
Diversity in ELLs

Besides diversity in native language, English learners differ in country of origin, culture, socio-economic status, level of English language development, past experiences, and prior formal education. They may be U.S. born, immigrants, refugees, long-term ELLs (LTELLs), or ELLs with severely interrupted formal education (SIFE).

ELLs are a heterogeneous and highly complex group of students. Long-term language learners are ELLs who have been in the U.S. seven or more years and are below grade level in reading/writing and other content areas. SIFEs are students with interrupted education who start school one or more years behind their grade-level peers. SIFEs may come from countries where poverty, disaster, and civil unrest affect the development of literacy and opportunities for education. They may also come from countries where persecution or strict rules about gender, social class, or ethnicity prevented them from attending school.

Abilities of ELLs

English language learners can be a resource and a challenge to schools. They bring multiculturalism and diversity, yet, although by definition they are not proficient in English, they must take the same high-stake assessments as all students. How can teachers meet this challenge? How can teachers deliver equitable instruction to students who don't speak English? How can content teachers teach literacy to secondary ELLs? For ELLs to be successful academically, administrators and teachers must address these challenges by focusing on the abilities these students bring to schools and their classes.

**Cognitively
Challenging,
Relevant, and
Engaging
Instruction**

ELLs have the same cognitive abilities as their native English-speaking peers, even though they have only a partial understanding of the English language. Local curricula and classroom instruction should recognize these abilities by being cognitively challenging, relevant, and engaging. In addition, teachers should set high expectations, address socio-cultural factors, know their students' English language proficiency levels, and use this information to explicitly integrate language development with the learning of content.

**Scaffolding and
Language Support**

Language is power — power to read to learn, power to access content. Scaffolding and language support must be provided so that ELLs can successfully engage in learning subject knowledge and developing skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Instruction that simultaneously