

# Improving Participation Among English Learners



*Best Practices & Cultural Considerations*

## ❖ Establish a Positive Classroom Environment

- Learn each student's name and how to properly pronounce it.
- Make connections to the cultures present in your classroom.
- Refrain from passing judgement or making assumptions about cultural beliefs and practices.
- Take advantage of teachable moments when questions arise or inappropriate comments are made by other students.

## ❖ Set Appropriate Expectations

- Refer to the [Can-Do Descriptors](#) to ensure you're framing questions in a way that is appropriate for the EP of each student:
  - Questions from easiest to most difficult: yes/no, what, where, when, how, and why
- Refer to the [Speaking Rubric](#) when developing rubrics.

## ❖ Engage ALL learners in the Classroom

- Allow and encourage the use of the student's native language.
- Incorporate 'Think-Pair-Share':
  - Pose appropriately structured question to students and allow for think-time
  - Share the answer with a partner
  - Share the answer with the group
- Incorporate 'Phone-a-Friend':
  - If the 'Student A' won't respond to a question, have him call on another student and ask the question. Once the other student has replied, pose the question again to 'Student A'.
- Non-Verbal Alternatives:
  - Students may respond through writing, illustrating, or physically demonstrating if other methods are either inappropriate or ineffective.

## ❖ Cultural Considerations

- In Asian cultures, being talkative is not valued as much as being accurate.
- Most newcomers will go through a silent period during which they are either unable or or unwilling to speak. This may last up to a year.
- ELs rely heavily on nonverbal cues, so teachers should continually monitor their own gestures, vocal tone, and facial expressions.
- Be aware that some common american gestures may be very offensive to students from other cultures.

## ❖ Cultural Considerations

- Asian children may smile or giggle out of embarrassment, confusion, grief, or an overall feeling of being uncomfortable. Be careful not to misinterpret these non-verbals.
- Asian cultures view direct eye contact with elders/authority as disrespectful. One should not force a student to do this.
- Physical proximity norms vary from culture to culture.
- Students previously educated in Asian countries will not be as comfortable with partner or group work. Explicit instruction and modeling will therefore be necessary.