English Learner Instructional Strategy Rubric (ELISR)

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Scoring Guidelines

This manual contains the scoring guidelines for each of the dimensions of the English Learner Instructional Strategies Rubric (ELISR). These scoring guidelines help raters apply the ELISR scoring dimensions uniformly to generate acceptable levels of reliability.

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SCORING GUIDELINES

OVERVIEW

The population of English learners (ELs) poses important and complex instructional challenges that demand direct attention. The English Learner Instructional Strategy Rubric (ELISR) draws on extant research that documents the necessary experiences ELs should be provided to achieve content and language proficiency standards. Thus, the ELISR targets aspects of the educational context that are necessary for promoting learning for ELs.

The ELISR is comprised of 13 dimensions that reflect effective instruction for ELs in terms of teaching quality and teacher quality. The Figure 1 presents these dimensions.

Figure 1. ELISR Dimensions

Teaching Quality	Teacher Quality
1. Classroom Management	8. Content Knowledge
2. Academic Literacy	9. Feedback
3. Communicating Objectives	10. Questioning
4. Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)	11. Assessment
5. Differentiation	12. Practice Opportunities
6. Background Knowledge	13. Sheltered Techniques
7. Curriculum Access	
Teacher Quality	**Teaching Quality**

Teaching quality refers to teachers' understanding of the content and teaching aligned to student background and learning needs. It is teacher knowledge of the content in relation to lesson delivery and strategies that foster learning for all students, including those for specific groups of students such as ELs. These strategies correspond to activities designed to increase curriculum access. Teacher quality refers to content-specific strategies designed to develop and strengthen students' content knowledge systems. Taken together, these instructional variables are designed to increase ELLs' achievement by either:

(a) minimizing the amount of language demand while still presenting key ideas, concepts, and relationships between concepts and ideas;

(b) providing students with strategies for making sense of linguistics input they receive to increase comprehension; and

(c) providing opportunities for producing linguistic output in the second language.

ELISR DIMENSIONS

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management generally describes the process of ensuring that classroom lessons run smoothly including actions taken to prevent disruptive behavior. Recent conceptions of classroom management involve routines to sustain academic engagement. Although effective classroom management begins with clear communication of academic expectations this dimension centers on evidence of techniques teachers use to ensure the lesson is delivered without behavioral disruptions. As such, this dimension evaluates three types of behaviors:

- On Task Behavior of Students
  Students are actively engaged and asking questions relevant to the content being presented. There is clear evidence of students following directions and paying attention to instruction.
- Communication of rules for learning and behavior
  The teacher reviews rules and communicates academic expectations before the lesson. Routines and procedures are evident such as students taking turns and raising their hands.
- Behavior management minimizes disruptions to instruction
  In a well-managed class, there are few disruptions. Teachers can redirect to minimize classroom disruptions.

ACADEMIC LITERACY

Academic literacy refers to 21st century skills as represented by the current wave of standards-based reform efforts. Academic literacy includes strong academic communication skills in the interpretation of text as well as the communication of interpretation. While word recognition and fluency are foundational skills in the early grades, comprehension, interpretation, and communication are given prominence in college and career readiness starting in kindergarten. That is, college and career ready students can effectively communicate content understandings as well as participate meaningfully in complex discipline-based practices. While word recognition and fluency pose a challenge for ELs, it pales in comparison to comprehension, interpretation, and communication. Therefore, the Academic Literacy dimensions targets both vocabulary development as well as skills beyond word-level skills that are essential for communication of learning. Therefore, three distinct types of literacy practices are evaluated in this dimension. They include:

- ☐ Teacher models language structures that are germane to the text types that correspond to the task
  The teacher models strong academic communication skills throughout the lesson and activity and consistently asks students to expand discourse, explain, and justify.
- ☐ Opportunities for oral practice of language structures that correspond to the task are provided (academic conversations)
  The teacher provides opportunities for academic conversations; and students participate meaningfully in discussions along with gaining a deeper insight on a concept.
- ☐ Instruction targets academic vocabulary directly related to the purpose of the task and targeted skill
  Meaningful vocabulary instruction (more than Fryer's model) is evident in lesson delivery and student interactions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning objectives are brief, clear, specific statements of what learners will be able to perform at the conclusion of instructional activities. Generally, learning objectives are competency-based as they designate exactly what students need to do to demonstrate they met the learning expectations of the lesson/instructional activity. With this in mind, learning objectives are always stated in terms of student outcomes. The purpose of learning objectives is to: (a) inform students of the expectations of the lesson/activity; (b) communicate the types of evidence that students need to produce to demonstrate understanding; and (3) provide evidence of student learning. To evaluate the effectiveness of teachers communicating learning objectives to students the following items are examined:

Note that scoring of each of the descriptors varies somewhat. Refer to Table 1 for the scoring procedures.

Table 1. Learning Objectives Scoring Procedures

Descriptors	Scoring Procedure
☐ There is a clear and discernible objective of the lesson.	0 = Not observed; 1 = No blooms verb; 2 = Blooms verb present
☐ The lesson targets both language and content objectives.	0 = Both not observed; 1 = No blooms verb in either; 2 = Blooms verb present in 1; 3 = Blooms verb present in both
☐ Learning objectives are clearly communicated to students.	0 = Not true/not observed; 1 = True but mostly low quality; 2 = generally true; 3 consistently true
☐ Provides closure/summary for students to reinforce lesson objective	0 = Not true/not observed; 1 = True but mostly low quality; 2 = generally true; 3 consistently true

HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILLS (HOTS)

Meaningful learning in school contexts necessarily involves higher-order cognitive functions, particularly when the goal of instruction is to develop students' conceptual understanding within subject areas. Developing Higher-order cognitive functions requires teaching higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) to students. In Bloom's taxonomy, for example, skills involving analysis, evaluation, and synthesis are thought to be of a higher order, requiring different learning and teaching methods, than the learning of facts and concepts. HOTS involve the learning of complex skills of judgment such as critical thinking and problem solving. Critical thinking is the process of actively analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information gathered from a variety of sources, using a framework designed to lend structure and clarity to the thinking process.

One of the challenges when teaching critical thinking skills to ELs is helping them develop adequate background knowledge and adequate "cognitive" vocabulary to support this type of higher-order thinking. Cognitive vocabulary is more than abstract content vocabulary; it refers to the language that students must use to produce academic justifications and explanations. Such language includes **conceptual verbs** such as, *results in, leads to, consists of, demonstrates*, etc. Such language also includes **causal conjunctions or transitions** such as, *as a result, because, therefore*, and *consequently*.

The research is mixed when it comes to ELs. However, HOTS are included in the ELISR despite mixed results because of consistent findings in language learning. ELs who experience second-language learning primarily through rote exercises do not have sufficient opportunity to gain control of those language functions requiring abstract language or the language needed to complete tasks involving HOTS. For ELs, developing complex problem-solving skills while in the process of acquiring English requires making explicit the underlying reasoning in subject matter through input that transcends their second-language acquisition. To achieve such understanding, explicit links need to be made between targeted content and the practices and concepts of students' everyday experiences. That is, instruction should begin with students' existing cultural resources and academic understanding; these resources should be directly tied to the targeted concepts and skills to promote HOTS.

To examine HOTS with ELs in mind, the following instructional targets are evaluated:

- Instruction targets learning and use of "cognitive" vocabulary in support of higher order thinking Evidence of teacher emphasizing (causal) verbs and conjunctions during lesson delivery and classroom activities.
- Instruction targets development of analytical (deductive or inductive) thinking where students analyze, evaluate and/or explain information.
- Evidence of students' knowledge transfer through evaluating, analyzing, and explaining concepts using academic vocabulary.
- Instruction targets development of problem solving skills where students justify solutions, experiment, and/or improve solutions

Student's knowledge transfer in academic tasks is evident in classroom activities and discussions.

Additional Scoring Considerations

When evaluating this dimension, consider both what the teacher is doing and saying as well as what students are doing and saying, especially for the first descriptor as student use of cognitive vocabulary should be examined.

Note that to get credit for analysis, some form of evaluation or explanation should accompany the activity. Otherwise it's just an activity without substance. Similarly, to get credit for justification, it needs to be verbalized by the student. The verbalization is necessary to promote development.

Induction refers to exposure to numerous examples to find a pattern (qualitative) that can be translated into a rule (quantitative). The application of this rule in a new context is deduction. Thus, **deductive reasoning** begins with a general hypothesis (generalization) or known fact and creates a specific conclusion from that generalization. This is the opposite of inductive reasoning, which involves creating broad generalizations from specific observations. The basic idea of deductive reasoning is that if something is true of a class of things in general, this truth applies to all members of that class. One of the keys for sound deductive reasoning, then, is to be able to properly identify members of the class, because incorrect categorizations will result in unsound conclusions.

Further, improving solutions refers to revision of solutions students offer during lesson. This process is usually facilitated by teacher prompting and/or questioning to help students revise solution strategies and improve solutions.

Finally, not all three types of problem solving need to be present to get a high score. Consistent justifications of solutions or consistent experimentation, and improvement of solutions is sufficient. However, for experimentation to receive a high score, it too needs to be accompanied by justification or explanation of experimental decisions. Again otherwise it can result in trial an error that does not promote development of problem solving skills.

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

Differentiated instruction is the process of "ensuring that what a student learns, how he or she learns it, and how the student demonstrates what he or she has learned is a match for

that student's readiness level, interests, and preferred mode of learning."[1] Teachers can differentiate through four ways:

- **Content**: The content of lessons may be differentiated based on what students already know. When teachers differentiate content, they may adapt how the students will gain access to the knowledge, understanding, and skills. In these instances, educators are not varying student objectives or lowering performance standards for students. They use different texts, novels, or short stories at a reading level appropriate for each individual student. Teachers can use flexible groups and have students assigned to like groups listening to books on tape or accessing specific internet sources.

- **Process**: Differentiating by process refers to how a student comes to understand and assimilate facts, concepts and skills. The process of how the material in a lesson is learned may be differentiated for students based on their learning styles, taking into account what standards of performance are required for the age level. This stage of differentiation allows students to learn based either on what method is easiest for them to acquire knowledge, or what may challenge them most: some students may prefer to read about a topic (or may require practice in reading), and others may prefer to listen (or require practice in listening), or acquire knowledge by manipulating objects associated with the content. Information may be presented in multiple ways by the teacher. The main idea behind this is that students are at different levels and learn in different ways, so a teacher can't teach them all the same way.

  - After teaching a lesson, a teacher might break students into small "ability" groups based on their readiness. The teacher would then give each group a series of questions, based on each group's appropriate level of readiness-skills, related to the objectives of the lesson. Another way to group the students could be based on the students' learning styles.

- **Product**: The product is essentially what the student produces at the end of the lesson to demonstrate the mastery of the content: tests, evaluations, projects, reports, or other activities. Based on students' skill levels and educational standards, teachers may assign students to complete activities that demonstrate mastery of an educational concept (writing a report), or in a method the student prefers (composing an original song about the content, or building a 3-dimensional object that explains mastery of concepts in the lesson or unit). The product is an integral component of the differentiated model, as the preparation of the assessments will primarily determine both the 'what' and 'how' instruction will be delivered.

  - When an educator differentiates by product or performance, they are affording students various ways of demonstrating what they have learned from the lesson or unit. It is done by using menu unit sheets, choice boards or open-ended lists of final product options. It is meant to allow students to show what they learned based on their learning preferences, interests and strengths.

- **Learning Environment**: Differentiating through the environment refers to the extent to which the environment is positive, structured, and supportive for each student. The learning environment includes the physical layout of the classroom, the way that the teacher uses the space, environmental elements and sensitivities including lighting, as well as the overall atmosphere of the classroom. The physical environment should be a place that is flexible with varied types of furniture and arrangements, and areas for quiet individual work as well as areas for group work and collaboration. This supports a variety of ways to engage in flexible and dynamic learning.

[1] Ellis, E., Gable, R. A., Gregg, M., & Rock, M. L. (2008). REACH: A framework for differentiating classroom instruction. *Preventing School Failure, 52*(2), 31-47

Teachers should be sensitive and alert to ways in which the classroom environment supports students' ability to interact with others individually, in small groups, and as a whole class. They should employ classroom management techniques that support a safe and supportive learning environment.

The Differentiated Instruction dimension examines how teachers differentiate the following:

- The teacher differentiates according to language proficiency levels
- Differentiation targets the content of instruction.
  Teacher preparation is evident in questioning and multiple teaching approaches to content.
- Differentiation targets the process of learning and instruction.
  Evidence of differentiation is made visible in student grouping or by providing students with additional time to complete tasks.
- Differentiation targets the final products of the lesson
  According to student's needs, the teacher provides opportunities for various student products.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

An important contextual variable that modifies the instructional characteristics of schooling is the background of students in a particular classroom. Links to prior knowledge refers to how teachers tap students' prior knowledge of the targeted content. An important assumption one makes when examining how teachers tap into students' prior knowledge is the notion that teachers can mediate differences in cultural, linguistic, and content knowledge background through instructional modification and interaction. Targets for evaluation include:

- The teacher taps into prior knowledge of content.
  The teacher provides students with a connection to prior knowledge of content.
- The teacher relates targeted content to personal/cultural experience.
  There is evidence that content is tied to a concept with which students are familiar.
- The teacher incorporates activity/demonstration that builds background knowledge.
  Lesson activity is related to instruction. There are ample demonstrations and explanations provided by both the teacher and students.
- The teacher taps into prior knowledge of the language features required for the content/tasks.
  The teacher provides scaffolding for language, for example sentence stems, anchor charts, and word walls.

CURRICULUM ACCESS/SCAFFOLDED INSTRUCTION

A critical concern related to EL achievement is access to the same curriculum as their non-ELLs counterparts. Curriculum Access refers to approaches that have documented effectiveness in providing ELLs with increased access to the curriculum. Scaffolded Instruction is one such approach. Scaffolded instruction aims to assist students in accomplishing an instructional goal by adjusting the amount of support and assistance that is provided throughout various stages of instruction. Thus, scaffolding refers to the level of support provided to students to perform at the next level of understanding to ensure progress in learning and development. Although initially developed for general populations, there is evidence that it is a necessary initial step in developing ELs' language and content knowledge, especially if they are at the beginning levels of English

proficiency. Scaffolded instruction as applied to ELs is distinguished from knowledge development strategies because the emphasis is in segmenting information to students to increase access to the content. That is, early ELs require a great amount of scaffolding (particularly linguistic scaffolding) to benefit from content instruction.

The ELISR examines the following behaviors to represent (procedural) scaffolding:
This dimension needs to be directly linked to lesson objectives.

- The teacher models skills/strategies/concepts.
- Emphasizes distinctive features of new concepts/skills/strategies – e.g. provides examples and non-examples to illustrate new concepts.
- Provides previews or reviews to content vocabulary corresponding to lesson content.
- Breaks down targeted skills/strategies/concepts into smaller/simpler components.

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

Content Knowledge refers to instructional activities and teacher behaviors that foster development of deep understanding of the content. Organization of instruction around big ideas is featured in this dimension. Big ideas are highly selective concepts and principles that facilitate the most efficient and broadest acquisition of knowledge. Big ideas serve to link several different smaller ideas and strategies together within a content domain such as mathematics. They can be conceived as keys that unlock a content area for a broad range of diverse learners and are best demonstrated through examples alongside definitions. Big ideas facilitate student understanding by guiding student attention to key concepts and principles. The linkages and connections between math concepts are made explicit by linking previously learned big ideas to new concepts and problem solving situations. By emphasizing the big ideas in each lesson, teachers can build students' acquisition and use of key conceptual knowledge across content. The targeted instructional qualities of this dimension include:

- Instruction is organized around big ideas/concepts or themes.
- Activities make the conceptual relationship explicit for students.
- Teacher uses precise language and is free from content errors.

FEEDBACK

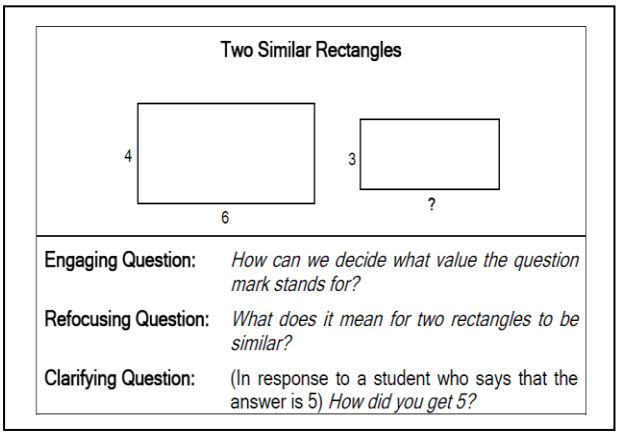
Feedback refers to informal interactions that provide teachers with information they can use to inform subsequent instruction aimed at deepening students' current understanding. For feedback to impact achievement it must be timely and it must be specific to the content being learned and the school's curriculum. The type and quality of feedback and assessment reveals consistency between instructional goals and desired student outcomes. Being able to clearly relay to students their progress toward learning objectives requires the teacher to (a) know the misconceptions students may hold related to the subject matter and (b) recognize constraints in students' linguistic repertoires that interact with their ability to articulate their understanding in expected ways. Thus, the ELISR examines each of the following feedback behaviors:

- Feedback to students corresponds to lesson objective.
  The teacher provides content specific feedback in a timely manner.
- Feedback to students corresponds to students' misconceptions related to lesson objective.
  The teacher provides specific feedback that corrects student's misconceptions on content.
- Feedback to students targets reasoning/thinking related to lesson objective
  The teacher provides students with opportunities to ask questions and feedback that helps them expand and elaborate their content knowledge.

QUESTIONING

Focusing instruction on big ideas and providing visual cues is necessary but insufficient to promoting conceptual understanding. It also requires ongoing monitoring of student understanding of those big ideas. Questioning and modeling of expert cognitive processes (through language moves) are two strategies for monitoring and fostering this type of understanding. Using different kinds of questions for different purposes can help differentiate instruction by tailoring instruction to the specific needs of students. Three types of questions that are particularly suited for both monitoring conceptual understanding and increasing the proportion of students who remain engaged in conversations about important lesson ideas. These question types include: (1) engaging questions, (2) refocusing questions, and (3) clarifying questions.

- **Engaging questions** invite students into discussion, keep them engaged in conversation, invite them to share their work, or get answers "on the table." Usually directed at the whole class at the start of a discussion, engaging questions are open-ended with multiple acceptable answers. They can also be used to re-engage students who may have "tuned-out."



- **Refocusing questions** serve to get students back on track or to move away from a dead-end strategy. For long-term learning it is generally ineffective to simply tell students what to do differently when they are going in the wrong direction. Doing so constitutes substituting the teacher's thinking for students' thinking, which does not help students understand why the strategy is ineffective or reorganize their thinking so that the use of the ineffective strategy is minimized. Refocusing questions remind students about some important aspect of a problem they may be overlooking.

- **Clarifying (probing) questions** help students explain their thinking or help the teacher understand their thinking. Clarifying questions can be used when: (a) a teacher is fairly certain that a student understands an idea but the language used to explain that thinking is not clear or precise; or (b) a teacher needs to reveal more about a student's thinking to make sense of it.

The ELISR targets the following questioning behaviors:

- Questioning invites students into discussion –to conjecture, hypothesize, or reason about math or science.

- Questioning allows students to reflect on the thinking involved in solving problems, such as discussion of incorrect answers.
- Questioning refocuses students' attention to important content, strategy use, or pattern/rule recognition.
- Adequate wait time is provided for students to respond to questions.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment refers to informal interactions and formal methods of soliciting student understanding that provide teachers with information they can use to inform subsequent instruction aimed at deepening students' current understanding. While questioning is a strategy for teachers to solicit information from students, assessment refers to teacher's judgment of the students responses to teacher questions and probes. Assessment also refers to formal procedures for monitoring student understanding. As such, the ELISR targets the following assessment behaviors:

- Monitors student understanding/performance during lesson.
  The teacher actively monitors student understanding through questioning, feedback and clarification of content.
- Monitors student understanding/performance after lesson.
  The teacher monitors student performance through formative assessments.
- Monitors whether individual students have accomplished the lesson objective.
  Student performance is periodically checked throughout the lesson by the teacher.

MEANINGFUL PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES (GROUP/PAIR WORK)

The nature of communication between teacher and students and among students is critical for second-language learning, given the positive relationship between oral language and achievement. Students benefit from opportunities to talk about the content by increasing understanding of that content, as well as control of the linguistic structures needed to convey such understanding. The use of collaborative groups is one method for providing opportunities for extended discourse. There are numerous studies citing the effectiveness of small collaborative group work for all students. This method appears to be particularly useful for improving achievement of ELs, provided group work is centered on meaningful activity. Effective group work has important advantages over whole-class work for second-language learning in that there is further input and practice in genuine communication compared with whole-class contexts in which it is much more usual for the teacher to ask the questions, and in which students are often required to answer only for the purpose of showing what they know. The ELISR targets the following practice opportunities:

- Provides opportunities for meaningful practice in pairs or small groups
  Students are provided with activities that enhance content understanding through pairs or small groups.
- Provides opportunities for independent practice on meaningful tasks.
  Students are provided with independent practice that enhances their content understanding.
- Group/Pair tasks are designed to target both language and content goals.
  The teacher needs to mention both language and content goals during lesson delivery.

SHELTERED TECHNIQUES

Sheltered techniques refer to instructional approaches and strategies that utilize second-language acquisition strategies in content area instruction. Specifically, this approach highlights the use of language and context to make information comprehensible. One underlying premise of sheltered instruction is the use of comprehensible input, which refers to the idea that second-language acquisition is optimized when language input is comprehensible to the language learner. That is, if language input contains forms and structures just beyond the learner's current level of proficiency in the language, then both comprehension and acquisition will occur. Following this reasoning, language input that is well above or well below the learner's current level of proficiency restricts the development of the second language.

The ELISR targets the following sheltered techniques:

- Teacher adjusts vocabulary and syntax instruction to students' proficiency level.
  The teacher adjusts vocabulary, uses words familiar to students, and avoids confusing language.
- Teacher adjusts rate of speech to students' proficiency level.
  The teacher paces lesson delivery and places emphasis on words according to student proficiency.
- Teacher purposefully models expressive fluent speech.
  The teacher uses complete sentences and enunciates words.
- Teacher uses materials and redundant cues to clarify and illustrate concepts, such as pictures, photos, tactile, and graphic organizers.
  The teacher provides a variety of materials to clarify content.
- Teacher accepts student responses in L1.
  There is evidence that the teacher accepts student's responses in their first language.