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Standards-Based Instruction for English Language Learners

By Joseph Laturnau

This paper will examine the potential benefits of standards-based instruction for English Language Learners (ELLs), present a backward mapping process for designing standards-based instructional units, and review the design of two standards-based units for ELLs.

Standards-Based Instruction and ELLs

Standards-based instruction (SBI) is at the forefront of education reform because it presents a way to ensure that all students are exposed to challenging curricula and prepared to contribute positively to an increasingly complex world. SBI is characterized by *content standards*, which define what students should know and be able to do, *benchmarks*, which identify the expected understandings and skills for a content standard at different grade levels, and *performance standards (or indicators)*, which describe how well students need to achieve in order to meet content standards.

By focusing on detailed descriptions of expected understandings—learning targets—SBI engages teachers in raising the expectations for all students, promotes the use of multiple assessment strategies which allow for students to reach proficient levels at different times and in a variety of ways, and requires teachers to differentiate instruction to meet the readiness levels, learning profiles, and interests of students.

ELLs need to be included in standards-based educational reform. According to Hakuta (2001), clear academic standards must be in place to confirm that ELLs should be held to the same expectations as mainstream students. Hakuta cautions, however:

> It is unreasonable to expect ELLs to perform comparably to their native English-speaking peers in their initial years of schooling (hence the need for standards specific to ELLs) and holding them to this expectation too early in their educational careers can be detrimental to

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their academic progress, not to mention their self-esteem. The problem enters when students are not pushed to go beyond this stage over time, are presumed to be at an elementary level, or are misdiagnosed as having educational disabilities by teachers unfamiliar with the needs of ELLs. (p. 3)

The gap between learning expectations as described in standards, particularly language arts standards, and the performance of ELLs as tempered by their initial and temporary limited English proficiency is in some cases widened by limited formal schooling. Two prominent efforts to bridge this gap have been undertaken by the California Department of Education (CDE) and the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL), a professional organization. CDE (1999) has produced English Language Development (ELD) Standards to assist teachers in moving ELLs to English fluency and to proficiency on the California English–Language Arts Content Standards. CDE has delineated five incremental levels of language proficiency (i.e., beginning, early-intermediate, intermediate, early-advanced, and advanced) and identified the linguistic competencies ELLs must develop to "catch up" with their monolingual English-speaking peers.

TESOL's English as a Second Language (ESL) Standards revolve around three goals for ELLs: (1) to use English to communicate in social settings, (2) to use English to achieve academically in all content areas, and (3) to use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways. Agor (2000), Irujo (2000), Samway (2000), and Smallwood (2000) provide sample PreK-12 units that describe how teachers use standards as planning tools, observational aids, assessment guides, and ways of understanding language development. Snow (2000) discusses ways to help prospective and practicing teachers implement the ESL Standards.

What promise does a shift to SBI hold for ELLs? Figure 1 below highlights key SBI teacher practices (adapted from Lachat, 1998) and their implications for ELLs.

Figure 1

In Standards-Based Instruction, teachers . . .	**The potential benefits for ELLs are that this shift . . .**
Organize learning around what students need to know and be able to do to reach high levels of performance.	Has the potential to reverse the tendency to assign ELLs to unchallenging curricula and presents an opportunity for schools to engage in substantive communication with the parents of ELLs regarding achievement.
Broaden the focus of their teaching to include higher order thinking processes.	Sets high learning expectations for ELLs, who have traditionally been provided with instruction focusing on low-level skills.
Guide student inquiry by giving students work related to real-life tasks that require reasoning and problem-solving.	Allows ELLs to build upon their prior knowledge and provides for diverse ways of solving problems.
Emphasize holistic concepts rather than fragmented units of information.	Focuses more on how ELLs think and what they understand rather than on whether or not they have the one right answer.

Figure 1 (continued)	
In Standards-Based Instruction, teachers . . .	**The potential benefits for ELLs are that this shift . . .**
Provide a variety of opportunities for students to explore and develop their understanding of concepts and situations over time.	Helps teachers understand how ELLs learn, places value on the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of ELLs, and allows ELLs to draft, reflect on, and revise their work.
Use multiple sources of information rather than a single text.	Allows for a variety of learning styles and offers multiple pathways and connections to academic success.
Work in interdisciplinary teams.	Improves communication between regular education and ELL staff and encourages an open dialogue about a school's expectations for ELLs.
Use multiple forms of assessment to gather concrete evidence of student proficiencies and achievement.	Complements diverse ways of knowing and learning and reveals productive "entry points" that build on students' strengths and lead to new areas of learning.

In summary, these practices point to significant changes in classroom practices and learning environments that have great potential for improving the educational outcomes of ELLs. Given the challenges they face in learning an unfamiliar curriculum in a second language and in a different culture and school setting, many ELLs have difficulty negotiating the routines and expectations of the classroom. Tomlinson (2001) stresses the importance of the atmosphere of the classroom and school:

> Atmosphere will signal without ambiguity whether the classroom is a place in which making a mistake is considered part of the natural learning process or a punishable event; varied ideas and perspectives are celebrated or rejected; diverse languages, cultures, and economic statuses are valued or problematic; and a student's current degree of skill and understanding is acceptable or inconvenient. (p. 45)

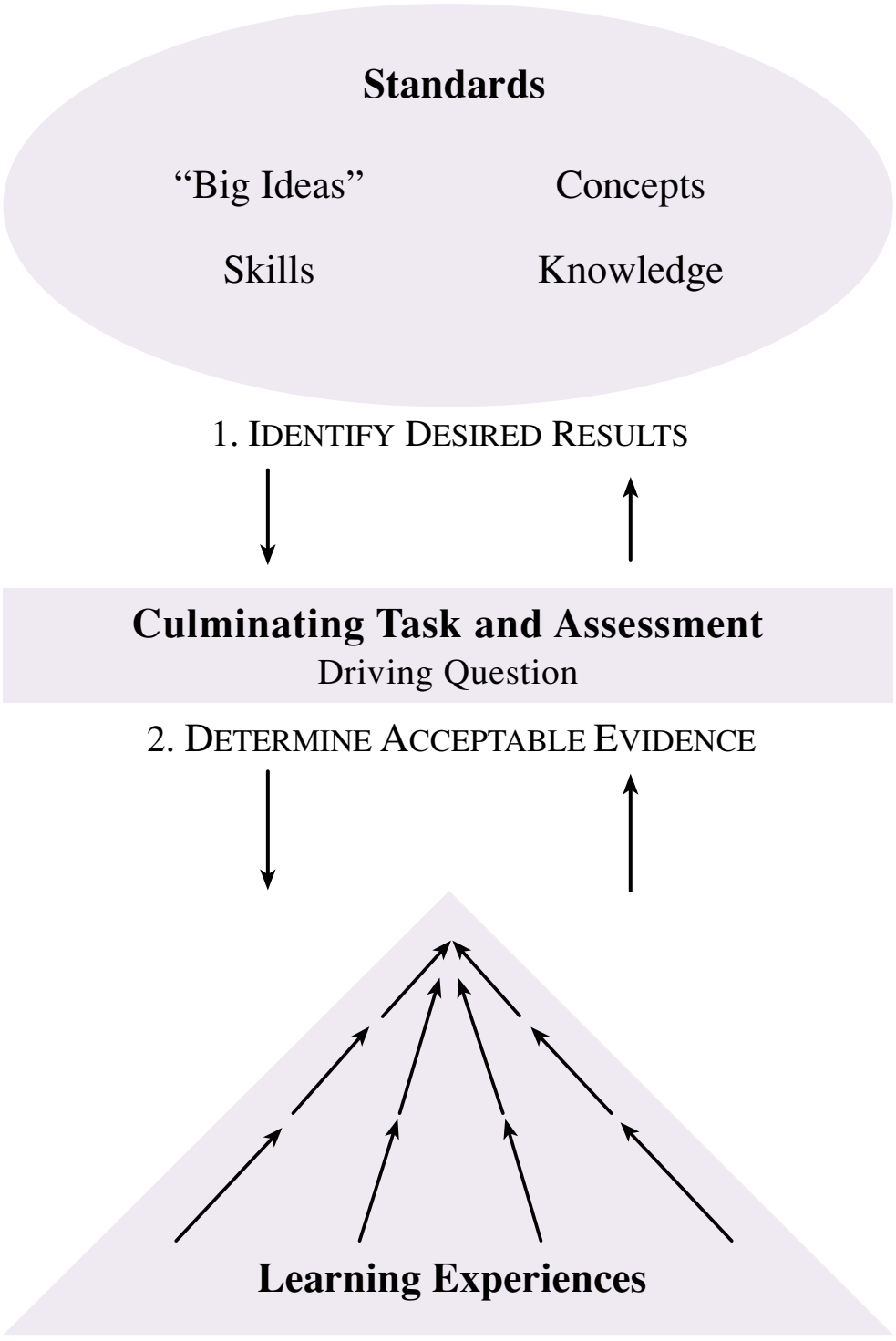
Designing Standards-Based Instructional Units

Latchat (1998) describes traditional approaches to schooling as often textbook-driven, characterized by an emphasis on "covering" the curriculum, and highly activity-based. Activity-based instruction typically includes three components. First is the selection of a topic from the curriculum, second is the design and presentation of instructional activities, and third is an assessment. Unfortunately, the demands and evaluative criteria of the final assessment are often kept secret from students, and once a grade or feedback is given, it is time to move on to a new topic, regardless of how much or how well students learned. Additionally, activities are often chosen primarily because they are fun and engaging for students (e.g., dinosaurs, rainforests) with little regard to what standards and benchmarks need to be taught and at what grade levels.

Current literature on planning for SBI (Mitchell et al., 1995; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998), advocates some form of *backward mapping* or *backward planning*, in which specific learning goals are identified and plans are made to ensure that those goals are achieved. Wiggins and McTighe delineate three stages in their backward design process: (1) identify desired results; (2) determine acceptable

evidence; and (3) plan learning experiences and instruction. This briefing paper suggests a similar backward mapping process to aid teachers in designing SBI for ELLs. Figure 2 below is a graphic illustration of the process.

Figure 2



Identify Desired Results

The Standards oval in Figure 2 represents Wiggins' and McTighe's "identify desired results" stage. The desired results are the standards being targeted. When designing an SBI unit, it is best to cluster standards, that is, to target a few standards that fit well together. For example, in a unit focusing on the U.S. Constitution, a teacher may choose some history and political science standards, as well as some language arts standards. A target of no more than three or four standards is suggested because the teacher needs to focus on standards that can be taught and assessed reasonably and effectively.

It is imperative that teachers understand what the standards and grade-appropriate benchmarks mean in regard to what student learning would look like. One strategy is to look closely at the verbs and the nouns in the standard. The verbs usually indicate the action the students need to take, and the nouns often represent the content or concepts. For example, a grades 6-8 history benchmark states, "Identify possible causal relationships in historical chronologies" (*Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards II [HCPS II], Social Studies*, 1999, p. 5). The important concepts are causal relationships and historical chronologies, and the students need to be able to identify them. But what does identify mean? If a student simply lists three causes of the American Civil War, is that adequate? It is at this point in the planning process that teachers need to be able to articulate learning goals. Perhaps most teachers would agree that in this example, in addition to identifying the causes, students would also be asked to explain and justify their findings.

Another strategy teachers can use when seeking a better understanding of state standards is to refer to standards published by national professional organizations (e.g., the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Council of Teachers of English), which tend to be more descriptive and in depth. One valuable resource that covers all subject areas is *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education* (Kendall & Marzano, 1996), which is also available online at http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/.

Also represented in the oval in Figure 2 are the *concepts, skills,* and *knowledge* of the discipline and content. Attention to these overarching "big ideas" grounds teachers in thinking about what students need to know and be able to do. Reflective questions such as "What do social scientists do?" or a review of statements like "The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse democratic society in an interdependent world" (*HCPS II, Social Studies*, 1999, p. 1) help teachers to plan units which get to the heart of the discipline.

Determine Acceptable Results

The arrow in Figure 2 that points down from the Standards oval to the Culminating Task and Assessment rectangle represents the next step in the process in which acceptable evidence is determined. This step represents a fundamental difference from traditional activity-oriented instructional practices. According to Wiggins and McTighe (1998):

> The challenge is to postpone all thinking about what specific learning activities should frame a unit until the culminating performance tasks and other assessments are clear. *Educators need to know precisely what performances are required by the end of the unit before they can know what specific experiences and learnings need to occur* [italics added]. (p. 41)

When designing the culminating task and assessment, it is important to consider the continuum of assessment methods (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) to be used throughout the unit. For example, informal checks for understanding, observations, quizzes, academic prompts, and projects all vary in terms of complexity, time frame, setting, and structure.

For the purposes of this discussion the culminating (or performance) task and assessment refers to a project-based activity. It is an engaging real-world activity that embodies all the selected standards and gives students a reason to achieve them. The task must directly match the standards identified, it must clearly describe expectations of students, and it must include specific criteria to evaluate quality. Culminating tasks are designed to build students' background knowledge, deepen their understanding, and result in applied learning. Additionally, culminating tasks typically seek to engage students in adult-like behavior, may include external audiences, and often require students to use technology to present what they have learned. Reference to state or district performance standards (or indicators) for the selected content standards can assist teachers in designing the culminating task and assessment.

Key to the second stage of the backward mapping process is one or more "driving" questions (sometimes referred to in various literature as "essential," "guiding," or "unit" questions), which are designed to stimulate student interest, energize instruction, and provide an unambiguous focus for the entire unit. Driving questions need to be open-ended, have the potential for in-depth investigation, and connect to real-world issues. Driving questions typically start with "how" or "why." The culminating task in Mitchell et al. (1995, p. 8) is stated as follows:

> Students will plan, organize, and carry out for the community a Pure Water Day. The day's activities will focus on issues of water purity in the community. These activities will be designed to answer the driving question: "[How] is the quality of our community's water affected by individual uses of land?"

The culminating task encourages student responsibility because the evaluative criteria are created (with student input if possible) before the unit is started and shared with students. Ideally, students are provided with exemplars to clarify learning expectations. Exemplars combine examples of student work at different levels of proficiency with teacher commentary on the quality of student work when compared to the desired outcomes. For example, if students were required to write a research paper about the causes of the American Civil War, the teacher could provide them with examples of student papers about the causes of the American Revolutionary War that exceeded, met, or didn't meet standards. From these samples, students can obtain a better understanding of how arguments can be presented, how a variety of informational sources can be incorporated, and how causal relationships can be explained.

The task's performance assessment asks students to synthesize information and to show and justify what they know, emphasizes important learning/concepts, and is designed with complex and multiple steps to stretch student thinking. When appropriately constructed, performance assessments ensure real world applications of student learning, meaningfully connect instruction with the discipline's big ideas and concepts, allow for a variety of student differences, and present opportunities for improving communication between schools and parents concerning student achievement.

Moon and Callahan (2001, pp. 54-55) present students with these instructions for the culminating task:

> Throughout history, progress (social, technological, artistic, etc.) has led people to believe that the time in which they are living is, in many ways, "the best of times." You have been employed by PBS to create a documentary from a particular historical era that will reflect on why that era was "the best of times" . . . . From the perspective of your new role, write an essay or develop a monologue to be presented to the class that will convince others that, for you, these are "the best of times."

Along with this scenario, students are provided with a three-point scoring rubric that describes performances that exceed, meet, or fall below expectations in the areas of historical accuracy, perspectives/point of view, persuasiveness, thoroughness, research skills, and referencing skills.

Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

The arrow in Figure 2 that points down from the Culminating Task rectangle to the Learning Experiences triangle indicates that the selection and sequencing of instructional experiences and activities take place *after* the culminating task and assessment are determined. Again, this constitutes a significant difference between activity-based instruction, in which activities are the means and ends, and SBI, where activities are the means and standards are the ends (Harris & Carr, 1996).

The arrows inside the Learning Experiences triangle symbolize the different ways in which students need to be prepared in order to successfully complete the culminating task. For example, the authors of the "Pure Water Day" task presented in Mitchell et al. (1995) identify six areas in which students need learning opportunities (i.e., creating, administering, analyzing, and reporting a water-use survey; understanding the water cycle; writing a persuasive editorial) to meet the expectations. If students struggle in any one of these areas, then the teacher needs to reteach or make other adjustments. Otherwise the students are inadequately prepared for the culminating task. In SBI, students may need more time and/or different avenues to achieve desired levels of achievement: That is, SBI focuses on student achievement, not simply the coverage of material.

When planning learning experiences, there is a number of reflective questions teachers can ask themselves. What materials/resources will be needed? How long will students need to complete each activity? What prior knowledge will students need in order to complete the activities? What exemplars can be shared with students? What informal and formal assessments can be used to measure student progress? How can instruction be modified or differentiated to ensure that all students have the potential to reach or exceed the expected learning outcomes of this unit?

The arrow in Figure 2 that points up from the triangle to the rectangle signifies that all the learning experiences were geared to preparing the students for the demands of the culminating task, while the arrow that points up between the rectangle and oval shows that the successful completion of the culminating task is an indication that significant progress toward the standards has been achieved.

Standards-Based Units for ELLs

When planning for the achievement of ELLs in the SBI approach, there are some unique considerations that teachers need to make in each of the three steps of the backward mapping process. As for Step 1 in Figure 2, Identify Desired Results, it is important that teachers understand the standards they are required to target and commit their efforts toward them. ELLs must have access to challenging curricula and the focus of instruction should be on their long-term success. ELLs may experience academic difficulties due to their limited English proficiency or lack of content understanding due to limited formal schooling; nevertheless, ways in which teachers can help ELLs make reasonable progress toward high standards must be explored and pursued. The previously described approaches taken by the California Department of Education and TESOL are examples of how teachers, schools, and school districts make efforts to include ELLs in standards-based reform.

When considering Step 2 in Figure 2, Determine Acceptable Results, it is important to note that the assessment of ELLs is often problematic. Do the ELLs understand the directions for the task or prompt? Even if ELLs understand the directions, do they have the facility in English to show that they understand the knowledge, concepts, and skills that the unit has targeted? For example, if the performance task centers on the concept of photosynthesis, and the ELL understands the concept in his/her first language but cannot yet express it in English, what type of assessment that measures the ELL's true content understanding *and* yields useful information for planning future English language instruction can be administered? Using alternative or authentic assessments with ELLs, rather than relying solely on traditional forms of testing such as multiple-choice tests, allows for better assess-

ment of the full range of student outcomes, and the information gained through the assessment can then be used to inform instructional planning. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) describe and discuss the advantages of using eight types of authentic assessments with ELLs, including oral interviews, story retellings, projects, and demonstrations, and they provide a number of rubrics and checklists appropriate for classroom use.

Perhaps the most important question in Step 3, Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction, is: How can instruction be modified or differentiated to ensure that all students have the potential to reach or exceed the expected learning outcomes of this unit? This question is particularly important when planning for the achievement of ELLs. To answer this question the teacher must identify the cognitive and language demands of the unit, as well as its cultural relevancy to the students. The diversity among ELLs is great; they differ according to prior educational experiences, exposure to English, length of time in the U.S., learning styles, family literacy practices, socio-economic status, sense of self, and other characteristics. These factors profoundly affect in idiosyncratic ways the learning readiness and rate of English acquisition of ELLs.

Examples of instructional accommodations or modifications which have proven effective with ELLs include providing instruction and materials in the students' native languages; demonstrating activities and strategies through teacher "think alouds" and modeling; setting language, content, and learning strategy objectives; tapping prior knowledge; using visuals/manipulatives; explicitly teaching key vocabulary; adjusting speech; utilizing cooperative learning methods; and teaching coping strategies. Figure 3 below provides a brief rationale for these accommodations.

Figure 3

Instructional Accommodations for ELLs	Rationale
Provide native language instruction and materials.	The strategic use of the students' native language to focus on the development of higher order thinking skills and on the clarification and elaboration of key concepts and vocabulary has great potential for accelerating and enhancing ELLs' access to mainstream curricula. Additionally, when ELLs' native language is valued and utilized, they are more likely to have increased self-esteem and greater self-efficacy. Access to materials written in their native language supports ELLs' literacy and cognitive development (Hakuta, 2001).
Provide "think alouds" and modeling.	ELLs benefit when teachers explain strategies and steps for tackling instructional tasks, check for student understanding before students start the task independently, and present numerous examples of concepts being taught (Gersten, Baker, & Marks, 1998).

Figure 3 (continued)	
Instructional Accommodations for ELLs	**Rationale**
Set language, content, and learning-strategy objectives.	Chamot and O'Malley (1994) contend that content should be the primary focus of instruction, academic language skills can be developed as the need for them arises from the content, and ELLs can learn and apply learning strategies to a variety of contexts if those strategies are explicitly taught.
Tap students' prior knowledge.	Instruction that values and continues to cultivate the educational and personal experiences ELLs bring to the classroom, rather than ignores or tries to replace these experiences, enables students to make meaningful connections with what is being taught (Cummins, 1994).
Use visuals/manipulatives.	Concrete examples and experiences give ELLs a variety of ways of understanding the information being presented.
Teach key vocabulary.	Traditional instructional processes aimed at improving vocabulary acquisition in which students are given word lists to look up in the dictionary, followed by practice in a definition or synonym exercise, and then tested, do not work well with ELLs (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Teachers need to utilize a variety of approaches and strategies (e.g., graphic organizers) to help ELLs gain a deep understanding of abstract concepts.
Adjust speech.	The Center for Applied Linguistics (1998) suggests 11 ways teachers can adjust their speech to increase comprehensibility: face the students; pause frequently; paraphrase often; clearly indicate the most important ideas and vocabulary through intonation or writing on the blackboard; avoid "asides"; avoid or clarify pronouns; use shorter sentences; use subject–verb–object word order; increase wait time for students to answer; focus on students' meaning, not grammar; and avoid interpreting on a regular basis.

Figure 3 (continued)	
Instructional Accommodations for ELLs	**Rationale**
Utilize cooperative learning methods.	Cooperative learning is a key instructional strategy for ELLs because it enhances interactions among students, promotes the development of positive academic and social support systems for ELLs, prepares students for increasingly interactive workplaces, and allows teachers to manage large classes of students with diverse needs (Holt, 1993).
Teach coping strategies.	ELLs may not have the confidence or facility in English to ask for help or clarification. They may also come from cultures where it is inappropriate to directly ask a teacher for help.

The two sample units that follow are appropriate for elementary ELLs. They are based on the *Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards II (HCPS II)*. The unit, "The Life Cycle of a Monarch Butterfly," adapted from a unit the author observed in a second grade self-contained English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, focuses on science standards. The "My School Day in Hawai'i" unit, designed for newly arrived non-English proficient students in an ESL classroom, aims for progress toward achievement of language arts standards.

The inclusion of the two units in this paper serves two purposes. First, the commentary provides insight as to the types of needs of ELLs and suggests ways in which teachers can make instructional accommodations in order for ELLs to reach high academic standards. Second, the units invite a professional dialogue regarding how teachers can plan for standards-based instruction. The following reflective questions are useful in determining the quality of the unit design and informing refinements to the unit plan. How complete is this unit? To what degree are the standards naturally integrated? How appropriate is the culminating task? How well do the assessments align with the standards? How well do the students learn the standards? How do the learning activities prepare students for the culminating task?

ELL Unit Plan #1	Commentary
Title: "The Life Cycle of a Monarch Butterfly" **Grade Level:** Second **Length of Time:** Five to six weeks **Unit Description:** Students will observe and learn about the life cycle of monarch butterflies, complete a visual aid depicting the cycle, and orally present their understandings.	Historically, an unfortunate characteristic of many ESL self-contained classrooms has been an emphasis on discrete language skills at the expense of content-area learning. In this case, however, the teacher has made a conscious, systematic effort to integrate language and content by providing age- and grade-appropriate curriculum.

ELL Unit Plan #1 (continued)	Commentary (continued)
Big Ideas: Science instruction engages students in describing objects and events, asking questions, constructing explanations, testing those explanations against current scientific knowledge, and communicating their ideas to others.	ELLs are vulnerable to educational discontinuities if academic instruction is delayed until they have mastered basic English skills. Programmatic and instructional accommodations should be made to ensure that ELLs have access to rigorous and high-quality curricula.
Content Standards: Science **Domain I:** How Humans Think While Understanding the Natural World **Strand:** Science as Inquiry **Content Standard:** 1. Students demonstrate the skills necessary to engage in scientific inquiry. **Grade Cluster Benchmarks:** Generate ideas, questions, and/or predictions about objects, organisms, events, places, and/or relationships in the environment; collect and organize data using simple tools, equipment, and techniques; appropriately communicate their investigations and explanations to an audience. (*HCPS II, Science*, p. 10, grades K-3). **Driving Question:** How do caterpillars turn into butterflies?	This cluster of selected benchmarks asks students to make predictions, collect and organize data, and communicate their understandings. These skills are central to scientific inquiry. One or more language arts standards could be added; however, the three benchmarks adequately cover what will be assessed in this unit.
Culminating Task: Students will complete a visual aid that depicts four stages of the life cycle of a monarch butterfly (i.e., egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, and emergence of butterfly) and use it to support their explanations.	The teacher needs to determine the circumstances under which the task will be completed by students. Will the students present in front of the whole class? A panel? One-on-one with the teacher? Some other arrangement?
Culminating Activity Assessment: The activity will be assessed according to the following criteria: ____ Student will complete a visual aid that is clearly labeled and appropriately depicts the four stages of the life cycle. ____ Student will use the visual aid as support to explain the life cycle. The explanation must include at least three facts or observations about each stage.	It is the teacher's responsibility to determine the answer to the question, "How good is good enough?" Based on the two criteria on the left, a rubric could be developed to determine the quality of the visual aid and the explanation. The explanation could be examined in terms of its science content as well as the student's facility with language.

ELL Unit Plan #1 (continued)	Commentary (continued)
Learning Activities: (1) The teacher starts the unit by utilizing the first two steps of the K-W-L approach (Ogle, 1986); that is, asking students what they *know* about caterpillars and butterflies and then what they *want* to know about caterpillars and butterflies. The final step of the approach is reviewing what has been *learned*.	Instruction must start where the students are cognitively and linguistically. The teacher should note that it may be difficult to determine what ELLs really know, therefore a variety of instructional accommodations are needed (see Figure 3).
(2) The teacher gives students a number of questions to research for the duration of the unit. These questions are compiled from three sources: 1) student incomplete understandings and misconceptions taken from the *know* step; 2) student questions from the *want* step; and 3) other important questions the teacher feels students may have missed. To support student learning, the teacher may want to categorize (with student help, if possible) the questions (on habitat, physical characteristics, etc.).	The premise is that if students can answer these questions from their observations and research, then they will be adequately prepared for the culminating task.
(3) The teacher provides students with opportunities to make daily observations of the caterpillar/butterfly terrarium, read a variety of literature for the research, and share their findings orally and visually. **Extension Activity:** After reading and exploring the features of storybooks or poetry about caterpillars/butterflies, students can write and publish fiction or poetry that incorporates their understandings from the life-cycle unit.	These opportunities and activities must focus on what students will need to know and appropriate ways in which they can explain their understandings. A number of accommodations may be necessary for ELLs. For example, students can be provided with prediction and/or observation logs. These logs could have simple prompts like "This is what I saw" (with a space for the ELL to draw what was observed) and "This is what I noticed" (with a space for the ELL to write what was observed). Practice in taking and recording measurements may be needed. As the unit progresses, a "scientific vocabulary" glossary or pictionary can be developed individually or by the whole class. A variety of reading materials, in terms of cognitive and linguistic demands, as well as types of texts (e.g., expository, narrative) will be needed. Students may need to paired or grouped for some research activities and sharing-out opportunities must be provided.

ELL Unit Plan #2	Commentary
Title: "My School Day in Hawai'i" **Grade Level:** Elementary non-English proficient students **Length of Time:** One to two weeks **Unit Description:** Students, with the teacher's assistance and guidance, will "research" daily routines at school and present their findings in a "published" book.	One of the first and most important tasks an ELL must undertake is to know school routines and expectations. Unless this understanding is reached, it will be difficult for the student to focus his/her energy on learning English, content, and skills. An important concept in the field of second language acquisition is "affective filter," which highlights the emotional component of second language learning and states that learning may be blocked when students are in a highly anxious environment. In addition to developing literacy skills and attitudes, this unit is intended to promote for the ELL a sense of belonging to the school. This unit could be adapted for ELLs at any elementary grade level.
Big Ideas: According to *HCPS II, Language Arts* (pp. 2-3), Hawai'i's standards are organized around these key concepts: • Language is functional and purposeful. • Language processes are meaning-making processes. • Language allows for communication through symbolic forms. • Language is governed by conventions. • Language develops from a positive attitude about self as a reader, writer, speaker, and from engagement in meaningful literacy activities. • Language enables us to develop social and cultural understanding.	These are key concepts for both first and second language learning.
Content Standards: Language Arts **Component:** Reading **Content Strand:** Attitudes and Engagement **Content Standard:** 5. Demonstrate confidence as readers, and find value and satisfaction in reading and sharing reading experiences with others. **Grade Cluster Benchmark:** Share reading experiences with others (*HCPS II, Language Arts,* p. 10, grades K-1 & 2-3).	The two targeted benchmarks reflect the Hawai'i language arts goals which are aimed at ensuring that all students develop knowledge about, appreciation of, and facility in using the English language in ways that will serve them in all aspects of their lives. Progress toward these benchmarks jumpstarts non-English proficient ELLs into the world of active English language use.

ELL Unit Plan #2 (continued)	Commentary (continued)
Content Standards: Language Arts **Component:** Oral Communication **Content Strand:** Convention and Skills **Content Standard:** 3. Apply knowledge of verbal and nonverbal language to communicate effectively. **Grade Cluster Benchmarks:** Speak clearly and expressively using nonverbal language to complement and enhance verbal messages; use standard English pronunciation and grammar when speaking to be understood (*HCPS II, Language Arts,* p. 16, grades 2-3).	
Driving Question: How can the story of a day at our school be told in a book?	Placing students at the center of the authoring, illustrating, and publishing processes is a powerful learning incentive.
Culminating Task: Students will read their illustrated book to their regular education teacher and to an adult at home.	The task requires students to complete their book, share it with others, and use English competently.
Culminating Activity Assessment: The activity will be assessed according to the following criteria: _____ Student will read the entire book with fluency, expression, and understanding. _____ Student will illustrate the book with pictures that support the text. _____ Student will illustrate the book with pictures that are colorful. _____ Student will read the book to his/her regular education teacher and return a signed form as proof. _____ Student will read the book to an adult at home and return a signed form as proof.	The assessment of this activity uses a simple checklist rather than a rubric because differentiating between levels of proficiency is not a priority. For example, if the student stumbles frequently while reading, it is more important to give him/her more practice opportunities than to determine his/her level of proficiency. Also, although the student will need to make illustrations, fine arts standards are not targeted in this unit.

ELL Unit Plan #2 (continued)	Commentary (continued)
Learning Activities:	
(1) Teacher explains to the student the criteria above for this activity (e.g., "By November 15 you will complete a book . . . and . . .").	If students can internalize learning expectations, chances are they will take more responsibility for their own success.
(2) Teacher explains and reviews the school day with the student.	To tap into student's prior knowledge, the teacher may ask the student to share and compare his/her school day from his/her home country.
(3) Teacher dictates and transcribes the story for student. Each bulleted item below may represent one page of the book, for example: • My name is_____. I am in the ____ grade at _____ school. • School starts at _____. • From _____ until _____ we study _____. (or "The first class is _____.") • Next we study _____. • Recess is from _____ until _____. I like to _____. • After recess, we _____. • Lunch is from _____ until _____ . I like to eat _____. • After lunch, we _____. • School finishes at _____. • "About the Author and Illustrator" page.	This is the point in the learning activities where the accommodations planned for ELLs are critical. The length of the book, the depth of details and descriptions, and the length and complexity of the sentences are the teacher's decision, based upon the capability of the ELL. The flow of the book is an important consideration. For example, the consistent use of time or sequence words will support the reader. The student's prior knowledge is another important consideration. Obviously, to complete this task the student will need to know some things about print (e.g., English is read from left to right) and be able to tell time or understand sequence words like first, second, after, next, then, etc.
(4) Teacher explains to student that illustrations must support the story and be colorful.	The main idea is that the illustrations must support the text. Fine arts standards are not a priority for this task, and therefore there is no formal assessment link of the illustrations to fine arts standards.

ELL Unit Plan #2 (continued)	Commentary (continued)
(5) Student completes illustrations. Teacher gives suggestions as needed and checks for appropriateness.	An ESL teacher who has tried this unit commented, "Because the students illustrated each page, they could easily 'read' their writing by looking at their pictures."
(6) Teacher and student "publish" the book.	The ELL experiences a sense of accomplishment and ownership, despite often being perceived as "limited or non-English proficient."
(7) Teacher gives student opportunities to practice reading (e.g., in front of a small group of peers) to the point that the student can read with fluency and confidence.	Teacher utilizes a variety of strategies to check comprehension (e.g., cloze, strip story).
(8) Student reads book to his/her teacher and to an adult at home and returns signed form to the ESL teacher. The form may include requests such as "Please comment on how well the child read the book" and "Please comment on the child's illustrations." The form may need to be translated into the family's home language and the family should be encouraged to respond in their home language if necessary.	An external audience reinforces a sense of purpose for the student. The form provides an opportunity to improve communication between the ESL teacher and the regular education teacher as well as between the school and the home. A regular education teacher, after seeing and listening to an ELL's book, commented that she "was impressed with the quality of work the ESL kids could do."
(9) Teacher and student meet to determine if the criteria for the activity have been successfully completed. If not met, then teacher and student determine next steps to ensure completion.	Opportunities for student self-assessment and timely, specific teacher feedback enhances learning.
Extension Activity: Student completes and shares similar book about his/her school day in his/her home country.	This is a potentially valuable activity because it indicates that the life experiences of the ELLs are valued and that ELLs are viewed as informational assets to the classroom and the school. All students can benefit from learning about life and schooling in other countries.

The butterfly life cycle and the school day units have been presented here as vehicles to investigate the potential benefits of SBI for ELLs. Do the units incorporate effective elements of planning for SBI and effective instructional practices for ELLs? In what ways could these units be improved? How could these units be adapted to classroom situations in your school?

The achievement of high standards by all students presents a daunting challenge for schools, particularly those with student populations that reflect diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The promise of SBI is that clear, high standards help to clarify that the purpose of schooling is to make the knowledge and skills essential to success in today's world accessible to all.

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