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FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Academic English Strategies in the Upper Grades

Los Angeles • April 2007

Topic: Teaching Literacy in English to K-5 English Learners

Practice: Develop Academic English

Highlights

- A daily language review presents two sentences each morning that students have to correct, increasing their sensitivity to grammatically correct speech and writing.
- A daily math problem provides an opportunity to review previously taught mathematical concepts and language.
- Incorporating English language development in arts enrichment activities develops students' ability to use English for a wide range of purposes.

About the Site

Cahuenga Elementary School (K-5)

Los Angeles, CA

Demographics

64% Hispanic, 35% Asian

70% English Language Learners

81% Free or reduced-price lunch

Cahuenga provides bilingual instruction in Spanish-English and Korean-English in a four-track, year-round school. Distinctive features of the school include the following:

- A strong core reading program; also arts, music
- Regular formative assessment; database support
- Emphasis on standards; ongoing cross-grade teacher collaboration
- Teaching writing, with use of rubrics, starting in kindergarten
- Multiple forms of peer interaction
- Stable leadership; strong learning community

Full Transcript

There is a book that we use every day called the Daily Language Review, and it has helped tremendously, both with their speaking and their writing grammar. Every day there are two sentences within the five sample questions that they do, and they are written grammatically incorrect. Some of them are just missing quotation marks, missing periods, but some of them have the wrong tense of the word; they have a subject-verb that don't agree. In the beginning of the year, a lot of the students spoke that way. They didn't speak grammatically correctly, and when they would read the sentence, they wouldn't see anything wrong with it. As we went through, and they could hear the correct way of saying it, now when they do these two sentences, almost every day everyone gets them correct, and it's just the practice of hearing them incorrectly, and then hearing the correct way, and they are able to correct themselves now, and when they speak, they speak grammatically correct sentences.

In the morning, the first thing that we do is that Daily Language Review and a math "problem of the day." Both of those require the students to write complete answers, complete sentences, and use the math vocabulary that they've learned maybe a week ago, a month ago, six months ago. The questions change every day. It could have been something we learned the first week of school; it could be something we learned yesterday.

In the upper grades (fourth and fifth grades), there are so many vocabulary words that they need to know, and it builds. It just keeps building on from what they learned in the beginning, so those words become part of their conversation. They get used to using those words.

There are really just so many things that they get to do here that I don't know if they would ever have the chance to experience at other schools. My students this year are involved in drama classes. They're involved in music classes, visual arts classes. They've got artists from the museum coming to teach them about art history. They take dance classes. They're in the orchestra. There is just so much that they do throughout the day that they are just engulfed in so much. All these different activities really help their English because they are using different forms of the English language. Sometimes they are using artistic words. Sometimes they are using dramatic words that, you know, sometimes kids don't hear until college or taking some sort of drama class when they are adults. They are using musical words. My class got a chance to go see the philharmonic play, and some of them who are in the orchestra were able to teach the other students about the different instruments, the conductor, what a composer is. So these are all different things that not only the instructors and the teachers are able to help the kids with, but the kids are able to teach each other.