

SIOP

Strategies for English Language Learners

By Stacy M. Cummings

As you rethink education, imagine a school where all content area teachers (e.g., mathematics, social studies, science) strategically plan their lessons to include content and language objectives and address state standards. Language learning is explicitly taking place in every classroom, and the students know the content and language objectives prior to each lesson. Visualize a classroom with increased educator capacity to implement strategies addressing the needs and taking pride in the accomplishments of English language learners (ELLs).

What Does It Mean to Learn Academic English?

Sheltered instruction emerges from this process as a means for making grade-level academic content more accessible for ELLs, while also promoting their English language development. Similarly, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model is a lesson-planning and delivery approach that can extend the time students have for getting language support services in the classroom, while giving them a head start on the content subjects necessary for graduation. The practice of highlighting key language features and incorporating strategies makes the content comprehensible to students.

For ELLs to succeed, they must master not only English vocabulary and grammar, but also the way English is used in core content classes. This is referred to as “school English” or “academic English,” and each content area has a vocabulary of its own. For example, vocabulary specific to mathematics includes words such as *plus*, *minus*, and *theorem*. In their content class, ELL students must learn how to put together this new vocabulary with the subject matter and, finally, do the assigned task. In their article “The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)” for the SIOP Institute (available at www.siopinstitute.net/pdfsioppaper.pdf), Jana Echevarria and Deborah Short assert, “the combination of these three knowledge bases—knowledge of English, knowledge of the content topic, and knowledge of how the tasks are to be accomplished—constitutes the major components of academic literacy.”

How Do They Do This?

The observation protocol contains 30 features or instructional strategies reflecting best practices for ELLs. The Model enables educators to use the SIOP lesson planning guidelines to assist them in classroom implementation. This is a framework of features from English as a second language (ESL) best practices over the past two decades, not an additive approach. The 30 instructional strategies are grouped into 8 key components: preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice and application, lesson delivery, and review and assessment.

Thus far, hundreds of educators across many content areas have received professional development assistance in Hawai‘i. Educators can do so either through attending SIOP Institute



Photo: Jennifer Padua

▷ Elementary students share stories they wrote in learning English as a second language.

trainings (www.siopinstitute.net), or with assistance from the Hawai‘i Department of Education and the Equity Assistance Center at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). Two SIOP Institutes are planned for Honolulu, Hawai‘i this year. SIOP Institute I will be held August 1–3, 2005, and SIOP Institute II will be held August 4–5, 2005.

To request more information, or to arrange SIOP training or professional development in your school, please contact Ms. Stacy Cummings at Pacific Resources for Education and Learning at cummings@prel.org.

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What can parents and families of English language learners (ELLs) expect of the school? What can the community expect of the school?

- ☑ Children are entitled to developmentally appropriate and culturally supportive curriculum and teaching strategies offered in languages they can understand.
- ☑ Children are entitled to integrated and diverse classrooms that support different learning styles and abilities.
- ☑ Children are entitled to instruction by teachers who hold high expectations for all students and who are fully prepared to meet the challenge of diverse classrooms.
- ☑ Children are entitled to support services that address individual needs.

Adapted from National Coalition of Advocates for Students, Mobilization for Equity (www.maec.org/frameset.php) by Charo Basterra.