

ESL Course Description

English language learners (ELLs) are linguistically and culturally diverse students who have been identified as having levels of English language proficiency that preclude them from assessing, processing, and acquiring unmodified grade level content in English. ELLs are those students who learned a language other than English as their first language. These students may be immigrants, refugees, or native born Americans.

ELL students are of varying needs, interests, and abilities and it is the responsibility of the ESL department to employ a number of teaching techniques in a variety of learning contexts to meet those needs. Each child's program is designed to fit his/her needs. Factors considered include age, level of English proficiency, previous schooling, mental or physical abilities, and native language and culture.

The English as a Second Language (ESL) program is a language acquisition program designed to teach English to students whose primary home language is not English. It is an instructional process designed specifically to develop English skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The ESL program is a sequential course that meets the needs of individual ELL students as determined by the W-APT, the WIDA ACCESS for ELLs, and the ESL teacher's evaluation. The course framework has been designed to aid the students in learning to use the English language correctly and effectively by participating in a variety of language activities that foster the development of English language skills. It has been created to assist ELLs in meeting the goals required to master English language proficiencies as outlined by the WIDA and Common Core Standards. The instruction consists of daily content and language objectives in the following areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition, an appreciation of various cultures and critical thinking are emphasized.

ESL (English as a Second Language Program) is a pull-out program. The ELL (English Language Learner) is pulled out of the regular classroom for special instruction in ESL for a minimum of 30 minutes daily at the Elementary level and is scheduled for a full class period (40-43 minutes) on the Secondary Level. POE (port of entry) students are pulled out / scheduled for two (2) class periods per day.

Students' need for ESL instruction is identified by the guidance counselors at the time of registration as well as by mainstream teachers who complete a Teacher Observation Rating Sheet (TORS form). An informal interview is conducted by a certified ESL instructor. The W-APT (WIDA ACCESS PLACEMENT TEST) screener is administered to verify the necessity for ESL instruction as well as to ascertain the appropriate placement level.

Differentiated instruction in a variety of learning contexts is employed in order to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of individual students. The program allows flexibility in methodology affording both the teacher and the student the opportunity to instruct and to learn according to preferred styles. An eclectic approach is utilized to maximize the results. Every effort is made to provide a comfortable environment for the students to accelerate the development of language skills and acculturation. Emphasis is placed upon the total development of the student which includes the physical, the social, the emotional, and the cognitive domains.

Linguistic, academic, and communicative competence is our goal. Students are instructed in the four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing) virtually simultaneously. Vocabulary is consistently taught in context and the concrete vocabulary is presented before the more abstract. Real situations that encourage language acquisition are the preferred method whenever possible. Such activities as role playing, utilizing newspapers, games, songs, plays, audio/visual support are employed to facilitate language acquisition.

According to Dr. Stephen Krashen's hypothesis of the affective filter, second language learning will be more successful if the child has a low anxiety level--if he is relaxed and not defensive. The teaching implication is

that we should create a positive and accepting environment to motivate him/her and lower his/her anxiety and lift this affective filter. Understanding the stages of acquisition that the child passes through is essential.

In summary, all students need to learn how to listen carefully, speak comfortably, read efficiently, write effectively, and think critically, in order to be successful both in and out of the school setting. Teachers who are sensitive to their needs will help the ELL to reach literacy and fluency, and to become comfortable with his/her new culture.