

Every Student Learns

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Preparing ELLs for Standardized Testing

Standardized tests have become a necessary evil of instructional programs. For students who are still learning English, any test becomes a test of their English language proficiency. This results in a large achievement gap between ELLs and English-proficient students. Students need to know what a multiple-choice test is and how to avoid errors that have nothing to do with their knowledge of the subject. How can teachers prepare students for standardized testing?

- **Build test-like structures into everyday instruction.**
- **Scaffold the kinds of instructions students will hear in the testing situation.** ELLs will become familiar with the terminology and it will not be a hindrance when tests are given.
- **De-mystify multiple-choice tests and the “tricks” in a positive setting.** Do not assume that students of any age know what a multiple-choice test is. Show students how to fill in a bubble. Model the process of elimination when four choices are given. Create opportunities for students to match vocabulary from four options or match words with printed pictures.
- **Provide direct instruction with modeling.** Practice how to make intelligent choices when the answer is not known. Remind students to rely on cognates to help decipher unknown vocabulary words and to use context to understand test items.
- **Encourage the use of academic language.** Extend student vocabulary by creating word families, playing synonym/antonym games, commenting on multiple meanings, and helping students make connections to their native language.
- **Offer all allowable accommodations for standardized testing.**

The solution, it seems, is a combination of approaches to test preparation. Provide a solid academic foundation of standards-based instruction, including a focus on the development of academic language and explicit instruction in test-taking skills, to ease the burden of test-taking and lessen the achievement gap that exists for ELLs.

For more information on preparing students for standardized testing, access the following article from ELL Outlook, “Test Preparation for English Language Learners: Pros and Cons” by Suzanne Irujo @

http://www.coursecrafters.com/ELL-Outlook/2004/may_jun/ELLOutlookITIArticle4.htm

ESL Curriculum Pacing Guide

Important Dates:

ACCESS Testing - January 28 - February 13, 2013

PSSA Writing - Grade 5 - March 11-15, 2013

For the third marking period, present the ESL curriculum as follows (approximate time frame).

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Complete Unit 5 - Story Elements

Complete Unit 6 - Literature

Begin Unit 7 - Living/Non-Living Things

Grades 1-2

Complete Unit 7 - Living/Non-Living Things

Complete Unit 8 - Math Basics

Grades 3-5

Complete Unit 6 - Math Concepts

Complete Unit 7 - Motion and Space

Begin Unit 9 - Living/Non-Living Things (to coincide with Franklin County Science Fair, April 5-6, 2013)

Highlighted Web Resources - Test Preparation

Visit the following sites for additional information on test preparation strategies:

PA ELL website - "Taking the PSSA - Resources for Students" @ http://paell.com/eng_stu_pssa.asp

PA ELL website - "Getting Ready to Take the PSSA: Successful Strategies for ELLs" - Teacher's Guide @ <http://paell.com/docs/svideoguide.pdf>

PSSA Guidebook - developed by Temple University for the PA Department of Education to assist students in preparing to take the PSSA @ http://www.svsd.k12.pa.us/home/Folder/PSSA_Guidebook.pdf