



R/ELA Weekly Tidbits

*Maryland Common Core State Curriculum Framework
Maryland School for the Deaf*

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Dear Teachers,

We'd like to focus this newsletter on bilingual education theories and applications. Can we meet the challenges of Text Complexity in the Common Core State Standards through ASL? The answer is a resounding yes! If one observes the word (sign) choice adults use when addressing deaf children, they tend to, carefully, choose signs and grammar structure and then either fingerspell some of the signs to introduce English terms, if there are any. That way, deaf children have success in learning language without facing frustration and/or obstacles. For example, to a prekindergarten student, an adult may sign, "STOP WHINE, YOU KNOW THAT YOU NOW W-H-I-N-I-N-G"? It is similar to how hearing parents talk to hearing toddlers, with an exception that they do not spell out words. According to Stephen Krashen's input hypothesis (i+1), a language acquirer who is at "level i" must receive comprehensible input that is at "level i+1." We acquire, in other words, only when we understand language that contains structure that is "a little beyond" where we are now. This understanding is possible due to using the context of the language we are hearing or reading and our knowledge of the world. (<http://www.languageimpact.com/articles/rw/krashenbk.htm>) Now for elementary students whose L1 (ASL) is not yet solid, teachers continue to be particularly mindful of how they sign to them, making sure the students understand the first time something is expressed to them in order to reduce anxiety, self-doubt, and/or boredom due to ASL complexity. For students whose L1 (ASL) is solid, teachers will shift from being mindful to trying to introduce concepts in more advanced ASL grammar with complicated use of classifiers. For ASL stories and poems, we pay attention to "reader and task". Do the students have enough background knowledge to be able to follow the text be it a story or poem? What about the topics? With "reader and task" in mind, we can determine the text complexity of ASL stories and poems and place the age/grade appropriateness to them.

We are sure you can detect the similarity between text complexity in ASL and in English. We as teachers want to be careful with the selection of English text with your students as we do not want to create anxiety, self-doubt and/or boredom to English complexity, but at the same time, we want to challenge them. We think Stephen Krashen's theory can come in handy whenever you are faced with the decision-making to choose which text, either in ASL or English, to be used in your classroom.

In the following pages, we want to share highlights of American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO's power point presentation, "Making the Common Core Standards Work for English Language Learners: The Importance of Linking English Language Proficiency Standards to the Common Core Standards". (<http://www.gilld.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/ELL-ELP-Standards-Aligned-to-Core-Standards-AFT-Forum-KLeos-Oct-2010.pdf>) We believe once we understand how to link English language proficiency standards to the common core standards, we will be better equipped to insure our students reach their utmost abilities to use the English language.

Enjoy your spring break!

Bonnie Kramer and Elizabeth Reed, R/ELA Curriculum Coordinators

Making the Common Core Standards Work for English Language Learners: The Importance of Linking English Language Proficiency Standards to the Common Core Standards

What Do We Mean by English Language Proficiency for PreK – 12 Grade Students?

The Global Institute for Language & Literacy Development, LLC. (GILD)'s Broad Definition: Language proficiency (or linguistic proficiency) is the demonstrated ability of a student to speak, understand, comprehend, read and write in the acquired language (i.e. English).

GILD's Operational Definition: Language proficiency of an English language learner means the English language the student has developed and acquired. That is, sufficient knowledge, skills, and ability in speaking, reading, writing, and understanding the English language so as to ensure that such a student has the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English and affords the student access to rigorous grade level academic content instruction.

What Does Alignment of ELP Standards to Content Standards Mean?

- ⇒ **Alignment** refers to the degree to which there is a “direct” match between the description of language domain and skill level, and the description of content objective.
- ⇒ Aligning ELP standards to academic content standards provides a focused description of what an English Language Learner is expected to know, be able to do and demonstrate in English at the end of instruction for any given content objective.
- ⇒ **Even more importantly** - alignment of ELP standards to content standards provide a description of the English language knowledge and skill level at which an English Language Learner can access instruction and thus have the opportunity to learn and master the content objectives, and attain expected academic achievement standards.

Why is this alignment important and why is it so important to tie ELP to content acquisition?

Reason #1: It's required by federal law. States must “. . . Establish standards and objectives for raising the level of English proficiency that are derived from the four recognized domains of speaking, listening, reading and writing, and that are aligned with achievement of the challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards described in section 1111(b)(1).” [Title III, NCLB, Section 3113]

Reason #2: It's a matter of civil rights. “Where inability to speak and understand the English language excludes natural origin minority group children from effective participation in the educational program offered by a school district, the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program to these students.” [Supreme Court Decision; Lau v. Nichols; January 1974]

What Would Alignment of ELP Standards to Common Core State Standards Look Like?

CCSS: Language Arts – Reading Standards for Literature K-5 Key Ideas and Details (Grade 4):	Example of Aligned ELP Standards and Benchmarks (Grade 4):
<p>1. Refer to details and examples in a text <u>when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences</u> from the text.</p>	<p>1. <u>Make predictions, inferences, and deductions, and discuss the meaning of literary works with attention to meaning beyond the literal level, to understand and interpret text presented orally and in written form.</u></p>
<p>2. Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem <u>from details in the text; summarize the text.</u></p>	<p>2. Identify and use reading and listening strategies to <u>make literary text comprehensible and meaningful.</u> Strategies such as skimming, scanning, previewing, reviewing, listening selectively or <u>for a specific purpose, and listening for main ideas and details.</u></p>
<p>3. <u>Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text</u> (e.g., a character’s thoughts, words, or actions).</p>	<p>3. <u>Analyze, compare and contrast characters, setting, theme, point of view and plot of text.</u></p>

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For more information, check the web site at <http://www.gilld.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/ELL-ELP-Standards-Aligned-to-Core-Standards-AFT-Forum-KLeos-Oct-2010.pdf>.

World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) is in the final stages of developing its 2012 Edition of the English Language Development Standards. Scroll down the web site and you will find nicely-written drafts. (<http://www.wida.us/standards/elp.aspx>)



Ideas for this newsletter
are always welcome!