



GET READY!

PHILOSOPHY AND RESEARCH

Get Ready! is based on scientifically-proven language pedagogy which drives the instruction. Students are at the center of every conversation, and every component of the program. The curriculum is built on specialized knowledge necessary for working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners, the assets they bring into the classroom, and the unique academic challenges they face. Unlike programs that retrofit for English learners or take an existing program and aim to align it to standards that do not truly drive its pedagogy, *Get Ready!* operates in a distinct manner. *Get Ready!* is written exclusively for English learners (ELs) who are identified as Newcomers, as well as students designated at Entering or Emerging levels (per WIDA or other ELD language assessments). Consistent and special attention is devoted to Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE), as well as dually identified students with disabilities. Every lesson in every unit contains differentiation offerings scaffolded for students who need additional support, as well as amplification for students who would benefit from additional challenges and rigor (including gifted learners). The differentiation notes are neither cursory nor general. Instead, they address concrete ways teachers can meet the needs of ELs across the range of abilities within and across proficiency levels and language domains (reading, writing, speaking, listening). EL instruction is supported and designed specifically to advance ELs' knowledge and use of English—moving from survival language in school and life to a level of proficiency that maximizes their capacity to engage successfully in academic studies taught in English.

All components of *Get Ready!* frame the education of English Learners from an assets-based perspective. This approach focuses on student strengths. It views diversity in thought, culture, and traits as positive assets.

Research Background

Language Learning in *Get Ready!*

The foundational research on language indicates that there is a distinction between acquiring a language and learning it (Krashen, 1982). ELs acquire their native language in natural ways through the unconscious process of communicating with their families and communities. When children are acquiring language, their parent or caretaker does not pause to explain a grammatical point or overtly note the phonetic pronunciation of a word. Instead, he or she address the linguistic development in authentic and natural ways.

In contrast, when learning a new language, students must learn about structure, pronunciation, and usage. In a classroom setting, there are complex emotional and motivational factors that come into play as students strive to develop language. Krashen (1982) referred to this as the “affective filter.” When the affective filter is high, students may experience anxiety, self-consciousness, boredom, annoyance, or even alienation. When the affective filter is low, students experience less anxiety and are actively

engaged and comfortable in the learning environment. *Get Ready!* is structured to create environmental and pedagogical supports that engage ELs in the simultaneous learning of language and content in a comfortable and welcoming manner. Meaningful tasks are posed in inviting ways that purposely engage students in learning to speak, listen, read, and write in English—at levels that challenge them while offering support.

Language Interaction in the Classroom

The work of Vygotsky (1978) has long served as a foundation for much of the research and theory on language development in the classroom. He believed strongly in the role of social interaction in the development of cognition and language. Notably, the importance of multiple exposures and meaningful interactions with language is key. Students cannot learn a language through rote memorization and have it be preserved or applied in any meaningful way. Instead, repeated exposure through multiple opportunities is crucial. Further, Bruner’s (1977) work also emphasizes the importance of revisiting concepts and ideas. He notes that learning requires a continual deepening of understanding in progressively more complex ways. *Get Ready!* contains multiple opportunities for repeated interaction in pairs, small groups, and whole groups. Vocabulary and concepts are revisited and spiraled throughout the book.

Building upon the foundational research and translating it into progressive applications shows that language instruction has evolved. Stanford’s *Understanding Language* initiative (2012), commissioned papers from EL experts on language and instruction with regard to today’s standards-driven education. Some key points include:

- Instead of teaching language in isolation, language teaching is now embedded in the discipline with a focus on task, purpose, and audience. (See Academic Vocabulary section.)
- Instead of exclusively pre-teaching all content, activities that build on students’ background knowledge and that scaffold both content and language development are key.
- Instead of language being an individual process, a purposefully structured, socially engaged process that focuses on collaboration in learning content and language is effective.
- Instead of mastery and accuracy being the immediate goal, it is now recognized that language development is a complicated, nonlinear process. The focus is on comprehension and communication. (Walqui, 2012)

Scaffolded Instruction

Systemic supports are needed in order to support the complex, nonlinear process of language learning. Scaffolded Instruction is a method in which the educator supports students at a level just beyond where they are able to achieve on their own. Vygotsky (1978) called this the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD). Educators can construct classrooms where students build on prior knowledge and connect to new information. Current research building upon the ZPD emphasizes the importance of scaffolds across the language domains. For example, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) Center for English Language Learners (2018) recently disseminated research noting that scaffolding is crucial in language acquisition and literacy. Some key findings include:

- Academic conversations can support listening and speaking skills. A proven technique is adding visuals, gestures, and examples to explain word meanings.

- Previewing and reviewing texts can support comprehension. Introducing the text (via the title, cover, illustrations, or added visual representations) can help students engage with the text. Reviewing affords ELs the opportunity to make learning more internalized.
- Teachers should engage students in oral discussion about texts to serve as precursors to writing.
- Graphic organizers, sentence frames, and paragraph frames can provide scaffolds for written academic text.

Get Ready! incorporates the foundational research and progressive models designed to meet the needs of today's culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The research is translated into strategies that function in a cohesive manner, focusing on the desired result of increased English language development.

Based on that foundational research, the structure of lessons in each unit is consistent. This is important for ELs to know what to anticipate.

Explore and Learn. Each lesson begins with an open exploration. This is an initial engagement where students preview visuals, essential questions, activities, and text. Students are asked to share what they know (e.g., about the theme, concept, vocabulary etc.). Vocabulary is cued, but not pre-taught out of context, as the development of schema is necessary for language to be retained and meaningful. After the exploration, there is direct instruction of the standards-based topic.

Practice Following the exploration and explicit teaching, students have many opportunities to interact with language across the domains (listening, speaking, reading and writing activities) in a guided manner followed by a gradual release.

Communicate Students then have multiple opportunities to reiterate their learning with partners, in small groups and independently. Listening, speaking, reading and writing activities reinforce the learning. The activities include differentiation.

Assess Each lesson includes a formative assessment so that teachers can gauge progress in real-time and then respond to individual student needs.

References:

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