

The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners: Grades K-12

Discussion Questions for Chapter 3 - The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners

1. The 6 Principles endeavor to assist classroom practitioners in providing the best learning environment for English learners. Which one of the 6 Principles speaks most strongly to your own teaching situation? Why is this Principle compelling to you and your teaching?
2. Principle 1 is to “Know your learners.” Teachers of native English speakers also feel that this is a good guiding principle. Why is this advice even more significant for teachers of English learners? How does Practice 1B add to our repertoire of teaching and learning?
3. Principle 2 describes ways to create conditions for more effective learning of language and content. Practice 2A deals with reducing anxiety and increasing trust in language learning students. Why is this especially important with non-English speakers?
4. Practice 2B is in opposition to messages that English learners receive from the wider community outside of school. At times, the school community also contributes negative messages to these students. What is the culture of your school community in regard to language learning student expectations?
5. Practice 2C deals with increasing motivation for learning. Which of the practices described here are novel or unfamiliar in your learning community?
6. Principle 3 explains methodology for designing high-quality lessons for language and content learning across the grade levels. Which of the seven practices found in this section are most essential for you in your teaching? Which would you like to learn more about and why?
7. Practice 3A describes the distinctions between Language Arts objectives and language objectives. Discuss these distinctions with your colleagues. Practice creating a language arts objective at your grade level and creating a language objective that complements it. Next, try to adjust how you would monitor or assess students at two language proficiency levels to determine if they are meeting the objectives.

8. Practice 3C encourages teachers to elicit language output from students. Often, language learning students may be embarrassed to speak in front of others. Look at the strategies and suggestions for increasing language output. Which of these could be used with the most reluctant speakers? Which could be used with students at a variety of language proficiencies?
9. Practice 3E requires that teachers differentiate their lessons according to learners' language proficiencies, needs, and goals. This is often accomplished through scaffolding. Look at Tables 3.1, 3.3, and 3.4. Discuss how teachers can insert these scaffolds into lessons to differentiate among a variety of language levels. How can some scaffolds be used with another to increase comprehensibility?
10. Practice 3G reminds us to teach effective study habits to students. Look at the short list of study habits under Examples of Practice 3G. Are you familiar with all of them? If not, do some research and share the information with others in your discussion group.
11. Principle 4 indicates that effective teachers often adjust instruction according to learner responses. Teachers may not always be aware that students are not understanding instruction. The 10-2 and group response techniques described in Practice 4A are helpful for giving teachers information about learner comprehension. Discuss how these techniques can be used routinely in class for all learners. Which ones appear to be most useful for your language learning students? What other techniques for checking comprehension have you used?
12. Practice 4B encourages teachers to adjust their speech to student language proficiency levels. Describe responses of your students when you use simplified sentences, provide more wait time, or ask open-ended questioning during instruction. What other forms of comprehensible input can be used to accompany teacher language?
13. Principle 5 refers to monitoring and assessment of student language development. Modeling, reteaching, and effective feedback are important components of this principle. Practice 5B lists a variety of oral feedback techniques. Which ones do you use routinely? Which ones are new to your practice? Which ones are grade appropriate for your students?

14. Practice 5C identifies a variety of classroom-based assessments: teacher observation, teacher developed tests, comprehension checks, rubrics, checklists, surveys/questionnaires, and anecdotal records. Of this list, which are routinely used in your school environment or at your grade level? Can you suggest ways to incorporate a greater variety of teacher assessments from the list into instruction?

15. Principle 6 suggests that engagement and collaboration are necessary to professional teaching. Practice 6B provides examples of ways that teachers can help each other to improve practice and to remain engaged in continual professional development. Which of these suggestions have you observed or participated in? Which suggestions would you like to see implemented in your school's professional development design?