

Round Table Discussion on Quality Early Childhood Practices for English Learners

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The daily life of a classroom is organized around quality early childhood practices that nurture the growth of all young children. These are the same practices and principles that help facilitate acquisition of the English language by young speakers of other languages.

Quality Early Childhood Practices include:

- Active hands-on learning that includes modeling, the use of visuals and realia, and multiple opportunities to practice new skills.
- Students learn concepts, skills and strategies through observation, discussion, manipulation, and exploration of a variety of authentic materials. Obviously for English learners who are beginners, observation and manipulation will be more useful than discussion. Once they have more receptive English skills, they will be able to follow along better with conversations and eventually participate in them.
- Age and Individually Appropriate Curriculum and Instruction
- Classroom instruction is based on knowledge of chronological and cognitive development and the unique strengths of individual students.

Other Important Factors for Young English Learners

- Responsiveness to Cultural and Linguistic Diversity
 - The classroom environment encourages respect for a variety of perspectives such as the language and customs of the student population. Differentiated instructional strategies addressing the cultural learning styles and linguistic learning needs of students are integrated into the daily curriculum. The teacher recognizes her/his own biases and assumptions and seeks to learn about family customs and background.
- Authentic Assessment
 - Student Achievement of desired standards and benchmarks is documented by observing, recording, and analyzing, and summarizing student work in real-life contexts.
- Flexible Grouping
 - Grouping patterns vary according to instructional goals, and student's needs and interests.

- Differentiated Instruction
 - Based on the POS, instruction, and assessment is adapted to meet the needs of the learner. Strategies that provide a variety of ways to learn as well as assignments and learning experiences with different degrees of difficulty are implemented, while maintaining a consistent instructional focus and high expectations for all learners.
 - Learning Strategies
 - Students interact with materials to explore, discover, practice new skills, and acquire new knowledge through a variety of activities.

- Opportunity for Choice
 - Students are encouraged to select activities that allow them to discover new knowledge, pursue and interest, practice skills, extend understanding, and apply problem-solving strategies.
 - Meaningful and relevant curriculum
 - Curriculum is designed to meet the POS and SOL objectives and make connections to the lives and experiences of students

- Safe and Supportive Classroom Environment
 - The learning environment is safe and nurturing. It is organized for the purpose of developing a community of learners by supporting the work children do, reflecting their unique qualities, and celebrating their individual and collective accomplishments.

References:

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