

English Language Development Strategies in Social Studies

- 1. Pre-teach Reading Assignments.** Before students read the social studies textbook assignment, the teacher models how to use features such as chapter overviews, chapter or lesson objectives, and bolded vocabulary words.
- 2. Use of Context Clues.** An effective strategy to support ELL vocabulary learning in social studies is the clues' proximity to the unknown word. Fluent readers use signal words (such as *or*) found close to the unknown word. Fluent readers also use punctuation clues, such as a comma that separates the unknown word with the rest of the sentence which might contain a definition or synonym. Teach students to look for these indicators.
- 3. Word Banks.** Word banks are used either as a whole class activity displayed as a word wall, or the teacher models for the students how to keep a personal list of newly learned social studies vocabulary.
- 4. Rehearsal Strategies.** Rehearsal is frequently used in social studies for verbatim recall of information. The teacher encourages and models the use of flashcards. Other rehearsal strategies include underlining or highlighting of important vocabulary and key concept points in the students' notes.
- 5. Teacher Lecture and Student Note Taking.** Effectively support student note taking during lectures by giving struggling students fill-in-the-blank guides or other forms of graphic organizers. During the lecture, the teacher indicates when to fill in the blanks. Further support student note taking by displaying or providing individuals a bank of key concepts and vocabulary words. Pause frequently to ask and answer questions and to give struggling students time to complete the blanks.
- 6. Role Playing.** Role playing can make difficult or abstract social studies concepts more understandable. If the ELL student lacks the language skills to participate in the role play, have them watch and listen as other students play the roles.
- 7. Primary Source Material and Artifacts.** Incorporate primary source materials, artifacts, or realia into the lesson to give ELL students a better understanding of difficult vocabulary, content, and concepts, as well as of historical periods. Photos, models, copies of documents, etc. can be used to enhance student understanding.
- 8. Jigsaw Learning.** In this cooperative learning strategy, divide the social studies chapter or material to be read into five or six parts. Divide the class into as many "home" groups, dividing your ELLs among the groups. Give each student one of the parts to read and later "teach" to a group. Students then leave their "home" group and meet in "expert" groups, who have the same material. The expert groups are a mixture of native speakers and ELLs who will work together to understand their section of the chapter. Last of all, the experts return to their "home" groups to teach their portion of the chapter and to learn from the other members of their "home" group. In this way, ELLs are not overwhelmed with the task of reading and understanding an entire chapter.

9. Graphic Organizers. The use of graphic organizers helps students categorize the information they are learning. Organizers such as Venn diagrams, timelines, flow charts, etc., can lead to the understanding of key concepts and vocabulary.

10. Analogies. Using analogies will help students link the familiar with the unfamiliar. Find examples within the classroom, school, and community that lead to student understanding of social studies concepts. It is important to point out similarities as well as differences.