

# Introduction

Have you noticed something different lately? Huge changes are taking place that affect all teachers' work with English learners (ELs). In today's educational climate, ELs are expected to develop a deep level of challenging content knowledge, engage with increasingly complex texts, and interact with their peers in more sophisticated ways than in the past, all while developing proficiency in English. The level of rigor has increased for all students, and ELs must meet the same challenging content standards as their English-proficient peers. As a result, all teachers of ELs must have the specialized skills and resources to be able to support their students in these practices. The phrase *teachers of ELs* no longer points directly to the ESOL teacher as the educator primarily responsible for supporting ELs' language development, as well as acclimation to the school setting. Rather, every teacher who works with at least one student acquiring English is now a *teacher of ELs*.

With the increasing number of ELs in today's classrooms, it is essential that *all* teachers understand and use strategies that effectively support ELs and can also model how to implement those strategies. In addition to all teachers of ELs being responsible for facilitating ELs' acquisition of English, all teachers of ELs also play an important role in helping students recognize that they are welcome members of the school and larger community and have linguistic and cultural resources to offer their classrooms and communities. During these times of great change, both in classroom expectations for ELs and nationwide, where EL students' place in the fabric of our society is facing increased scrutiny, the charge all teachers of ELs face has grown infinitely more crucial.

We recognize, however, that the realities of teacher preparation often fall short in preparing all teachers of ELs to meet these challenges. We know that many teachers of ELs were not provided with training to approach their work with ELs with a toolbox full of ready-to-go, research-based strategies to reach their learners. In addition to being able to use effective strategies to support ELs of different proficiency levels, all teachers of ELs are increasingly called upon to do even more in areas that are sometimes overlooked and

undervalued. All teachers of ELs must now collaborate, advocate, and serve as leaders at their schools to unlock their ELs' potential in the classroom and also have a long-term positive effect in preparing them for college and careers. This book helps educators develop their own interpersonal, advocacy, and leadership skills that are essential to fully support their ELs and for educators to engage with other professionals as leaders.

As we wrote this book, we imagined all of the different types of current and future educators who might use the book and took steps to adapt the content, as well as structure of the book, to reach a wide audience. First, we were sure to frame the book around solid research that grounds the EL strategies you will encounter and apply. Next, we structured the book in a way that provides the background that teachers with less training in working with ELs will need to understand the support from research, the rationale, and the use of particular strategies. At the same time, we also included ample modeling and examples, application activities, and reflection questions that can support even an experienced teacher of ELs in deepening his or her understanding and use of the selected research-based strategies, weaving in scenarios that span grade levels and content areas. We are confident that anyone from kindergarten dual-language teachers to high school mathematics teachers can find useful strategies that they can apply to their context and can voice the rationale for using such strategies to support ELs by using this book. We are also sure that preservice teachers in teacher education programs will greatly benefit from reading and applying this book.

We have structured the book so that you can use it independently, as part of a course, or within a professional learning community (PLC), where ideally, ESOL teachers and content teachers can discuss and interact with the material together. The book is organized so that the first three chapters introduce our organizational framework and provide overarching strategies for ELs that are meant to be implemented in combination with other strategies shared in Chapters 4–9 of the book. Chapters 4–9 then each introduce a very specific strategy in a multilayered fashion that you can incorporate into your instruction. Each chapter includes scenarios that allow you to reflect on how the strategy might be applied to a particular classroom setting and tools to help you implement the strategies in your own setting. If you are reading this book as part of a PLC or in a coteaching partnership, you could select any of Chapters 2–9 to read, discuss, and implement in your classroom.

Even though integrating research-based strategies is crucial to ELs' success, educators must also constantly monitor and strengthen their professional skills with other educators to most effectively serve ELs. Our approach to work with ELs is unique, and so is this book. Because we believe the principles of collaboration, equity, advocacy, and leadership are fundamental to supporting ELs, we have woven these ideas into each chapter. As a result, we have included two sections at the end of each chapter that identify the

role collaboration can have in relation to each specific strategy and also how equity, advocacy, and leadership can play out in the facilitation of each strategy. This book offers you a space in which you can hit the pause button, reflect on your own practice and your relationship with your colleagues, and recharge your batteries to better support ELs. We encourage you, as you implement the different strategies recommended in this book, to examine how you can strengthen your collaboration with your colleagues in service of equitable education for ELs. We also hope you will reflect on how you can bolster your advocacy and leadership skills to share the new considerations, approaches, and strategies that you are implementing with other educators as a result of your learning in this book. This book will provide you with the opportunities to begin conversations not only around strategies that all teachers can use to support their ELs but also around ways in which teachers can continue to enhance their own professional development and grow as leaders and advocates for ELs. So getting back to our original question, “Have you noticed something different lately?” We hope you have, and we know you will lead positive changes to better serve the ELs you work with.

A summary of each chapter follows.

## **Chapter 1: Why You Need This Book to Support ELs**

Chapter 1 identifies the urgent need to provide ELs with the type of instructional support that they require to succeed academically and recognize they are equal members of any classroom. The chapter provides an overview of the current educational context, demographics, research, and climate within which ELs are being educated. We also introduce the five guiding principles that define our work with ELs and their educators. These principles provide an easily accessible theoretical framework that forms the foundation for the remaining chapters in the book.

## **Chapter 2: Using a Culturally Responsive Framework to Meet the Needs of ELs**

Chapter 2 provides an understanding of the role culture plays in the education of ELs. The chapter includes working definitions of culture and culturally responsive teaching, a description of the characteristics of culture, and strategies to support culturally responsive teaching. It also provides opportunities for you to reflect on your own culture and how it shapes your instruction, classroom expectations, and interactions with ELs.

## **Chapter 3: Scaffolding Instruction for ELs**

Chapter 3 shares an overview of what scaffolds are and why they are essential to incorporate into lessons for ELs. The chapter’s deeper focus is

on research-based strategies for selecting and developing scaffolds based on such factors as the academic task at hand and ELs' proficiency levels, as well as other background factors. The chapter includes examples of a variety of different types of scaffolds, checklists, and practical tools for you to plan and implement scaffolded lessons for ELs in your context.

## **Chapter 4: Academic Conversations: A Tool for Fostering ELs' Oral Language Development**

Chapter 4 begins with a discussion of the importance of integrating academic conversations in the content-based instruction of ELs framed around relevant research. It introduces and provides examples of four student practices that will foster ELs' engagement in academic discussions in order to support their oral language development and their understanding of challenging content. The chapter also includes tools that you can use when planning and incorporating oral language activities into your instruction and offers recommendations for different types of oral language activities.

## **Chapter 5: Teaching Academic Language to ELs**

Chapter 5 defines what academic language is and shares why it is critical for ELs to acquire academic language in order to access challenging content standards and be fully integrated into content classrooms. It also includes practical examples of how to analyze a text's academic language and how to teach the linguistic forms and functions necessary for ELs to interact with challenging grade-level texts and topics. The chapter gives you guidance on how to leverage different types of teachers' strengths in order to effectively collaborate, thereby weaving together academic language and content instruction.

## **Chapter 6: Vocabulary Instruction and ELs**

Chapter 6 describes why focused teaching of academic vocabulary is critical to ELs' academic achievement. Recognizing that teachers must select vocabulary for ELs carefully and judiciously, the chapter includes research-based guidelines on selecting what vocabulary to teach that will have the most benefit for ELs, as well as strategies for teaching and reinforcing those new words. The chapter also offers a tool for planning lessons focused on content-specific vocabulary.

## **Chapter 7: Teaching ELs Background Knowledge**

Chapter 7 presents research on the role of background knowledge in ELs' reading comprehension and addresses the need to develop a new approach to the teaching of background knowledge to ELs within a focus of close reading. It presents a new four-step framework for deciding which types

of background knowledge to teach ELs and ways to activate and teach background knowledge concisely. The chapter models several activities that you can use in your own planning and instruction to help you put the EL background knowledge framework into practice.

## **Chapter 8: Supporting ELs' Reading for Multiple Purposes Through the Use of Scaffolded Text-Dependent Questions**

Chapter 8 synthesizes relevant research, discusses what it means for ELs to read for multiple purposes, and provides a framework that allows ELs to unlock the meaning of complex text. The chapter describes what text-dependent questions (TDQs) are and how they can be a tool to support ELs' reading for multiple purposes. It also includes recommendations, tools, and practical tips for you to develop and scaffold TDQs to effectively support ELs of varying proficiency levels as they engage with challenging text on multiple levels.

## **Chapter 9: Formative Assessment for ELs**

Chapter 9 highlights the necessity of creating formative assessments that assess ELs' acquisition of academic language and content. The chapter includes a definition of formative assessment and provides a summary of relevant research on the practice of formative assessment for ELs. It also includes guidance on creating appropriate classroom assessments for ELs based on ELs' proficiency levels and offers you the opportunity to apply what you've learned to your own formative assessment of ELs.