Tips for EL/Migrant Students

As the school year begins, you may be greeted with new or returning students. Those students’ native language may differ from English. It is vital to create a positive interaction with English Learners (EL) students early on. Although it can feel overwhelming to make another modification in your lesson plans and teaching delivery, some intentional preparation will make it more manageable.

So, what defines an EL student? As a result of Supreme Court Case Lau verses Nichols, “students who do not speak English as their first language must be provided instructional and assessment accommodations so they have an opportunity to be academically successful.” (Fregeau and Leier). Parents of EL students report on the home language survey that another language besides English is spoken in the home. If the student has transferred from another school, those records will be requested and used accordingly. If the student’s records are unavailable, the student is then screened for language abilities, using the WAPT. Based on those results, a program service plan is written to accommodate the needs of the student. As a classroom teacher, you are asked to sign this plan and provide accommodations in instruction and assessment.

Some techniques include the following:

* Give students more wait time (15-20 seconds)
* Use cooperative learning and put students in groups with English-speaking students
* Use lots of visuals, like graphic organizers and pictures
* Repeat and rephrase often
* Emphasize 5-8 vocabulary words of a lesson
* Give simple instructions
* Simplify complex questions
* Allow students breaks when working

EL students are incredible assets in your classroom for language and culture.

Involve them when you can and be flexible with formative assessments. Alternative strategies could include physical demonstration (point), pictorial products, interviews, reading response logs, and journals. Encourage and include EL students and you will see them progressing in the classroom and the community.

# Works Cited

Fregeau, Laureen and Fregeau Leier. "Assessing ELLs in ESL or Mainstream." *TESL* (2008): 1-5.