

can help her be more responsive.

Mrs. Thibodeaux recognizes that English learners' understanding of topics and concepts often exceeds their English language ability. Just because a student can't speak English fluently doesn't mean that student can't use higher levels of cognition and respond to higher-order questions. She encourages English learners to use their home language to clarify points or to express their ideas to a more proficient English speaker who shares their language background, and who then scaffolds their participation in the group discussion.

### Expectations

Decades of research suggest that teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and expectations affect student performance. The notion that English learners aren't capable of meeting high academic standards is rooted in low expectations for these students, expectations often tied to their socioeconomic status. However, poverty isn't the greatest predictor of success for English learners; rather, their success is influenced primarily by their level of first-language development and the quality of instruction they receive (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010). English learners are capable of participating in lessons at their grade level, and they learn in many of the same ways that English-proficient students do, especially when their teachers believe that they can and when their teachers have the skills to ensure students achieve.

One way teachers express their expectations for students is through their daily lessons. The learning target or objective for a given class provides significant information about what the teacher thinks students are capable of accomplishing. Sometimes, a teacher with low expectations sets the learning target two or more years behind the students' grade level or age. A learning

target for a group of 6th graders that reads, "identify the theme of the text" suggests that the teacher expects students to complete work that is at the 4th grade level. At the 6th grade level, students should be expected to determine how specific details convey that theme. When the learning target or objective is below grade level, the teacher may need help determining what instructional supports he or she can provide to help students reach high levels. Or it may mean the teacher doesn't believe specific groups of students are capable of learning rigorous content; this teacher might benefit from seeing students in another classroom mastering such work.

Although **access** is necessary, it **alone is not sufficient**. Yet the support English learners receive too often begins and ends with access strategies.

Another aspect of clear expectations for English learners relates to the language that the teacher uses and expects students to use. A teacher who says "flip it" rather than "invert" as part of a mathematics lesson may be demonstrating lower expectations. That's not to say that teachers should refrain from embedding definitions in their language, but saying something like, "I'd like your group to reach consensus, meaning that you agree on the answer" supports students' language development while conveying an expectation that students will understand and use academic language.

English learners deserve to be enrolled in a rigorous course of study, with support. This support may be a supplemental class, but it should not prevent students from having the same opportunities as native English speakers. Students who are beginning

English speakers need time to develop basic proficiency, but their course of study must rapidly begin to include academic content in science, social studies, the arts, and technical subjects if they are ever to develop the background knowledge and experiences necessary for academic success.

Further, schools that hope to prevent students from becoming long-term English learners foster students' aspirations. Teachers and administrators in those schools provide students with opportunities to consider a wide range of career and college choices, to engage in field studies, and to complete internships in areas of interest. For example, the students at

Health Sciences High complete a field study every three weeks. On these days, students spend time in the community collecting information they can use in their classes. In a field study at the local tide pools, students use their phones to take pictures they will write about later and collect water samples they will analyze back at school.

At Garfield High School, students in the culinary arts program have numerous internships that contribute to their understanding of restaurants and customer service. Students intern one day per week at the convention center, learning how to manage large groups and ensure that the people who visit have a great experience. As they get older and have more experience, they intern in local restaurants, examining all aspects of restaurant operations, from prep work to cooking to customer service.