

# Social Studies: Teaching Strategies for ELLs

Teach vocabulary/concepts through visual strategies: the arts, field trips, dramatic enactment, music, storytelling, literature and technology

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# **Social Studies**

## **Teaching Strategies for ELLs**

- **Create Positive Classroom Culture**
- **Affirm ELLs Identity**
- **Activate Prior Knowledge**
- **Build/Create New Background Knowledge**
- **Teach Vocabulary/Concepts through Visual Strategies**

# **Teaching Vocabulary/Concepts through Visual Strategies**

- **The Arts**
- **Dramatic Enactment**
- **Field Trips**
- **Oral Storytelling**
- **Language Experience Approach (LEA)**
- **Authentic Literature**
- **Student Interactivity**
- **Technology**

# Create

## Positive Classroom Culture and Socially Supportive Environment

### *Welcome ELLs*

**Learn students' names**

**Model correct pronunciation**

**Use language/culture sensitive content instruction**

**Assign a peer partner**

**Use an interpreter or peer during instruction**

### *Invite ELLs language and culture into your classroom*

**Read aloud a folktale or story from their culture**

**Have ELLs teach class some words from native language**

**Use books and materials related to ELLs' cultures**

# Affirm

## English Language Learners' Identity

***ELLs' cultural knowledge and language abilities in their home language are important resources in enabling academic engagement.***

### Research: Education

Recognition of students' home language and home cultures can facilitate students' feeling of belonging to the school community.

—Crawford, 1999; Ovando & Collier 1998; Torrey, 1983.

English language learners will engage academically to the extent that instruction affirms their identities and enables them to invest their identities in learning.

—Cummins; Bismilla; Chow; Cohen; Giampapa; Leoni; and Sastri, 2005

# Research: Brain—Self-Concept

- Our self-concept is shaped by past experiences. Positive or negative reactions from others produces strong emotional reactions
- The brain encodes and stores emotions with the cognitive event. These emotional cues are so strong that we often re-experience the original emotion each time we recall the event.

# Activate Prior Knowledge

***Link social studies concepts to prior knowledge (ELL student's "funds of knowledge") and use cognates, particularly for Spanish ELLs, but remember—there are also false cognates***

## Studying WWII

- Begin discussion on student's personal experiences and problems with being different, or the idea that differences can lead to conflict.
- Extend understanding into social, political, and economic differences among groups of people and specific groups, e.g., between England and Germany in WWII.
- Make WWII context rich by personal stories and broad-based content knowledge.

- Utilize student experiential knowledge by relating it to important social studies concepts and events.
- Linking of student's prior knowledge to curriculum is the oral history approach. Student's background and experiences form the raw historical data from which social studies can be built.
- Oral history projects help students understand that history is composed of stories in which they and their families have participated.
- Complex issues, such as religious persecution, tyranny of autocratic rulers, and rights and responsibilities of self governance are more accessible when developed from students' own background and experiences.



# Build/Create New Background Knowledge \*

## **VISUAL STRATEGIES for Teaching English Language Learners (ELLs)**

- The Arts
- Dramatic Enactment
- Field Trips
- Oral Storytelling/Jr. Historians

\* Remember to connect it to ELLs' prior knowledge.

- Graphic Organizers
- Language Experience Approach (LEA)
- Authentic Literature
- Student Interactivity
- Technology

# The Arts

## MOTIVATION

### PARTICIPANT LEARNING

ACTIVATE YOUR ENERGY

ACTIVATE YOURSELF INTO DRAMA, MUSIC, DANCE, ETC.

***Arts—Use drama, painting, dance, puppets, music, songs and chants to motivate students to investigate social studies concepts, topics and historical events.***

The Arts open windows on the possible and give prominence to the imagination. We can look at art as story. What will this story tell us?

- Listen/see/feel.
- Enlarges/Enhances experiences
- Changes and deepens experiences
- The picture changes/The world changes
- Multiple media reduces reliance on language, particularly helpful for ELLs.
- The Arts place information in a context that is more comprehensible to ELLs.

***Realia***—Use objects (mementos from home) photos, video clips, films, maps, illustrations, and magazines to evaluate data and historical events.

# Dramatic Enactment/ Role Playing

*Have students use dramatic skits, pantomime, simulations, and mock trials to act out an historical event or literary passage. “You Are There” dramatizations allow students to pretend to be reporters describing various scenes from history and literature.*

## **Rationale:**

Research indicates that dramatic enactment is the best way for ELLs to understand literary concepts and events. (*Critical Links*—A compendium on the Arts, edited by Richard J. Deasy).

Dramatic enactment also encourages imagination which, unfortunately, has become routinized and bureaucratized in our high-stakes, test-driven educational world. Facts and data have trumped imagination.

Imagination is essential if we want to educate our students to become creative, critical thinkers in a global, multicultural, and technological world.

### Critical and Creative Thinking

Imagination facilitates an encounter with an alternative reality or outcome. “*What if?*” is an important creative question and one that ELLs need to explore more. (See Bloom’s Taxonomy.)

## Multiple Perspectives/Perceptions

- Social studies fosters multiple perspectives on historical events and topics portrayed in primary sources, history books, and authentic literature. For some students, “perception is reality.”
- Students need to tackle more than one side of an issue and support their arguments with evidence. “*Whoever explains, learns.*” They have to develop the ability to look at other possibilities and look at everything as if it could be different.

- Dramatic enactment helps students to use their imagination to portray conflicting sides of an issue and to walk in the shoes of other participants in the drama or role play.
- Students can create mini dramas on life during WWII, portray pivotal historical characters, e.g., Roosevelt, Hitler, and Churchill. They can research and write the dialogues before their performances and improve their literacy skills.
- Dramatic enactment helps students to understand social studies vocabulary and concepts more easily because “drama is in fact a curriculum for story and reading comprehension.” Acting is not inert; there are more cues to help with comprehension.



# Field Trips

***Visit museums, historic sites, parks, zoos, cultural organizations and community board organizations (CBOs).***

- Field trips, particularly museums, help to build new vocabulary/concepts and new background knowledge for ELLs.
- The museums present exhibits that provide visual context for social studies concepts and events to facilitate comprehension.

- All field trips provide opportunities to learn new vocabulary in a natural way as students explore new experiences.
- The field trips' experiences provide the opportunity for students to improve their literacy skills by telling, listening, writing, and reading stories about their visits. (See LEA approach).

- The field experiences plant seeds for group storytelling that builds confidence in ELLs.
- The museums provide extensive resources for background knowledge.

## **VIRTUAL INTERNET FIELD SITES**

- “You are there”—Use virtual museums, historical sites, and geographic places to motivate students and have them participate vicariously in key events in American and Global History.
- Students can choose images and develop stories for class presentations.

- Students can establish links with their peers in other countries to discuss common interests and current events in each other's countries.
- The field sites provide extensive internet resources for social studies projects.

# Oral Storytelling/ Jr. Historians

***Why should students interview family members or community members to record an oral history?***

- Students realize that their group's oral history is not something that happened long ago and now lives only in their textbooks—they now know they and their communities are **PLAYERS ON THE HISTORICAL STAGE**
- History is filled with stories and they see that the stories of their own families have something worth sharing with mainstream culture.

- “BRING HISTORY HOME”—Students recognize common characteristics shared with other ethnic groups as well as uniqueness of their own family. Many grandparents know WW II. Some Puerto Ricans were teenagers at the time and many of their peers served in the military.
- Students’ understanding of new vocabulary/concepts is strengthened because a context is developed from their own experiences.

- Teachers can develop parallels between the history of the U.S. and the students own communities and help them realize that the HISTORY OF THE PRESENT IS BEING CREATED BY PEOPLE LIKE THEMSELVES.



# Oral Storytelling

Students can dictate and tell own stories.

- They can interview family members and tell their stories.
- They can interview the community and CBOs to tell their stories. At the same time they can explore informal internships for citizenship responsibility.

# Oral histories help students to:

- Improve their oral proficiency
- Improve their writing proficiency
- Promote native language use
- Meet instructional goals
- Validate their culture and experiences
- Enhance their self esteem

# How Can Students Prepare and Conduct an Interview?

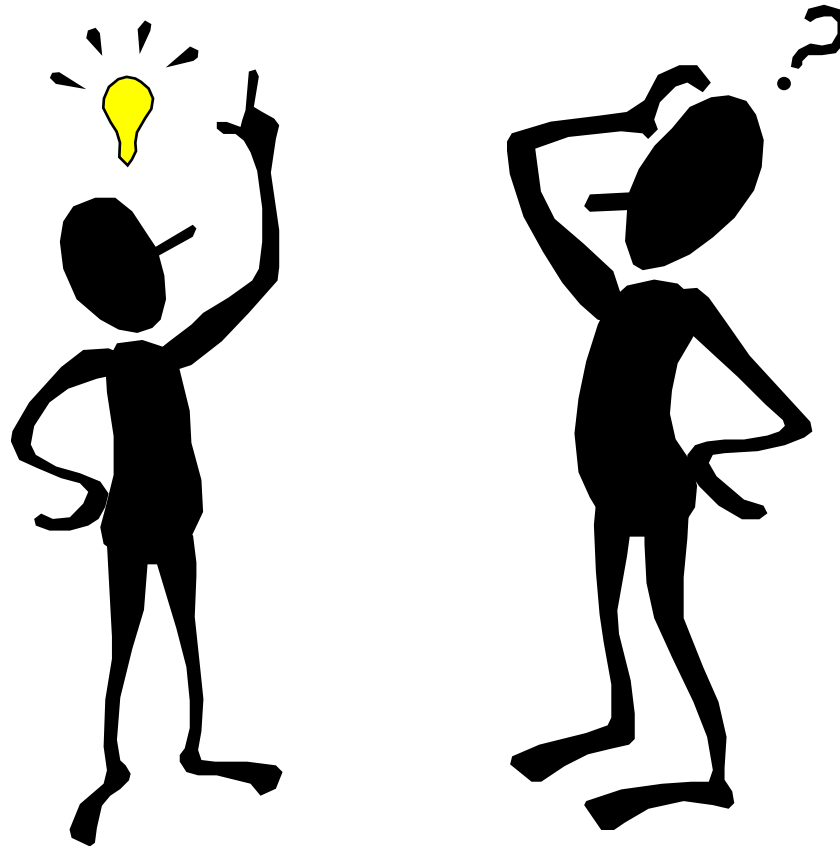
- Record and Practice Interviews
  - Collect Stories—take notes, tape record data
  - Practice interviewing classmates
  - Role play/Act as grandparent
  - Take photos of interviewee

- Invite Guest Speakers
  - Interview by whole class
  - Transcribe oral speech—excellent ESL exercise

Learn understanding of natural, non-academic, speech.

- Compare and Contrast Experiences of Interviewees
- Read historical bios or novels of people in different times; focus on similarities and differences between their interviewees and historical characters.

# Reflections and Questions





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