced in a chapter)

Homework Buddies/ Study Groups – Allow students to take linguistic ‘risks’ without the teacher present. Helps students meet native English speaking peers outside the classroom.

Journaling – Encourage or require students to keep a journal in class about content area (science journals, math journals, dialogue journals, response journals)

Vocabulary Cards – Notecards with new English word on one side and translation on other side.

Think Pair Share – This strategy is useful for reluctant speakers in class. ELLs may not want to take the risk in a whole-group setting, but will discuss with a partner. Allow sufficient wait time before partners discuss question/ situation.

Pre-reading – ELLs should have time to pre-read a text prior to class discussion (or independent read aloud) about a particular topic.