



Strategies to Scaffold Performance Tasks for English Learner (EL) Students

When utilizing Performance Tasks use these strategies with your EL students.

Starting the Task



Working in Small Groups or Pairs

Best practices and Common Core State Standards emphasize that all students, K- 12th grade, be able to interact in small groups or pairs. When EL students work in small group discussions or with a partner they build thinking, language and content understanding. They negotiate meaning with their collective knowledge to establish a shared understanding. EL students are more willing to participate in small groups and partners because they are less intimidated.

Front Loading

By frontloading the concepts and information before the lessons, EL students will be able to participate more fully and be successful completing the tasks.

Meet with EL students before each level of the Performance Task to:

- activate their background knowledge.
- frontload the task and the key essential vocabulary with respect to the task.
- frontload the vocabulary that is instrumental in understanding the task.

Frontloading Lesson Examples:



Defining the Job - Each Performance Task requires students to take on a real world job. Before beginning the Performance Task, activate student interest and understanding by frontloading the job. In order for EL students to understand the job, have students "skim" the Job Description (included in the Performance Task) and highlight 3 interesting facts about the job. Share facts with a partner then with the group as a whole. Have partners respond to the following the question: What responsibilities or tasks could this job include? Discuss the job as a group to clarify the role they will play in this Performance Task. Teacher may need to add information about the job to help student understanding of the task.

Think-Aloud - Most ELA Performance Tasks have a model writing piece for students to “close read” or, analyze the text. Many EL students are not confident or proficient in reading. Frontload EL students who struggle with reading by reading the text aloud to identify confusing parts and clarifying them by pausing and commenting on what you are thinking as you comprehend the text. Reread sections after talking about the meaning. After about a $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way through the text, ask students to think aloud to each other in pairs, then talk about their joint understanding or confusions. When you finish reading, have students share their understanding of the text with partners then as a whole group. This will prepare the EL students for the close reading activities analyzing the text with the whole class.

Challenge



Model and Practice Reading Interview Questions

Several Performance Task Challenge activities have interviews. Many times the EL at the Early Intermediate level or Expanding level or higher are not confident with their reading. Frontload EL students by giving them optimal practice reading the interview questions if they are the interviewer or rehearse responses to possible questions if they are the interviewee.

Share Assumptions

After frontloading the task with EL students, conclude the frontloading for each task at each level by having them share assumptions about what the task involves, what the final product is, what information is needed to further clarify any confusions.

Finale

Finale assignments are usually an ELA writing assignment. The following ideas are beneficial for all students but most important for the EL students to be successful.

Brainstorm & Review Rubric Best practices show students perform better if they know the expectations and understand the rubric being used to evaluate the assignment before attempting to do the assignment. When introducing the Finale, review the rubric and expectations for each choice BEFORE students begin their project. If students select their own Finale extended writing project or if teachers select the Finale assignment, EL students benefit from brainstorming ideas and oral discussions in small groups or with partners to rehearse what they plan to create or write.

Peer Editing

After students finish the Finale writing project, encourage EL students to meet with a partner to read aloud their work to a partner (the partner does not need to be an EL student). This will help the EL student to self-correct, edit, and revise their work. Encourage partners to ask clarifying questions when they don't understand what the student is trying to say. Students can use the rubric to self check their assignment with a partner.



Checking for Understanding

Monitor and check-in with EL students to make sure they understand the task several times while the students do the Performance Task. Give feedback to confirm they are on the right track or clarify the task if it appears students are confused?

Think-Pair-Share (TPS)

Strategically match students to discuss information before discussing with the whole class. Encourage cooperation between partners rather than competition. To start TPS, be sure to give students 30 to 60 seconds to mentally think about their response. (Keep in mind, these children are translating in their head. This takes thinking time and if the time is not provided, EL students give up and become passive participants.)



Pair Up Square Up

After TPS partners work together on their response, they find another TPS pair to make a "square" or "square up". Together they share their ideas and create a synthesis or consensus of the two pairs. This gives EL's students the opportunity to share again in a small, less intimidating environment thus giving them another chance to rehearse their response, building confidence before sharing with the class as a whole.

Alternate Ranking

We suggest Alternate Ranking to create pairs for TPS. Make a list of your students putting the top student at the top and the lowest student at the bottom. Put the second top student on the second line and put second from the bottom student above the lowest student. Continue this procedure "alternating" between the top of the list and bottom of the list until the class is ranked. Then cut the list in half. Match the second half with the top half so the student who is at the top of the second half is matched with the top student of the class. Further refine pairs considering shy students and

talkers or discipline issues. In other words, a shy student shouldn't be matched with a talker. The object is to match students so they will all interact with the prompt and be able to come to consensus on their response.

Model, Model, Model

Students must be trained to work well together in groups or pairs. EL students need explicit examples to clarify the task and the language expected to be used in the activity. We suggest teachers model each part of the task to clarify what is expected. Fishbowl conversations (two students or a teacher and student demonstrate the discussion for Performance Task while the class observes) are suggested to model so students understand the expectation.

Sentence Stems

(For EL students at the Early Intermediate or Expanding Level or Higher)



Sentence stems help EL students to articulate their responses and ideas using academic language when working with a partner, small group, or the whole class. (We would expect EL students at the Beginning or Emerging level of English Language development, at any grade level, respond with one or two words or simple sentences) We suggest making anchor charts or a graphic organizer with sentence stems to display in the classroom so students have easy access to the sentence prompts during discussions. It is essential the teacher models how the responses would be used perhaps using Fishbowl conversations. A word of caution: It is important teachers do not over emphasize the students' use of the sentence stems. Students should not be bogged down with the sentence stems during their discussions inhibiting students ability to complete the task.

CCSS Framework

This requires all students to engage in collaborative discussions (with partners, in groups, and teacher led) and learn to both express their own ideas clearly and to be able to build on others' ideas as they participate in the discussion. Including authentic discussions throughout the Performance Task activities (CCSS S/L 1 K-12) increases academic language and allows all students especially EL students to make their thinking visible to others justifying interpretations, hypothesis, opinions, and building on others ideas. See Think Pair Share Discussion Starter and Negotiating Conversation Sentence Starters for suggested stems for students to build on each other's ideas.

Performance Task Sentence Stem Examples

Teachers should adapt the following stems to fit the specific Performance Task.

Grades 3-5 TPS or Whole Class Response Stems:

- I thinkshould be because.....
- It seems to me that.....because.....
- From my point of view, I thinkshould be because.....
- I disagree with you that.....should be because.....
- My partner and I believe should be because
- In our opinion.....should be because.....
- We decided should be..... because.....

Grades 6-12 TPS or Whole Class Response Stems:

- From my/our perspective I/we think that.....should bebecause.....
- In my/our opinion should bebecause
- I agree with you that should but/because.....
- I'm not sure I understand what you mean. Can you explain/elaborate/clarify what you mean?
- should have top priority because.....
- That's a valid point but.....
- I/We feel strongly that because.....