



Robert Collins, Superintendent

Annette Star, Literacy Coordinator

District 1... where students come first!

Expert Advice

We recently became acquainted with the English Learner Support Guide at an all-day training at the beautiful downtown Omni Hotel. The day was intense, but the main theme was that the development of rich academic language (knowledge) is critical for all students, especially English learners, to learn to read and write well. The training addresses an important component of English language instruction, providing access to the reading/language arts program, but not replacing the ELD program.

Our ultimate goal is to develop competence in the functions, form and vocabulary of English and to provide many opportunities to develop oral and written fluency. "Functions" refers to the tasks or purposes and uses of language. Students need to understand that there is a type of language used in social purposes (expressing needs and wants, exchanging greetings, telling jokes and stories, engaging in personal conversation) and also academic purposes (seeking or relating information, compare/contrast, identify cause and effect, draw conclusions, summarize, conduct research or persuade). "Forms" refers to grammatical features, word usage and vocabulary. It was pointed out that a rich and varied vocabulary is needed to be a fully proficient English speaker and writer. This includes learning words that are "brick" (vocabulary specific to topic) and "mortar" (basic and general utility words required when using certain sentence structures).



Noble Avenue ES has developed a very useful plan. A ladder of ELD folders is mounted in each classroom. Clothespins with the students' names on them are attached to the folder and moved from level to level as a child masters the standards. Every child knows exactly what is expected to improve. In addition, the IWT chart illustrates the components of each phase with **Must Do** and **May Do** activities.

Many of the teachers have commented on the usefulness of these visuals, because a quick glance at the charts reminds them of which students need specific instruction during IWT.

As we look forward to our continued training in the use of the English Learner Support

Guide, what are we hoping to achieve? The goal is to learn an approach to "frontloading" language in exciting ways. It is so very important to realize the distinction between simply teaching *in* English and effectively *teaching* English as a second language. Our students need opportunities for both oral and written language practice and we will hopefully learn many new strategies to support them in our classrooms.

From your experts,
Aviva, Cecilia, Gayle, Helen & Joanne

What's Happening At Your School?

**And They Say There Is No Creativity in OCR...
Take A Look At This!**

With planning, preparation, and imagination, the 5th grade teachers at Capistrano brought the "Heritage" unit to life. Students and teachers kicked off the Opener with artifacts and activities abounding. All fifth graders met in the auditorium to engage in meaningful theme-related activities. At one area, students were given artifacts from all over the world to look at and determine where they came from, sparking students' curiosity. At another center, music was the universal language where students learned folk dances from France, Israel, and the Philippines. Others shared the excitement of testing their knowledge of a foreign language by playing a Spanish language Bingo game.



The remaining center provided an opportunity for students to locate the flag of their country of heritage and replicate it onto art paper.

This is undoubtedly what a Unit Opener is all about – creative, exciting and engaging. An opportunity for students to publicly share their personal experiences, deepen their knowledge of the theme, explore unit concepts, and trigger curiosity

and a thirst for learning which led to the development of concepts and questions to investigate throughout the unit.

Congratulations to 5th Grade Teachers – Veronica Allen, Fred Alvarez, and Mark Van Dam, and Literacy Coach, Arlene Cowen.

(Contributed by Arlene Cowen)





As we visit schools throughout the local district, we are frequently asked what we are looking for when we visit classrooms. And, of course, there isn't a quick answer or even one answer. For me, as coach coordinator, visiting classrooms keeps me grounded. It allows me to develop a big picture of the implementation level at an individual school and across the local district. Observations in many classrooms across the local district help us identify common issues, problems and concerns that assist in planning the professional development for our coaches. In addition to what we gain from our site visits, we hope that we provide "outside eyes" to assist and support coaches and administrators in their work at the school. It provides an opportunity to assess school needs and suggest any resources we can provide to the school.

On a positive note, we are way past looking to see if sound/spelling cards and Concept Question Boards are up. When I walk into a room, I quickly orient myself -- grade level, unit, general room environment. Then I watch the lesson that is being taught. Is it obvious, without referring to the teacher's guide or lesson plan, the intended student learning of the lesson? Is it a first or second read? Are students reading chorally? Is it the first day of a vocabulary lesson or a subsequent lesson? Are the students engaged? Is it evident that IWT/Workshop is happening daily? Are workbook pages being taught with direct instruction or are students being asked to complete workbooks independently? Is standards-based student writing apparent, and is it coherent throughout a grade level? Is the work current? Are criteria charts and rubrics being used for major assignments, and do students receive explicit feedback as to how they can improve their writing? Is it evident that teachers have modeled the writing process for the children? Are the classroom walls reflective of authentic student generated work or filled with store bought posters? Are teachers utilizing all the resources in the *Open Court Reading* program or using outside materials? Are decodable books being used appropriately? Are students practicing fluency at their independent level or is the entire class reading the same passage? Are students involved in the exploration/research for the unit? Again, depending on the lesson that is occurring, the questions I ask myself vary.

But even beyond good instruction, what is the level of questioning, student response and engagement? I recently had the opportunity to see Charlie Rose speak at the Walt Disney Center. As a master interviewer, he talked about those powerful questions that he asks and how he aims to engage each person being interviewed so that they get beyond any canned answers that they had prepared. He shared that his best interviews are those in which the person interviewed is so involved in the conversation and so passionate about the topic that he/she forgets that it is an interview. He also talks about how he loves to be "surprised" by what someone has to say.

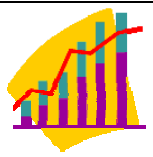
Making the connection between asking good questions and engagement in an interview and the classroom, I think that one of the things that make a classroom visit truly memorable is seeing children deeply engaged in a discussion about what they are learning, making connections across stories and units, and asking and answering questions in reflective ways. And those very special moments come when children "surprise" us with the depth and creativity of their thinking. It is those classrooms that are truly so "magical" that we don't want to leave.

Thank you to all the District One Coaches and Teachers that create those special moments for our children each and every day.

TOBI'S TIPS



Unit 2 Data Speaks to Us
Writing Up, Fluency Down



Data not only drives instruction, it also drives the coaches' job. Results provide insight into teachers' successful instruction and areas where we need to carefully examine our instructional practices. "Is there a better, more effective way to use instructional time?" we need to continually ask. The Unit 2 data indicates that fluency scores in most grade levels have reached a plateau or have decreased. It is our job to look deeply to determine why this has happened. Are students failing to achieve benchmark scores because of poor decoding skills? Do all students know the picture, sound, and spelling(s) of the Sound Spelling cards? Are there opportunities in the classroom for repeated reading? Have the students been practicing fluency **at their own reading level**? Are the decodable books being used to apply, review, and reinforce the phonic elements? Is "partner reading" evident and a regular practice in the classroom? Can all students fluently read the nondecodable sight words? Is IWT, small group instruction, in place and supported by differentiated instruction? These are only some of the questions we need to ask ourselves and our staffs as we analyze data, visit classrooms, hold grade level meetings, and present professional development pieces. We know that fluency is not all about reading fast. It is the effortless ability to read or access words with seemingly little attention to decoding. It also involves grouping words into meaningful units and using expression appropriately or prosody. Fluency is critical in the development of comprehension and the development of successful readers.

PERSONALS

(...about baby rattles and wedding bells)

Congratulations...

- ... to second-time Mommy, **Dayna Leo**, of *Serrania ES*, for giving birth to baby Jillian Michelle in early March.
- ... to **Eliza Parker** of *Superior ES*, who also delivered a baby girl recently.
- ... to another expectant mother, **Rocio Serna** of *Liggett ES*, who will be delivering her baby very soon.
- ...to **Annette Star**, Literacy Coordinator, for the birth of her 4th grandchild.
- ... to **Patty Sonnabend** of *Encino ES*, who recently wed long-time beau, Michael Kort.
- ...to **Helen Kim**, District I Reading Specialist, and **Kathy Frank** of *Bassett ES*, for their upcoming weddings.



Happy Birthday
February & March



2/3	Sussy Cordano	3/1	Patty O'Hearn
2/8	Rosa Acosta-Gonzales	3/3	Cindy Fagin
2/11	Nancy Fradin	3/3	Fern Capeloto
2/14	Polly Westfall	3/4	Kirk Nascimento
2/18	Helen Kim	3/18	Kathy Frank
2/27	Rachel Pokorski	3/20	Cathy Altuvilla
2/28	Shelly Brower	3/22	Susie Weinstock