Focus: Designated English Language Development for English Learners at the Secondary Level

VOICES FROM THE FIELD
Supporting English Learners at the Secondary Level:
Creating Meaningful Distance Learning Experiences to Build Community, Trust, Hope, Language, and Literacy

Research on adolescent English Learners' language and literacy development has begun shifting from an English-only and deficit perspective towards a more assets-based approach. Charlene Fried puts into practice the research-based California ELA/ELD Framework for grades 9-12 to support her students' language and disciplinary learning in meaningful ways. "English learners in grades nine through twelve explain ideas, phenomena, processes, and relationships within and across texts, explaining inferences and conclusions" (p674).

As former California Association of Bilingual Education and National Association of Bilingual Education Teacher of the Year, Charlene Fried has dedicated her life to advancing the success of her high school EL students. This 2020-2021 school year will be historic and not like any Charlene nor any of us have experienced before. We anticipate teaching fully online, with specific guidance on synchronous and asynchronous instructional minutes required by grade level from the California Department of Education. When Baldwin Park Unified School District published the class schedule indicating which days synchronous/live teaching would take place, Wednesdays are signaled as primarily asynchronous with a one hour window for "office" hours." Charlene drew from her many years of teaching as well as the experiences from the prior semester's online teaching experiences to create a flexible distance learning teaching schedule.

"We need to find ways to break down the screen that can separate us; this screen does not have to limit, separate or confine us from each other."

Charlene builds on her students' assets and makes linguistically informed instructional decisions. She shares several key approaches and projects to develop "listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities" while simultaneously fostering creativity and formal public speaking.

Listen to your students to develop caring relationships.
In addition to live daily instruction, she holds individual, daily synchronous office hours to meet with her students (and their parents) who can't attend daytime classes. In the community where she teaches, many of her students hold jobs to support their families, a reality that has become even more dire during these trying times. Her students also share devices with their parents and siblings, and internet access is sketchy. Recounting the early days of the shift to distance learning, Charlene tells the story of Roberto (pseudonym), a senior who would be graduating in June 2020, but who was not attending online classes. She called his and other students' parents and eventually found out that he had returned to Mexico to work. *"It took me 2 weeks to find Roberto, but when I did he told me that 'I needed to go back to work to put food on my [single] mother's table'."* A daily practice for every class session is to make time to get to know each of her students to understand what is important and meaningful to them.

Scaffold Language and Literacy in Meaningful Ways.
To begin each school year, Charlene normally asks students to draw their body parts and interview each other to "speak through" their peers. The Human X-Ray Profile Project was adapted to the COVID-19 context. These are a form of empathy Interviews from which drawings such as the one Hanna (see Figure 1) drew became the starting point from which to support English oral language and literacy development. These visual representations were used to bridge into writing a composite quote that summarizes the effects of Covid-19 on their lives which then becomes a thesis statement for their essays. To acknowledge the linguistic and cultural resources of her students, especially her newcomers, the essays could be written in Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese or Tagalog (her students' primary languages). The writing process would then move towards English by using tools such as Google Translate along with other tools.
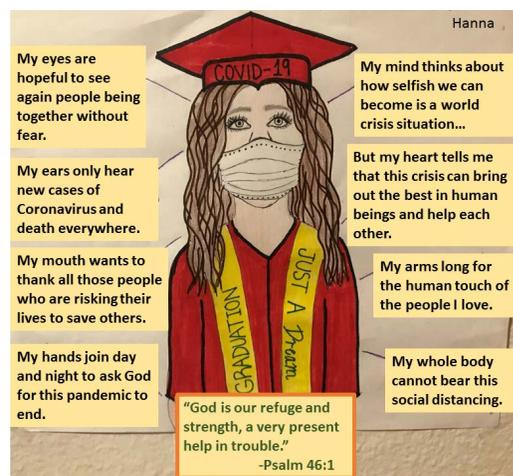

Figure 1: The Human Drawing/ X-Ray Profile Project: Hanna's Human Drawing

Connect with content teachers to bolster academic language and literacy development.
By collaborating with her English Language Arts (ELA) and other content area teachers, Charlene leverages engagement in her school's Professional Learning Communities and intentionally plans for her Designated ELD. She also meets with math and science teachers to identify key vocabulary and concepts to support the students that they share. Building from the Human X-Ray Profile Project, she scaffolds her students' character analysis skills in complex texts from their ELA classes. Students apply the pattern (My eyes see, my ears hear, etc.) to analyze evidence from fiction and non-fiction texts for characters. For example, this was done with one of the core texts for 10th grade EL, Things Fall Apart by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe.

Figure 2: The Super Hero Project:
Irish May's Super Doctor

Build on students' strengths to foster creativity.
The Super Hero Project is an empathy building set of activities which follows the pattern of imagining how we can combat the virus by creating a character and describing her/his attributes. Irish May creates Dr. Super Doctor with the student's choice of materials.

Presentations of work products are also conducted through the Academy Awards Activity, where students work in small groups (breakout rooms) to create a Quickwrite/Quick Share-Tell. They then interview each other with agreed-upon criteria to select a winner and present the award for the best story in the main room. Students are assigned roles, including a Master of Ceremonies, who presents the Award to the Winner, who then delivers a short acceptance speech.

Charlene's innovative approaches provide our ELs with ways to connect during these very challenging times as they continue on their journey towards English language acquisition and content area knowledge. *"We want our students to create rather than consume, and invent rather than mimic. They are the ones who will shape our world as they find ways to end this pandemic and promote peace and justice for all."*
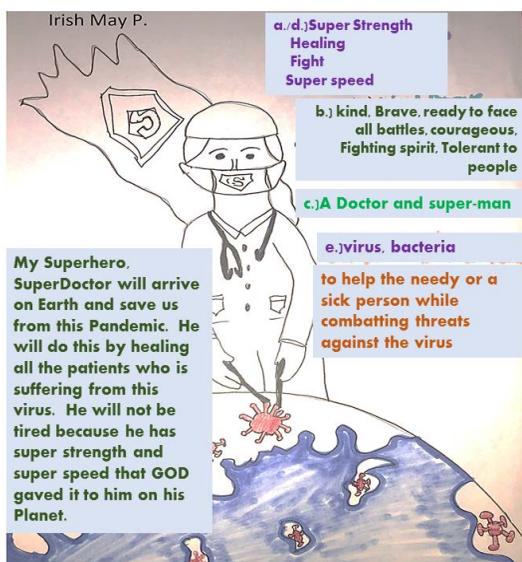
Human X-Ray
Content Connection
To view this activity,
click **here.**

- **Social Science :** Political Figures, Historical Figures, Philosophers, etc. (Pancho Villa: His eyes see the injustice. His heart bleeds for the working-class people in Mexico. His knees refuse to bend to the people who are oppressing his people. His feet march onward, to liberate his people...).
- **Math:** Famous Mathematicians; Equations, etc.
- **English Literature:** Characters, Authors
- **Science:** Famous Scientists, Living Cell, DNA, etc.
- Students can also compare and contrast after they have created their figures (ex: Stalin vs another historical figure).

Superhero Project Goals
To view this activity,
click **here.**

- **Vocabulary**
- **Grammar**
- **Conversation**
- **Comprehension**
- **Creativity**

Note: This is meant to be a fun and creative project where students can express themselves. This project makes an easy transition from your traditional classroom to your distance learning online classroom.

Academy Awards
Content Connection
To view this activity,
click **here.**

- **Math:** solve a word problem; tell a story while solving a problem
- **Science:** predict the results of an experiment/create a hypothesis
- **English/Spanish/Mandarin:** write a summary, reflection, argument, character analysis
- **Art:** analyze a work of art
- **PE:** reflect on a game
- **History:** analyze a historical event, write about a political decision, write about an historical event that still impacts us today, etc.