

# PUTTING

*It All*

# TOGETHER

Focus on meaning

Generate more language with critical thinking tasks

Encourage multilingual communication

Integrate content and language instruction and assessment

Leverage home languages as instructional assets

Bridge from oral language to reading and writing tasks

Provide comprehensible input and "just right" scaffolds

# KEY SHIFTS

## *For Teaching English Language Learners*

This module's mindset shift pushes us to leverage and regard the home languages of English language learners (ELLs) as instructional assets, assets that bridge prior knowledge to new knowledge and that ensure that content is meaningful and understandable to ELLs. Using ELLs' home languages is not only an essential practice, it also fulfills our commitment to social justice that provides ELLs with equitable instruction and assessments.

Equitable assessment practices require us to provide scaffolds – including home languages, when appropriate – to more accurately understand what they know about reading and content areas. Otherwise, by assessing only in English or without appropriate supports, we risk not having a full picture of what ELLs know and can do.



As teachers of both content and language, we plan deliberately to support the oral and written language development of our ELLs. We use comprehensible input to make lessons more accessible and meaningful for language learners. We scaffold their access to grade-level content and critical thinking tasks that will engage them cognitively as they learn the language. These strategies offer high expectations along with high levels of support.

**When we plan deliberately for ELLs to use their entire linguistic repertoires and their background knowledge, we create instructional spaces for ELLs to engage meaningfully with grade-level tasks and develop their oral and written language skills.**

# PORTABLE PRACTICES

## *that Work Across Learning Environments*

### *Promote Equity!*



- Ensure all your students have access to devices, software, and the internet, if necessary. A recording of your screen with step-by-step instructions for using new tools, apps, or programs – with captions or translations in home languages – is useful for families.
- Increase comprehensible input for ELLs by recording lessons and adding captions.
- Increase engagement by incorporating students' cultural assets – try a survey.
- Increase participation and concept development by using home language strategies.
- Increase access to appropriate support services by conducting bilingual assessments.
- Make digital anchor charts that are portable across environments.
- Create – or have the students create – portable scaffolds, such as bilingual visual word walls, glossaries, and sentence stems for each unit.
- Select multimedia resources that have translations available and are representative of the diversity in the classroom and community.
- Identify multilingual school liaisons for each home language who may be available to record versions of key school information in their languages.

# Students First, Language Second

When planning for language, be careful not to reduce language and content goals to requiring ELLs to use only specific sentence starters, phrases, and key vocabulary (Chamot, 2009; Echevarria et al., 2024; Gibbons, 2015). After teachers analyze lessons and units of study, vocabulary is often identified, deliberately organized, and scaffolded so that the language learner is pushed into using them within the lesson, orally and in writing. Requiring the ELL to use pre-selected vocabulary, phrases, and sentence frames can be helpful for their class participation in a new language, but it also takes away their agency from speaking and thinking in authentic ways. **In order to make sure that our language scaffolding is not limiting, encourage students to be creative and use any authentic language or form of communication (drawing, models, gestures) at any time. Focus on meaning.**

*Many educators consider translanguaging strategies as simply scaffolds for language learning, but they can play a more significant, central, agentic role for the language learner.*

Van Lier (2004) states that the notion of scaffolds is rather “rigid and static” and that educational work is more dynamic and flexible. Scaffolds don’t always need to be heavily teacher-directed where the language learner plays a limited fill-in-the-blank type of role. Translanguaging and home language scaffolds can have powerful implications for the language learner; together they can create transformative spaces for the student to be an agent of their own learning. Students can also communicate when they need temporary scaffolds, such as word banks or sentence stems, and when they can be removed.

*We teach students first, then language.*

Building relationships with students and finding their strengths are part of selecting the “just right” scaffolds for each classroom activity and assignment. If setting up scaffolds is a formulaic process with preset places for student contributions, we miss out on their voices and their highest-order thinking.

Be careful not to over-scaffold content and prevent students from sharing original ideas that do not align with the sentence starters or key vocabulary. Language instruction cannot be about language in isolation – it must be about students engaging meaningfully and authentically with ideas that motivate them to fully deploy their linguistic repertoires.

*We must engage learners in great ideas that deserve the application of language.*



# Welcoming ALL Student Voices

Throughout this module, we have provided a number of strategies for educators serving multilingual and ELL students. Let us return to the principle of getting to know our students' backgrounds and prior knowledge. This allows us to affirm their identities as learners, bridge to new learning, and create a more equitable learning environment; this reinforces that the educator is a learner, as well.

For example, when we ask students when or how they find translation tools helpful, some students may say that translation is a hindrance in the classroom, but that it provides a meaningful way to communicate with grandparents on WhatsApp. This enables you to tailor your use of the tool and encourage it as a form of language maintenance and family connection.

**Here are some other ways to center ELLs in your instruction to create a more welcoming environment at the school or classroom level.**



**Ask students to set individual growth targets** in content learning, language, and personal development. Multilingual students may have specific goals for their first language(s).



Set up a **council or club for multilingual families or students** to advise administration or educators.



Initiate an **Around the World Club** where families and students share their cultures and learn about others while remembering that most of our ELLs were born in the U.S.



Start an **Equity and Social Justice Club** with allies around the school. Let students set the agenda.



Teach students how to **advocate for themselves and ask questions**.



Let **students take the lead in creating scaffolds**, such as word banks, sentence stems, or visuals.



**Ask students which scaffolds are “just right”** for right now. When and in what circumstances can we remove them?

# Welcoming **ALL** Student Voices

More ways to center ELLs in your instruction to create a more welcoming environment at the school or classroom level:

**Ask ELLs if translation is a helpful tool.** When? How? What resources do they need, if any?

**Ask ELLs if they are comfortable translating or interpreting for another student.** Some students may not feel confident using their home language for grade-level learning. Others may simply not want to take time away from their work or to act as an ambassador each time.

**Have students select texts for the whole class that represent their backgrounds, identities, and experiences.** Ensure that a variety of identities are represented in texts, pictures, and multimedia.

Review texts and resources to ensure that they **do not reinforce stereotypes or bias.**

Plan lessons that give students **many opportunities to read, write, speak, and listen** and that encourage the participation of all students.

Offer **frequent comprehension checks**, as well as opportunities for self-reflection and peer feedback on learning targets and goals.

What other strategies have helped you to build rapport with your ELLs or to learn more about them?

What helps you create a welcoming environment where ELLs thrive?

# Now It's Your Turn!



Let's put it all together as you wrap up Module 4.

In your workbook, you will have the opportunity to review a lesson that you recently taught and identify opportunities to embed supports for ELLs.

# Works Cited

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Gibbons, P. (2015). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning: Teaching English language learners in the mainstream classroom* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.

van Lier, L. (Ed.). (2004). *The ecology and semiotics of language learning: A sociocultural perspective*. Springer Netherlands.



# About Us

## **The TALE Academy**

The TALE Academy is a series of virtual learning experiences available to all New York State educators and offers a rich array of resources on topics related to teaching across learning environments (TALE). The TALE Academy is built upon the work New York State educators carried out during emergency remote teaching (ERT) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and extends it toward the future. TALE invites educators to think beyond online learning to consider a broader perspective on teaching and learning that encompasses teaching across multiple environments (in-person, remote, and hybrid).

## **The Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE) Project**

The TALE Academy is part of a broader New York State Education Department (NYSED) initiative known as Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE). In July 2020, NYSED was awarded funding through the United States Department of Education's Education Stabilization Fund-Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant to implement TRLE – a three-year project to build the capacity of teachers and educational leaders to effectively implement remote/hybrid learning for all students. Launched in the depths of the pandemic, the first phase of the TRLE project focused on getting resources to the field through partnerships with Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and school districts across the state. The second phase, which began in February 2022, focused on aggregating lessons learned and emerging teaching and learning strategies to address a broader field of practice: teaching across learning environments.

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