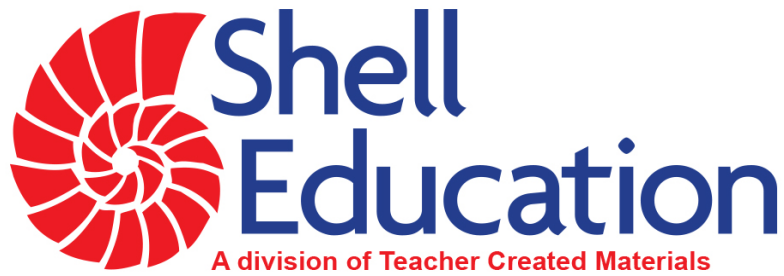Sample Pages from

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To **Create** a World in which
Children Love to Learn!

50

STRATEGIES

for Supporting

Multilingual Learners

Mandy Manning

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How to Use This Book

Choose a strategy and give it a try! Most activities use common items found in schools and classrooms, but there are some where you'll likely need to gather additional materials.

This introductory text provides a brief description of the strategy.

Differentiation ideas are provided. Most strategies include differentiation ideas for three grade ranges. Be sure to check out all the options!

Additional tips are provided to support your teaching.

Creating a Supportive Learning Environment | **SUPPORTING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS**

Culture in Class

Connecting lessons to students' cultures increases their sense of belonging in class and helps them make connections between what they are learning, what they already know, and their lived experiences. This can take the form of reflecting students' cultures in the learning environment, using culturally relevant texts, and helping students reference their own cultures through class projects, activities, and assignments. Any posters or visuals used for instruction should represent the cultures and interests of students. During instruction, ask guiding questions that help students connect their current learning with their cultural experiences and knowledge.

Make It Real

Grades PK–1

- Teach culturally appropriate greetings to all students, such as how to say "hello" in each of the languages spoken in the classroom.
- Ensure the classroom library has books with characters from a range of cultures, including students' backgrounds.
- Vary the books you read aloud to the class so students see themselves in the stories.

Grades 2–5

- Give students specific opportunities to incorporate their cultures into assignments. For example, have students create collages about who they are as learners and as individuals with elements related to their cultures.
- When setting up classroom norms and practices, encourage students to share about their previous school experiences. Compare rules or classroom expectations.

Grades 6–12

- Design assignments so that students can incorporate their cultures. For example, students may have learned different ways of solving mathematical equations. Have students share these methods.
- Give students opportunities to be experts in their cultures. Students from other countries can be cultural teachers who share historical and/or geographical knowledge about where they lived previously.

More for You

If multiple students in your class have similar cultural backgrounds, have them work together on a project to share their culture with the rest of the class. When possible, connect culture-based projects to course content.

Keep in Mind

It is essential to learn about students' backgrounds before and during the first few weeks of school. This information may be in students' files, or you might reach out to previous teachers or school counselors. Research the nations where your students lived and supplement lessons with materials and resources that reflect those cultures, nations, and backgrounds. Be sensitive to any traumas students may have experienced and ensure that opportunities for sharing their cultures do not require students to relive those traumas.

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These notes are key to think about when using the strategy.

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Focus on Community

Building community in your classroom is critical to reaching and teaching multilingual learners. Students need to feel valued by and connected with their teacher and their peers to be comfortable using new language and taking academic risks. Spend the first few weeks of school focused on building a strong classroom community.

Make It Real

Grades PK–1

- Ask students to create art that shares something about themselves. This can be structured as a show and tell. Have students draw pictures of the things they like or complete a similar project. Help them introduce themselves to one another, offering multiple avenues so that students at all language levels may participate—keep in mind some students may not yet be able to introduce themselves in English.

- Have students play games through which they connect and learn to work cooperatively. For example, the game "In the Middle" helps students find similarities with their peers. Students stand in a circle, and the teacher calls out a characteristic, such as "brown eyes," and all students who have brown eyes go to the middle.

- Quick check-ins are best when students are engaged in unstructured activities, such as snack time, playtime, or other breaks. Being present during unstructured time will also help identify if MLs are connecting socially with their peers.

Grades 2–5

In addition to academic skills, these students are learning how to navigate interpersonal relationships.

- Assign students a get-to-know-you project to share their interests and who they are outside of school. This can be a brown-bag speech, a poster about themselves, or some other "I am" project.

- Provide opportunities for students to discuss differences productively, with curiosity rather than judgment. Use whole-group discussion when there is an issue the whole class needs to resolve. Facilitate one-to-one conversations to help students learn how to have difficult conversations that lead to repaired relationships.

- Social opportunities are critical. Periodically incorporate social activities that intentionally promote positive interactions between students, such as playing board games or having a discussion using social prompts.

Grades 6–12

For many students at this level, opportunities to build community may be limited, so being intentional is especially important.

- Develop community systems such as regular class meetings, established times for checking in, and scheduled team-building or social activities.

- Assign a get-to-know-you project. If students are reluctant to present to the class, do a gallery walk and then have students pair up and ask one another questions based on what they learned from seeing the projects.

- Social opportunities can be used for conversation practice. Set aside a few minutes each week to give students a social topic such as "music you enjoy listening to," and have them discuss the topic with their neighbors.

- Schedule regular one-to-one time with students to check on their academic progress, but more importantly to make sure they are feeling confident and secure and to allow them time to share anything happening in their lives that might impact their performance in class

More for You

Conducting classroom circles (or classroom meetings) is one way to build community. This is especially true for MLs, as circles can be used as a cultural bridge to help students navigate learning within new classroom and cultural environments. Classroom circles can be conducted daily, weekly, or periodically. Use them for getting to know one another at the start of the day, to process learning, to set the schedule for the day or week, to review and decompress, and to work through difficulties as a class and solve problems together. Classroom circles are common in elementary school. They can be an effective strategy at the secondary level to give students time to share and socialize, which helps students be more ready to learn.

Keep in Mind

Continue using community-building activities throughout the year. In addition to creating connections among students, find opportunities to connect with students one-to-one. Participate in social activities, and check in with students when they are working in groups or independently.

Content Is Language

Every lesson is a language lesson. As part of learning content, multilingual learners must learn the language for the content. This is especially true in subject areas with complex academic language, such as science and math. It is important to create language goals within content instruction (Fisher and Frey 2010). Identify and plan for the academic vocabulary students are expected to use and understand, as well as the language structures, and teach them explicitly. Create separate learning targets for the language structures and functions. *Language structures* refers to the technical aspects of language, such as vocabulary and sentence structures. *Language functions* refers to how and why language is used. Model language structures and functions and provide opportunities for students to practice together. Repetition is key to students using language correctly and appropriately for the content.

Make It Real

Grades PK–1

Much of what children are learning at these levels is based on factual description and making comparisons across subject areas.

- Teach the academic language related to describing and comparing things, whether they are numbers, events, people, or other topics.
- Teach students the sentence structures used to describe and compare for each content area.
- Students need to know language to understand instructions. For example, for making comparisons, pre-teach vocabulary such as *same*, *different*, and *describe*.

Grades 2–5

These students are engaged in increased critical thinking and abstract thought. They are moving beyond describing, to making predictions, summarizing, and developing their own ideas.

- Teach the language students need to navigate instructions, such as making a prediction, or writing their own narrative. Ensure students know this language prior to giving instructions.
- Pre-teach any academic vocabulary students need to understand a lesson, such as the terms for the task, like *summarize* and *predict*.
- The meaning of terms varies depending on the content. For example, in science we make predictions about what will happen in an experiment, and we use specific sentence structures to state those predictions. We also make predictions in stories and use specific language for those predictions. It is critical to teach these differences to students.

Grades 6–12

Analysis and synthesis of information is central to learning in secondary grades. Content becomes increasingly complex in language and structure.

- Pre-teaching academic vocabulary is critical. Complex vocabulary should be taught in context and reviewed each time students encounter the words in a new or different context.

- Students need to be explicitly taught the language structures they are expected to use for each content area. For example, students must express math equations using specific sentence structures. Help students articulate their understanding by providing models that incorporate the target academic vocabulary and sentence structures.

- When content requires multiple language structures and functions, break them into parts and teach each element independently.

More for You

English language proficiency (ELP) standards such as the WIDA standards (2020) provide a framework through which to identify language forms and functions. Use ELP standards alongside grade-level content standards to pull out the language within the content.

Keep in Mind

Language learning is most effective in context. Though pre-teaching the language students will encounter during a lesson is important, it is also critical to point out the language within the context of the content as you teach. Pre-teaching and then reteaching during the content lesson will help students learn the language more efficiently.

Authentic Language

Multilingual learners benefit from hearing multiple examples of natural language in context. Authentic language refers to language used in everyday contexts and by different speakers. Students need to hear a variety of models. This means exposing students to different accents and language used in contexts other than the classroom. Use materials that provide authentic language examples such as podcasts and short videos. Ensure that the media is related to content students are learning. These examples will help students understand how the subject is discussed or referenced in conversations in the real world and will provide a model they can emulate.

Make It Real

Grades PK–1	Grades 2–5	Grades 6–12
Many videos and recordings are available for young learners.	Many videos and other media are available for the middle elementary grades.	Content-specific videos and podcasts will deepen understanding and extend learning.
• First assess media for authentic language use and ease of comprehension.	• Curriculum, especially curriculum for MLs, often comes with media that includes authentic language examples. If the examples are beneficial to students, utilize them.	• Prepare students for listening by previewing what they will hear. Create a listening guide with questions that cue students to what they should be listening for. This guide can then be used for review.
• Check to confirm the media does not have excessive background noise and the speaker or performer communicates at an appropriate speed.	• Invite other teachers or support staff to come in and model language with you. MLs benefit from hearing different accents and different ways of speaking.	• Incorporate choice by providing a list of vetted media from which students can select.
• After students have listened to the media, check for understanding.		

More for You

Classmates who are native speakers of English are a good resource for authentic language practice and exposure. Create opportunities for MLs to listen to presentations by and converse with their English-speaking peers.

Keep in Mind

Students need to know the purpose for listening and what to listen for. If the content is complex, pre-teach vocabulary and provide a listening guide. Listening to authentic language is difficult because natural speech is fast, and words often run together. When students understand the context and have an idea of what they will hear, they are better able to understand it.

Examining Visuals

Visual literacy is essential to learning a new language, as students must navigate visuals to support their language learning. Multilingual learners benefit from practice describing, analyzing, and interpreting the elements of visuals, such as colors and shapes, especially because visuals are used to illustrate or support English language text. Visuals often enhance or expand the meaning of fictional and informational books, instructional texts, and classroom materials such as anchor charts. Learning to analyze visuals helps develop critical thinking skills, which translates into analysis in the other domains of language.

Make It Real

Grades PK–1	Grades 2–5	Grades 6–12
• Have students compare images to find differences and similarities. For example, they can compare how illustrations show a character's changing emotions. • When reading aloud, help students look for clues in the illustrations. Ask questions that engage students in making inferences about emotions, relationships, and so on. • Teach students the meaning of visual cues such as exit signs, arrows, and sign shapes (e.g., the octagonal shape of a stop sign).	• Have a scavenger hunt. Provide a topic and have students find or create visuals that connect to that topic. • Have students compare visuals to find similarities and differences. Then have students write about the similarities and differences. • Use visuals such as emojis to help MLs discuss how they are feeling or to process an experience. Students can also create visuals to communicate during difficult conversations.	• Visual analysis is appropriate for artistic works, science-related images, math models, primary sources in social studies, and more. • Provide a visual and have students work in groups to discuss their ideas about its meaning. • After students process their thinking, have them write what they believe the visual means, what they learn from it, how it relates to the content, what emotions it evokes, what the artist is trying to say, and so on. • Explicitly teach how symbolism is used in visuals.

More for You

Have students create visual representations of the learning in a lesson or unit. Display the visuals in the classroom and have students explain their images. Use the visuals for review.

Keep in Mind

Described as the fifth language domain, visual literacy is about communication and interpretation. Just as students need to learn to read, write, listen, and speak, they also need to understand how to interpret, communicate about, and communicate using visuals.