Scaffolding Writing for Elementary ELLs

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“We cannot opt out of the Western print world and remain active participants in society”

ELLs in Frederick County

• 1702 ELL students from 67 countries representing 61 languages

• Dominant languages:
  – Spanish (17 countries)
  – French
  – Burmese
  – Vietnamese
  – English
  – Chinese
ELL Population Growth

- 1990-124
- 2000-301
- 2003-599
- 2005-926
- 2007-1,100
- 2009-1,400
- 2010-1,532
- 2011-1,702
- 2012-1,800+
Writing is the most difficult of the four skills...

• Orthography
• Spelling
• Vocabulary
• Register: context, purpose, audience, form

• Concepts of print
• Grammar
• Organization
• Content
Strengths and struggles?

• Examine the student profile. Try to anticipate what strengths and struggles that particular student might have with writing. Be prepared to share.
Jonathan

Jonathan is a 1st grader from a large Chinese family. The parents, who speak fluent English, are busy with their restaurant. The boys are home with a grandfather, who speaks little English. Jonathan’s oldest brother helps him with homework.

At school, Jonathan struggles with the English grammar. He leaves out articles and endings, and his sentences tend to be very short. He is a gifted artist and loves to illustrate his writing. He is good at using classroom resources for spelling.
Pamela

Pamela is a second grader who speaks fluent English. She was born in the U.S. At home, she speaks Spanish with her parents and English with her middle school-aged brother. Pamela loves to write. She is an outgoing student and eager to do her work.

Pamela struggles with organizing her thoughts for writing. She will often write prolifically, but off-topic. Sometimes, her written responses do not make sense at all. Her spelling is good and her sentences resemble fluent spoken English.
Angsumalin

Ang is from Thailand, and has lived in the U.S. for three years. Her father works at a research laboratory and her mother is a homemaker. Ang speaks English well, but with a noticeable accent. She is a conscientious 3rd grader who visits the school library every morning.

Ang works hard at her writing assignments, but her accent sometimes affects her spelling, and she makes many grammatical errors. Her writing is full of detail, and she is able to support her answers and use classroom resources.
Mimi

Mimi is a 4th grader, who came to the United States from Togo a year ago. She quickly made a lot of friends and loves the social aspects of school. Mimi already speaks English well and loves to read. At home, she speaks French. Mimi is reluctant to write. Her written work has little detail and lacks voice. Often, Mimi will sit for twenty or more minutes, laboring over one sentence. She likes to work with a partner on writing, and has good spelling and grammar.
Kendrick

Kendrick, a 5th grader, came to the United States from Mexico six months ago. He is a withdrawn student who does not even socialize with the other Spanish speakers in his class. On the weekends, Kendrick often helps out his father at work. His writing in Spanish is on grade level.

Kendrick is not a risk taker in writing. He tends to want to do his work in Spanish even when he knows how to write it in English. He often does not complete homework. At school, he likes to sit at his desk and take notes in English.
WIDA Access for ELLs

www.wida.us
1 - Entering

• pictorial or graphic representation of the language of the content areas
• words, phrases, or chunks of language when presented with one-step commands, directions, WH-, choice, or yes/no questions, or statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support
• oral language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede meaning when presented with basic oral commands, direct questions, or simple statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support
2 - Beginning

• general language related to the content areas
• phrases or short sentences
• oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that often impede the meaning of the communication when presented with one- to multiple-step commands, directions, questions, or a series of statements with sensory, graphic, or interactive support
3 - Developing

• general and some specific language of the content areas
• expanded sentences in oral interaction or written paragraphs
• oral or written language with phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that may impede the communication, but retain much of its meaning, when presented with oral or written, narrative, or expository descriptions with sensory, graphic, or interactive support
4 - Expanding

• specific and some technical language of the content areas
• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral discourse or multiple, related sentences, or paragraphs
• oral or written language with minimal phonological, syntactic, or semantic errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication when presented with oral or written connected discourse with sensory, graphic, or interactive support
5 - Bridging

• specialized or technical language of the content areas
• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse, including stories, essays, or reports
• oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English-proficient peers when presented with grade-level material
6 - Reaching

• specialized or technical language reflective of the content areas at grade level
• a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse as required by the specified grade level
• oral or written communication in English comparable to English-proficient peers
Vocabulary

Evey word has layers...
Pronunciation
Spelling
Morphology
Syntax
Usage
-> teach the layers!
3 Tiers of Vocabulary

You may have to teach them all!

Tier 3: Terminology used in specific domains of knowledge: *peninsula, refinery, digestive system*

Tier 2: High-frequency academic vocabulary used in a variety of domains: *conclusion, evidence, persuade*

Tier 1: Frequently used everyday vocabulary: *clock, baby, walk*
Sentence Structure

• “Does that sound right?” is not always helpful
• ELLs need good models:
  – Copying is acceptable at lower levels
  – Peer editing with native English speakers
  – Sentence frames – can be leveled

_________ is ________, but __________ is ________.
Both _________ and __________ are __________.

_________ and __________ are different/similar, because____________________.
Grammar

• Common Core has great resources – use them
• Grammar is best learned when taught **explicitly**, with an **authentic** context
• Some students thrive on learning rules
Great writers have great background knowledge

Develop background knowledge through
- Stories that matter and nonfiction that awes
- Social studies and science
- Sharing connections
Organization

• Tweak organizers to be more direct (see attached)
• Model by cutting up and reorganizing an interactive writing piece
• Have students draw the picture(s) first
Mechanics

- Use an editing chart

Did I use...
- Capital letters at the beginning of every sentence
- Punctuation at the end of each sentence

Did I spell these words correctly:
there, because, know, __________, __________

- Quick-word books or personal dictionaries
- Alphabet and phonics cues may be helpful even for older students
Motivation

• Authentic writing: What am I writing? Who is the audience? What is the purpose?
• Interactive journaling (see attached)