

Philosophy

The English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction has been evolving over the past several years. Until recently most ESL curriculums centered on language topics and functions such as colors, clothing, weather, requests, etc. Research however suggests that language is best acquired when meaning is attached to it. With the movement towards heavier content based testing and knowledge, Fair Lawn takes the position that the ESL classroom material should parallel classroom grade level material, particularly in the areas of social studies and science. Using content based materials as a basis for its program, students will also learn to acquire the functions and usage of the English language. Learning objectives will be twofold: (1) students will gain knowledge in the content areas while simultaneously (2) learning specific language objectives.

In paralleling grade level content material, the goal is to provide students with enough language and knowledge to engage in classroom activities. The program does this by integrating the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in weekly lessons. The role of the teacher is to dispense the content material while at the same time facilitate English language development. By nature of its small group instructional setting, the ESL classroom lends itself very well to differentiated instruction. Lessons are designed to tap into the variety of learning styles engaging all students in active learning. Assessment is also differentiated and the use of portfolios is encouraged to evaluate students and track their progress along the language learning continuum.

The elementary ESL program plays a major role in helping today's child to acquire the English language to become members of the larger English speaking community of the United States. Although American culture is a key component of the program, the ESL classroom also celebrates the cultures and diversity of its student population, valuing the contributions of other cultures to modern world.

This curriculum has been developed as a reference guide for teachers in the implementation of the ESL program. Although sample lessons and suggested materials are included, the program allows teachers the flexibility to adapt the program to their (and their students) individual needs. Topics such as holidays, customs, school and community activities will be addressed on an ongoing basis as needed. Ultimately the goal is to welcome students into American society while equipping them with the language and knowledge needed to be successful learners in our schools.

Structure of the Curriculum

The English as a Second Language (ESL) Curriculum for grades K-5 is a scope and sequence that builds and develops linguistic proficiency for non-native English speakers. All students are assured a high quality English linguistic learning experience based on the six language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, critical thinking (based on Bloom's Taxonomy), learning strategies and culture.

The goal of the curriculum is to provide the students with the skills necessary to transition successfully into the mainstream classroom. The scope and sequence is built upon the national TESOL Standards and the New Jersey Standards for ESL

Program Access

Currently Fair Lawn utilizes the Maculaitis II test for Kindergarten through fall semester of first grade. The WAP-T is utilized for first grade (spring semester) through fifth grade. These test scores are weighed heavily when considering placement of students in the ESL program. Teacher recommendations and the student's individual performance are also considered.

Once eligibility is established a letter is sent home to the parents informing them of their child's placement. This procedure follows NJ State regulations regarding parental notification. A translated version of this letter is also available in a multitude of languages on the New Jersey Department of Education website (NJDOE). Finally, in accordance with the NJ State Law, parents have the legal right to refuse these services.

Delivery of Service

Although the delivery of ESL services varies according to the needs of the student, at the elementary level, ESL is most often delivered on a pull-out basis with groups ranging from one to six students. Pull-out service provides one 30 minute period daily. Currently Fair Lawn has a significant Russian, Spanish and Hebrew speaking population that requires the district to provide an additional thirty minutes of services to these language groups. Due the impracticality of implementing a bilingual program, Fair Lawn has filed a waiver of bilingual services with the state department. In lieu of a bilingual class, the district offers an additional thirty-minute literacy period to these language groups. Finally, although the pull-out services are most common, at times the ESL may opt to provide "push-in" services to a student who might be better suited for this type of educational program.

Exiting the ESL Program

Fair Lawn employs a multi-criteria approach when exiting students from the program. A heavy emphasis is placed upon the student's test score on the NJ State approved language test, ACCESS for ELLs. Other factors include:

- Teacher recommendations (both the ESL and classroom/content teacher)
- Academic performance
- Portfolio work