

## McGraw Hill's Guiding Principles for Supporting English Learners

McGraw Hill is committed to providing English Learners appropriate support as they simultaneously learn content and language. As an organization, we recognize that the United States is a culturally and linguistically diverse country. Moreover, this diversity continues to increase, with corresponding growth in the number of English Learners (ELs). In 2012–2013, an estimated 4.85 million ELs were enrolled in U.S. schools; this subgroup now makes up nearly 10% of the total public school enrollment (Ruiz-Soto, Hooker, and Batalova, 2015). In fact, ELs are the fastest growing student population in the country, growing 60% in the last decade, compared with only 7% growth of the general student population (Grantmakers for Education, 2013). Perhaps most interesting of all, the vast majority of ELs—85% of prekindergarten through fifth grade ELs and 62% of high school ELs—were born in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2015). These U.S.-born ELs may be first-, second-, or third-generation students with strong ties to their cultural roots.

A great many ELs come to school with a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds from Spanish-speaking countries in South and Central America. In addition, schools enroll native speakers from numerous other backgrounds and languages—the most common other languages being Cantonese, Hmong, Korean, Vietnamese, and Haitian Creole. While over 70% of ELs come to school speaking Spanish as their native language, as a group, ELs speak nearly 150 languages (Baird, 2015). The experiences and identities acquired in the context of ELs' homes and communities can transform the simplest classroom into a unique cultural and linguistic microcosm.

English Learners' success in learning a second language is influenced by a variety of factors besides the instructional method itself, including individual, family, and classroom characteristics; school and community contexts; the attributes of the assessment used to measure progress; and whether the language acquired is a national or foreign language (August & Shanahan, 2006; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). For instance, children's initial levels of proficiency in their home language(s), along with English, influence new language acquisition (August, Shanahan, Escamilla, K., 2009), as does the quality of school support (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014) and the characteristics of the language learners' first and second languages (Dressler & Kamil, 2006).

Given these factors, there is a pressing need for fundamental principles that guide the support of ELs as they acquire content and develop language. Drawing upon extensive research in the field, McGraw Hill has developed nine guiding principles for supporting English Learners at all grade levels and in all disciplines.

## Guiding Principles

- 1. Provide Specialized Instruction:** English Learners benefit more from specialized instruction that is focused on English acquisition than they do from simple exposure to the language (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010; Norris & Ortega, 2000). To optimize learning, specialized teaching models should provide targeted instruction in English that does not come at the expense of grade-appropriate academic content (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006).
- 2. Cultivate Meaning:** Meaning exists at multiple levels within a language—for example, words, phrases, and sentences each carry meaning. As such, instruction should attend to meaning at all levels: lexical, grammatical, and discourse (Ellis, 2012).
- 3. Teach Structure and Form:** Most research indicates that second language learners must be explicitly taught how structure and form contribute to meaning, or how grammar and syntax work alongside words to communicate thoughts and ideas.
- 4. Develop Language in Context:** Numerous studies have highlighted the importance of developing oral language in the context of content-area instruction—this is to say that students benefit from learning English by studying grade-level material in other subjects (cf. de Oliveira, 2016; Baker et al., 2014).
- 5. Scaffold to Support Access:** It is critical to provide ELs with comprehension support for academic content because mastery of subject matter content is one of the most important criteria for success in school (August, Shanahan, & Escamilla, 2009; Ryoo, 2009; Silverman & Hines, 2009; Vaughn, et al., 2009). Scaffolding provides the added benefit of helping all learners access grade-level core content.

- 6. Foster Interaction:** For both second language acquisition and content learning, it is important to provide ELs with abundant opportunities to interact (via speaking, listening, reading, and writing) using the second language with bilingual and English-proficient partners (Gersten, et al., 2007).
- 7. Create Affirming Cultural Spaces:** To create social and cultural spaces that affirm students' social and cultural identities, teachers must implement linguistically and culturally responsive teaching practices. Responsive practices reflect students' cultures and experiences, including their values, customs, backgrounds, and home languages (Banks, 2008; Gay 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Taylor & Sobel, 2011).
- 8. Engage Home to Enrich Instruction:** The most effective schools and educational programs recognize the vital roles of family and community. These institutions develop effective, creative approaches to bridging any cultural and language differences by integrating family and community into education (Tinajero & Munter, 2004).
- 9. Promote Multilingualism:** Bilingualism or multilingualism is an asset, an intellectual accomplishment, and a national treasure! Schools are in a position to capitalize on a student's native language by creating opportunities for all students, ELs and non-ELs, to acquire two or more languages.

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