

Book Review

Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners

By Jane D. Hill & Kathleen M. Flynn
Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision
and Curriculum Development, 2006

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A recent Pew Hispanic Center Report (2006) indicates English Language Learners (ELLs) are represented in every state. Over the last ten years this increase has accounted for an increase of ELL students by as much as 400% in some states. The number of ELLs has teachers and preservice educational institutions grappling with meeting the unique needs of ELL students. Institutions must equip teachers with strategies and institute programs that current legislation requires to be instructional and research based. Educational programs must not only address improving the academic achievement of students, but they must also increase the English language proficiency of a large number of students. Addressing academic needs and English language development needs is a constant challenge for current teachers and institutions preparing teachers for the workforce. In a recent study that dealt with the needs of teachers, one educator stated "Teaching ELL students is hard work, not only are you teaching academic content you are also teaching students English and you are trying to meet the needs of English only students too!" (Luna, 2005).

The challenge of meeting the educational as well as linguistic needs of ELL students is a daunting task. *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners* is a treasure trove of useful, practical strategies based on current research and proven classroom activities. My

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only caution in reviewing the piece is not to be fooled by the diminutive size of the book. *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners* is a comprehensive review of research based strategies that are relevant and applicable to ELL students irrespective of their grade and ability levels. The book is based on efforts that are grounded in research, including *Classroom Instruction that Works* (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001) as well as *A Handbook for Classroom Instruction that Works* (Marzano, Norford, Paynter, Pickering, & Gaddy, 2001). The research upon which the books are based consisted of a review of over 30 years of data and 100 studies of instructional strategies. The findings identified nine categories of instructional strategies that have proven to increase student achievement and, therefore are deemed “exceptionally effective.” The nine categories include: (1) setting objectives and providing feedback, (2) using nonlinguistic representations, (3) implementing cues, questions and advance organizers, (4) utilizing cooperative learning, (5) summarizing and note taking, (6) providing homework and practice, (7) reinforcing effort and providing recognition, (8) generating and testing hypothesis, and (9) identifying similarities and differences.

In *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners*, Jane D. Hill and Kathleen M. Flynn studied the nine strategies and conducted additional research to investigate how and if these strategies could be modified to effectively promote the academic achievement and the English language development of ELL students. The result of their efforts is a teacher friendly manual, which offers research-based strategies for meeting the challenge of teaching in diversely populated classrooms. The reader is provided with detailed information, graphic organizers, matrices, and explanations that scaffold information, which appropriately address the unique requirements for meeting the needs of ELLs.

From my perspective as an assistant superintendent of educational services, the book reflected the necessary combination of research-based instructional strategies and activity based illustrations useful for staff development and round table discussions. In my position as a university instructor, the book supplied vivid descriptions of student and teacher interactions presented in an activity based format. These provide examples that can be easily modified and replicated for a variety of students and subject areas. Finally, from my perspective as a researcher, it was evident the premise of the book was grounded in theory and based on proven research-based strategies. The book’s strengths include the manner in which the content readily lends itself to meeting the needs of busy practioners.

The book is a refreshing review for veteran teachers and an excellent resource for those new to the field. The reader is presented with

clarifying terms such as, “sheltered instruction” an East Coast term and “special designed academic instruction in English, SDAIE” used on the West Coast. Veterans can take comfort in rereading references to works by Krashen, Terrell, Collier, and Thomas and Cummins, to name a few. Novices are provided with detailed information describing the attributes, necessary teacher prompts and expectations of ELL students at the preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency levels. Strategies are presented in terms of lesson examples dealing with language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The lessons are presented in a teacher friendly format addressing English-only students as well as ELL students regardless of their various levels of English fluency. Strategies are presented in a variety of formats including annotated bullets, hands-on activities, and step-by-step questioning guides such as “reciprocal teaching strategies,” which require the teacher to prepare lessons that encourage students to summarize, question, clarify, and predict information.

As a district administrator responsible for ELL student programs and as a preservice teacher educator, I would highly recommend this book as a useful tool for meeting the needs of ELL students, teachers and researchers. The book is similar to a guide book in that it provides detailed descriptions of what class activities should look like and step-by-step instructions for executing successful lessons in the classroom. In addition, the appendices offer illustrations and supporting text for a variety of graphic organizers, summary frames including descriptions and supporting questions, and an example of a three year parent and community involvement plan. For those interested in research the resource pages offer more than 70 articles and books written by respected educational and ELL authors. *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners* should be in the libraries of all those who are dedicated to improving the academic achievement of ELLs.