

Raising the Achievement Level of English Language Learners through SDAIE

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SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English) is an approach to teaching grade -level subject matter content in English to ESL/ELL students using strategies tailor-made to help speakers of other languages access content. Frequently referred to as "sheltered English" or "sheltered instruction," the goal of SDAIE is to assist ESL/ELL students of intermediate fluency or higher to benefit from instruction in complex academic content.

The underlying principle of SDAIE is access to instruction. ESL/ELL students face the daunting task of keeping up with grade -level material and being evaluated with grade -level assessments while dealing with language challenges that can render content impenetrable. Through the use of specific, proven classroom strategies, SDAIE gives ESL/ELL students the opportunity to progress in grade-level subjects and meet grade level standards while gaining greater proficiency in the English language.

A teaching approach meant to be used across the curriculum, SDAIE is not a substitute for English language development, nor a watering down of the curriculum, nor is it submersion into English. Rather, it is a way to adjust teaching to promote comprehension of the core concepts. SDAIE strategies give you and your ESL/ELL students the tools for decoding language as they learn content.

The Basics of SDAIE Instruction

Emphasizing the concept of comprehensible input, SDAIE focuses on teaching techniques and strategies which make abstract concepts more readily understood by learners especially those not yet proficient in English. These strategies include the use of

- Background building meant to move students from the known to the new.

- Vocabulary previews to identify and teach students essential words and terms before they encounter them in the text. These are often more than the new "key terms" in a content lesson, they are often words that native English speakers at the grade level already know.

- Illustrations and visuals including photographs, drawings, artwork, posters, graphs, maps, videos, computer programs, and reproductions of documents to provide a context for learning. Students new to English literacy can focus on reading captions in their textbooks which often capture the main ideas of a lesson or unit of study.

- Realia (real objects and materials) that reduce abstractions and make new concepts more explicit. Their use helps ESL/ELL students relate classroom teaching to real life and to their own prior knowledge and experience.

- Graphic organizers including matrices, Venn diagrams, tables, charts, story maps, outlines, study guides, and webs that maximize comprehension by visually organizing information into meaningful conceptual groupings.

- Manipulative materials and hands-on activities including props, multimedia presentations, experiments, building models, and demonstrations that build background and context. Teacher uses gestures, body language, and slowed pace of speech to aid comprehension.

- Repetition and review of concepts and vocabulary. Provide bilingual dictionaries.
- Group activities such as team projects, cooperative learning, and peer tutoring to promote interaction between class members. This ensures that students get adequate practice speaking the new language rather than teacher lecture as the only model of learning.

Text Characteristics for SDAIE Compatible Instructional Materials

This checklist will help you select appropriate text materials for your ESL/ELL students. The Globe Fearon® products on the following pages are specially designed to aid in acquiring necessary content and skills in cross-curricular areas.

- Does this text enhance access through comprehensible input?
- Do the visuals match the text on the page to better illustrate abstract concepts?
- Are there supplemental visual supports through posters, study-prints, overhead transparencies, photos, reproductions of documents, textbook illustrations, video, and CD-ROM programs on computer?
- Is the student's prior background elicited and utilized to aid comprehension? How?
- Do the materials build background through discussion, hands-on experiences, literature examples, and/or demonstrations?
- For students who are beginning and early intermediate learners of English, are there captions, headings, or margin notes that allow for some very basic reading of the main points of the text?
- Are there prepared questions for students at all levels of English proficiency so that everyone is engaged in the lesson and the teacher is checking for understanding of all levels of students?

- Are there study aids such as graphic organizers, matrices, webs, Venn diagrams, story maps, and class-note outlines? Do students have the use of bilingual dictionaries? • Is there a preview of the instructional material in the student's primary language through recorded summary, video, or CD-ROM?

- Are there ways for students to demonstrate their understanding that do not require a native-like level of English proficiency? What are they?

- How are families informed of the student's progress? Are there alternatives for homework that students with limited English proficiency can actually do? What are they?

Prepared for Pearson Learning Group by Elizabeth Jimenez

Elizabeth Jimenez, CEO of GEMAS Consulting in Pomona, California, brings to the area of ESL/ELL education a unique combination of professional experiences. She has been a bilingual elementary teacher and an adjunct professor of education in California. In addition, she has worked for the California State Legislature for Bilingual Education Legislation and is a registered lobbyist with far-reaching contacts in the Hispanic legislative caucus and state policy-making bodies in California. Elizabeth is a published author of Spanish language children's books and stories and spent 18 years in a successful career in the educational publishing industry.