

Paladin Palmerton

Evergreen State College

ELL Statement

ELL Practices Are Good Classroom Practices

Approaching education from an ELL supporting perspective can do more than just support those with English as their second or even third language, but it can also enrich the culture and learning of an entire classroom, if approached correctly. Once an educator is able to gauge where a student's competencies and struggles are they can inform and tailor their coursework to both support not only that student, but also the whole class by finding ways to make those student's cultures relevant and placed into the context of instruction.

Opening assessment is deeply important. Being able to gauge where students are approaching upcoming content from is instrumental in both formulating lesson and content plans, but also helps in determining where and how students may struggle or in what ways they may be struggling. In my time observing world history classes at Capital High School I saw two main methods that were being used to discern student's knowledge going into new content modules. The first was the classic pretest, giving students low stakes multiple choice questions allowed them to show off what they may already know about the subject which in turn would allow the teacher to tailor content to the students. The other strategy I saw implemented was the issuing of several short answer writing prompts that would prime the student's minds for the coming content. Leading into the Enlightenment era, the teacher I was observing issued several philosophical prompts to the students asking them to write out their opinions on the role of government and lines between personal freedoms and governmental control. Using prompts like these falls directly in line with ELL support strategies regarding assessment. The article provided

suggests that acquiring samples of a student's writing does well in assessing the strengths and potential weak points in an ELLs proficiencies, which in turn allows educators to formulate how exactly to help a student.

The way I wish to approach teaching history matches up well with ELL support strategies. When teaching, and getting students invested in, history I feel it is deeply important to find ways to make course content relevant and relatable to students. One of the ways I plan on implementing this is by providing historical viewpoints centered around the backgrounds of my students. One of the ELL strategies touched on by the provided article is that very idea. By providing historical viewpoints from the cultures represented in the classroom students will be able to form stronger connections to the content along with the added bonus of driving home the point that this is *our* shared history and that history is felt by everyone, not just the big names from the books. There is also a real potential to help ELLs feel valued in the classroom by using/asking for their personal cultural reference points in order to color the history that is being presented. Hopefully this will both strengthen their understanding of content, but also their connection to their fellow students.

Speaking of their connection to their fellow students, a heavy emphasis on peer-to-peer coursework and group activities will do much in building both understanding and community within the classroom. Students working together on presentations will help give ELL students a sounding board for how they can best communicate with other students and the world around them. Having group help in a classically anxiety inducing scenario can hopefully open all students involved up to navigating communication barriers and can help students to find ways to feel confident in public speaking rather than shutting down as some want to do. ELL students can also wield their cultural backgrounds to the benefit of themselves and other students in

activities such as a group map project. They may be able to help teach others about the geography of different continents while also providing a deeper cultural context to names on a map.

By supporting ELLs we can not only reinforce their learning and understanding, but the learning and understanding of the whole class. Strategies to support ELL comprehension and buy-in fall directly in line with how to support those very same ideas within a history class in general.