

# Possible Guiding Questions: Conversations Between Principals and Teachers

## ROLE: English as a Second Language Teachers

*This document utilizes the components within the Danielson Framework for Teaching to provide possible guiding questions for conversations that occur between a principal and teacher. Note that a few of the guiding questions also provide linkages to the Framework for Leadership in order to establish a level of connectedness among the two frameworks.*

*Please note: The questions identified here are provided to spur some thoughts as to the individual conversations that occur between a principal and teacher. The actual conversations that occur should be determined locally. It is not mandatory to use these questions, nor should they be viewed as a “checklist” to be followed. They are provided solely as a resource.*

### Role of the ESL Teacher Informing Observation

1. The ESL teacher’s primary role is to teach the language of English aligned to the English Language Proficiency Standards.
2. The ESL teacher plans and delivers direct instruction.
3. English as a second language in Pennsylvania is core instruction.
4. ELP Standards are measured by state-mandated assessment, ACCESS for ELLs, and attached to an accountability target described in the AMAOs (Annual Measures of Achievement Objectives) in NCLB.
5. The ESL teacher who must hold an ESL Program Specialist Certificate develops an expertise in linguistics, cultural knowledge, effective second language acquisition, literacy, and language needed to support content area learning.
6. The ESL teacher who holds an ESL Program Specialist Certificate maintains an expertise in second language assessment, and local, state, and federal policies and legal mandates related to English language learners and their families.

7. The ESL teacher masters the instructional leader skills of student assessment and data interpretation in a multi-tiered system of support (RtII), consultancy for special needs personnel, service as professional resource for content teachers and school administration, effective record keeper, and advocate for rights of English language learners.

## Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

### *1a: Demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy*

#### **Look Fors:**

- ESL teacher as language teacher
- ESL teacher integrates four language domains in planning: listening, speaking, reading, writing
- ESL teacher customizes learning strategies for stages of second language acquisition

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- How are you addressing the components of the English language in this lesson plan and/or other lessons in this unit plan?
  - Response indicates that the ESL teacher integrates English language instruction, including syntax (sentence construction and rules for construction), phonetics (the sound system of the language), semantics (the meaning of words in sentences), pragmatics (the context in which language is used), sociolinguistics (appropriateness of language and language choices to the social situation), morphology (the parts of words and affixes), and other components of language.
- How have you adapted instructional focus, scaffolding, activities, and expectation of student response for stages of language acquisition and levels of English proficiency?
- Response should indicate teacher understanding of the levels of English language acquisition (Entering, Emergent, Developing, Expanding and Bridging) and characteristics of learners at various stages of language development (silent period learners).

### *1b: Demonstrating knowledge of students*

#### **Look Fors:**

- ESL teacher knows student backgrounds (social, emotional, academic, and cultural) and differentiates instruction accordingly
- ESL teacher knows English language proficiency levels of his/her students and adapts instruction to levels
- ESL teacher recognizes challenges of students with interrupted or limited formal education and adapts instruction to address the challenges

## Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

### *1c: Setting instructional outcomes*

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- Tell me about the most challenging student in your ELL class. What individual factors contribute to the challenge?
  - Response should include demonstration of in-depth knowledge of the student including academic background and preparation, English proficiency level, cultural support for education, motivation to learn English, etc.
- How do you adapt instruction for this student?
  - Response should directly address areas of challenge with a problem-solving approach.

#### **Look Fors:**

- Instruction is guided by English Language Proficiency standards (See PDE SAS), relevant content-area PA Common Core standards, and assessment data.
- ESL teacher's instructional planning is delineated by clear language-centered instructional outcomes; little non-outcome instruction is evident; ESL teacher does not replace or replicate content instruction.
- Class planning is rich in instructional support.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- What scaffolds have you included in your lesson planning to differentiate the level of support needed for ELL students?
  - Response should include a variety of student grouping strategies, graphic support, use of technology to support English learners, various student response methods, etc.
- What data do you use to inform your differentiation?
  - Response should include ACCESS data, observational data, language performance rubrics (such as WIDA and others), formative assessment, student self-assessment and stated needs, PSSA/Keystone results, and content-specific assessments.

## Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

### *Id: Demonstrating knowledge of resources*

#### **Look Fors:**

- ESL teacher uses culturally-diverse and culturally responsive materials in instruction
- ESL teacher integrates instructional resources (technology, graphics, manipulatives, etc.), in addition to textbooks, that support language learning and content access in lesson planning and as student resources
- ESL teacher has knowledge of resources for professional development specific to teaching English language learners in addition to knowledge of sources for most current policy decisions related to their learners.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- Have you used texts from subject-matter texts to inform your instructional planning in this lesson? Have you identified the linguistic and cultural challenges for your ELL students in the use of these texts?
  - Response should include knowledge of content texts and materials used in content classes of ELL students. Response should also indicate that the teacher has analyzed the language demands (reading level, challenges of background knowledge needed to access the text information, confusing word meanings, etc.) of texts and materials.
- How have you kept informed of current policy concerning ELLs, current resources for ELL instruction, and resources that can help support ELLs in content classrooms?
  - Response should include evidence of continuous learning for the ELL professional, but also for assisting content teachers in supporting their English learners.

### *Ie: Designing coherent instruction*

#### **Look Fors:**

- The lesson plan and unit plan are clearly structured and centered on language learning goals in addition to content support.
- The ESL teacher varies methods of instructional delivery that maximizes ELL language use and practice.
- Learning experiences are engaging, interesting, and relevant to the lives of the ELLs in the

## Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

class.

### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- How do you typically structure your lesson plans for your ELL class? Why do you use that structure specifically for ELLs in contrast to other structures for non-ELL students?
  - Response may include reference to explicit instruction followed by modeling of learning by the teacher, and abundant practice for the student. ESL teachers should talk both in terms of language instruction and content support instruction.
- How does your planning foster participation and language practice through intentional grouping strategies?
  - Response should articulate knowledge of the variety of student grouping ideas and matching student grouping strategies to the instructional objectives and ELP level.
- How are you supporting and involving the student and family in this plan?
  - Response may include specially-designed homework assignments, linkages to family culture, and using the family as learning resource. The response also indicates student-centered planning to foster deep student engagement.

*If: Designing student assessment*

### **Look Fors:**

- The ESL teacher has detailed knowledge of the principles and administration of WIDA assessments including ACCESS for ELLs. The teacher follows PA policy in using results for student placement and promotion.
- ESL teacher details continuous assessment and summative assessment firmly aligned to language learning outcomes in the context of content learning. Teacher has benchmarks for language progress identified.
- ESL teacher details assessment that measures the performance of language in addition to the knowledge of language.
- Assessment results drive instructional planning, both short term and long term planning.

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## Domain 1: Planning and Preparation

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### Possible Guiding Questions:

- Tell me about one of your English language learners and his/her assessment results and how their particular ELP level drives instruction.
  - Response might include references to ACCESS scores, formative assessment, progress in language learning as indicated by performance assessment, and how the teacher plans to modify instruction to maximize language growth.
- How are you setting benchmarks to measure student growth and progress towards language and content goals?
  - Response indicates the existence of benchmarks in student assessment.

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## Domain 2: The Classroom Environment

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### *2a: Creating an environment of respect and rapport*

#### **Look Fors:**

- The ESL teacher is welcoming, friendly, and supportive, modeling these attributes for others in the school community.
- The student community works well together, aware that some culture conflict may exist outside the classroom, but a safe space is established within the classroom.
- The ESL teacher knows about the languages and cultures of the students and communicates that knowledge and understanding to students and families, including some limited use of the students' native languages in the classroom.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- Can you tell me about the cultural and linguistic accommodations and modifications you have instituted in your classroom to mirror the cultural diversity, cultural sensitivities, and culturally-appropriate ways of learning and resources for your students?
  - Response indicates that the teacher knows about and demonstrates strategies that are culturally-responsive and culturally-sensitive. The response demonstrates strategies that legitimize and honor home language and culture.
- How can you help us make a more culturally-responsive and culturally-welcoming school for your ELL students?
  - Response should address the ESL teacher's role in creating an environment safe and welcoming for their students in the wider school community.

### *2b: Establishing a culture for learning*

#### **Look Fors:**

- ESL teacher expects ELL students to meet the same outcomes and standards as all students. The curriculum is not dumbed-down.
- The teacher consistently reminds students that lack of English proficiency does not equate to inability to achieve in content areas.
- The teacher demands and rewards high effort from students and fosters student motivation to engage in independent, student-directed learning.



## Domain 2: The Classroom Environment

### *2c: Managing classroom procedures*

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- Tell me about how you capitalize on one student's strengths and interests in fostering motivation for learning and high achievement.
  - Response includes knowledge of a student's life experiences and cites specific integration into classroom instruction and student activities. Response also indicates a disposition for students to learn independently.

#### **Look Fors:**

- The ESL teacher is explicit in his/her explanations of rules and classroom procedures. Rules and procedures should be posted in the classroom in language comprehensible for the students.
- The teacher demonstrates predictable and consistent classroom routines for common tasks, thus providing a safe and predictable environment in which to acquire English.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- What are some practices of the American classroom that may be different from schooling in another culture or country? How do you attempt to negotiate the differing rules, practices, and expectations?
  - Response might include such ideas as the importance of raising your hand to respond, the importance of working collaboratively in groups, use of the native language in class, etc.
- Tell me about the routines you have established and how they are important for English language learners.
  - Response should demonstrate that the teacher can easily articulate the step-by-step routines enacted daily in the classroom and why these routines support the learning of English learners.

## Domain 2: The Classroom Environment

### *2d: Managing student behavior*

#### **Look Fors:**

- The ESL teacher maintains classroom control, however, he/she is aware that students bring cultural backgrounds that will impact classroom behaviors.
- The ESL teacher is explicit in communicating the principles of behavior expected in the American classroom in a culturally-aware way. (i.e. Culturally-mediated behaviors are not wrong, just different from American classroom expectations.)

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- As the ESL teacher how do you engage students in classroom and school behavior expectations, with consideration of their cultural backgrounds that will impact classroom behaviors.
  - Response should include orientation to American school culture, behavioral rules and expectations. Response should include realistic, but high expectation for behavior conducive to a learning environment. The family is part of the orientation plan.

### *2e: Organizing physical space*

#### **Look Fors:**

- Desk arrangement that is conducive to student interaction in order to practice the skills of English communication.
- The classroom contains centers for specific learning activities and to accommodate the varying instructional needs of the heterogeneous ESL student population.
- The walls, ceiling, etc., should be language and literacy rich to foster passive English language acquisition.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- What is your intentional plan for making maximum use of available instructional space? Talk also about your seating plan.

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## Domain 2: The Classroom Environment

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- Response should include cultural sensitivity and support, deliberate groupings of students, varied spaces for specific instructional purposes, effective placement of instructional support material (such as word walls, classroom library, etc.).

## Domain 3: Instruction

### *3a: Communicating with students*

#### **Look Fors:**

- During the lesson, the ESL teacher uses multiple channels of communication simultaneously (speaking, writing on the board, displaying text on chartpad, using technology display) to communicate directions and important learning.
- ESL teacher employs translation devices (iPad translators, hand-held translators, bilingual dictionaries, verbal translations) to bridge first language to new language.
- ESL teacher communicates for different proficiency levels using appropriate levels of language to meet student needs.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- How do you effectively communicate and teach students who have a language different from your own languages and do not speak any English?
  - Response should include uses of realia, Total Physical Response, abundant repetition, activation of listening skills, use of visuals, etc. Teacher should be comfortable with working with students who speak no English.

### *3b: Using questioning and discussion techniques*

#### **Look Fors:**

- ESL teacher asks questions that lead to critical learning; teacher does not dumb-down content questioning because of limitation on English proficiency but uses high language support techniques.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- How do the processes and techniques for questioning for a class of English language learners differ from those of a class of native speakers?
  - Response should include use of wait time, multiple response model (i.e. non-verbal response for level one learners, yes-no questions for learner levels ones and two, etc.), teacher focus is additionally on the form and syntax of the answer not just the content of the answer, etc.

## Domain 3: Instruction

### *3c: Engaging students in learning*

#### **Look Fors:**

- ESL teacher uses a variety of grouping strategies (paired, triads, etc.) and explicitly provides directions for the work of the group.
- ESL teacher presents the groups with a task to be accomplished so groups must use language negotiation to complete the task.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- What is your intentional plan for grouping students engaged in collaborative work?
  - Response should include
- What techniques do you use to teach learners with limited oral proficiency to develop oral skills for academic conversations? Why is it important to teach oral language in an academic context?
  - Response should include designing the lesson for providing opportunities for academic conversations (turn and talk, paired assignments, etc.), explicit modeling of academic conversations, and the grammatical structure and academic vocabulary needed to engage in academic conversations. The oral academic tasks should develop critical thinking in a context that is meaningful and purposeful. The theory explanation should address new research that strongly suggests that academic conversations form the basis for academic literacy development, thereby moving students from just acquiring information to communicating information, ideas, and concepts in the content areas.

### *3d: Using assessment in instruction*

#### **Look Fors:**

- ESL teacher should have explicit plans for continuously assessing English language accuracy and development to inform instructional planning and to provide feedback to students on language progress.
- ESL teacher asks students to self-assess language accuracy and development.

## Domain 3: Instruction

### *3e: Demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness*

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- How has the data you have on the students in this class driven your lesson focus? What data was used in this decision?
  - The response should include an analysis of the Teacher Report and Roster Report of ACCESS for ELLs in addition to an analysis of recent and reliable formative assessment data.
- In what ways have you used student self-assessment and student interest survey data in your instructional process? Tell me about the learning goals of one of your students and how these goals were collected.
  - Response should indicate use of student self-assessment and intentionality in using that information in the instructional process.

#### **Look Fors:**

- ESL teacher knows students well and can articulate their backgrounds, interests, and instructional needs.
- ESL teacher knows when students are learning and comprehending both language and content and when they are not and reinforces or reteaches as necessary.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- As an example, how would you modify your instruction to accommodate students who have recently arrived in your class mid-year knowing little English?
  - The response may address forming a safe and supportive connected relationship with the student, pairing the new student with a supportive student, use of additional visuals, consideration of use of first language use, increasing the explicitness of instruction surrounding crucial language functions, and responding to the immediate needs of the learner, finding out abundant information about the student (including academic preparation in home language and academic orientation, family support for learning, emotional traumas that may impede learning, etc.).

## Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

### *4a: Reflecting on teacher and student learning*

#### **Look Fors:**

- ESL teacher has and can discuss ongoing, frequently-assessed and systematic language performance records that demonstrate individual student progress in language development. Teacher should be able to articulate a plan for each student customized to current levels and short-term and long-term language goals.
- ESL teacher reflects on how the observed lesson could be more effective, focusing on language objectives.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- How do you assess the lesson you just taught? What is the evidence you used to make this judgment?
  - Response should include progress towards meeting language objectives and content support objectives. The response should address individual student progress as well as whole-class progress. Teacher should discuss how he/she could further improve and support all students.
- Tell me about one student who seems to be lagging behind the others in language growth. What data can you should me that leads you to that conclusion? Is there data to suggest specific areas in which this student needs intervention? What is your plan for intervention for this particular student?
  - Response should document that the teacher has continuous records of progress in all language production domains (reading, writing, speaking, listening) and records of knowledge of the English language (grammar, vocabulary, phonetics/pronunciation, etc.). Teacher should be able to articulate areas of strength and weakness and articulate a plan to assist this student's progress in particular areas.

## Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

### *4b: System for managing students' data*

#### **Look Fors:**

- There are no commercially-developed record-keeping systems that address English language progress specifically. Therefore, the ESL teacher develops his/her own system for recording progress in language growth or adapts a school-wide system for recording language skill beyond literacy.
- A highly experienced teacher may have developed an online record system so that others in the school community can share information about English language learners.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- Explain your system for recording and archiving important information such as documents for the student file (language and academic background, language proficiency levels, motivational patterns, etc.), mandated accommodations for assessment, home language survey, family communications, ACCESS for ELLs / W-APT scores, etc.
  - Response should indicate that the teacher has a system that is organized and shared with others in the school community to foster a stronger web of support for individual ELLs.

### *4c: Communicating with Families*

#### **Look Fors:**

- The ESL teacher integrates family and cultural community into the instructional program and academic support system for each student. The ESL teacher may have community speakers from cultural groups, but must have a year-long plan for family involvement and engagement that includes not only communication (newsletters, homework guides, etc.), but also family information programs and family education programs. Communication is offered in both English and in the home language of the student.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- How have you advocated in the school community for communication access for families who speak a language other than English?
  - Possible responses should include use of TransAct, Language Line, bilingual



## Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

### *4d: Participating in a professional community*

instructional personnel, bilingual written communication, mandated use of translators in parent meetings, etc. Does the ESL teacher include non-instructional personnel concerns such as guidance services, central registration services, school nurses, administrative assistance, transportation personnel, etc.?

- What family-centered programs and activities have you conducted in the past year?
  - Response should indicate that the ESL teacher has reached out to the family and community on a frequent basis through communications and programming. Ideally, the programming should not be one-way information-giving, but should provide opportunities for families to bring their opinions and cultural-knowledge into the classroom and school.

### **Look Fors:**

- In the role of the ESL Program Specialist, the ESL teacher provides ongoing expertise for members of the school community to better support English learners. That support often includes school-wide presentations, consultation on curriculum, materials, and programs, and membership on student support teams.

### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- How have you collaborated with your school community to support the learning of English learners in your school? How have you provided professional development for the instructional and non-instructional staff?
  - Response should indicate that the ESL teacher has planned professional development that targets the needs of the school community and has collaborated in organizing professional development with other teachers and administration. Teacher can articulate how he/she monitors teacher and staff professional development needs.

## Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

### *4e: Growing and developing professionally*

#### **Look Fors:**

- ESL teacher is a member of one or more organizations or learning communities that focus on English language learners.
- ESL teacher is fully aware and engaged with new instructional initiatives in local, state, and federal contexts.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- Growing as a professional often involves collaboration with others in the ESL field. Can you talk about some of your collaboration experiences this year?
  - ESL teachers learn from sharing the practices of others. The response should indicate engagement with other ESL professionals.
- How have you developed your knowledge beyond your area to support the learning of your students, for example understanding new initiatives such as the Common Core, new state assessments such as the Keystones, and New Generation Science Standards?
  - Response should articulate systematic methods for keeping abreast of new initiatives using either state resources (PaTTAN, PDE SAS, etc.) or research and print resources.

### *4f: Showing professionalism*

#### **Look Fors:**

- The ESL teacher displays a disposition towards advocacy in ensuring that English learners are given the same access to educational quality and educational services as other students.
- The ESL teacher ensures that all policies related to English learner education are known by administration and instructional staff and that the school and district are in compliance with regulation in ensuring the rights of English language learners in educational contexts.

#### **Possible Guiding Questions:**

- Tell me about the sources you regularly use to keep abreast of policies related to the education of English learners. Are there any policies you feel this school might want to

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## Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

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look at in ensuring the rights of English learners?

- The response should indicate that the ESL teacher has accessed the BEC (Basic Education Circular) and understands its contents related to ELLs as well as other sources of state education policy. The ESL teacher should indicate that he/she has a holistic view and opinion on serving ELLs and their families in the school and district, and when he/she feels that school has not been in compliance, that the teacher has respectfully and professionally advocated for compliances and equality of programming and service.