



Best Practices for Teaching English Language Learners



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Introduction

This guide includes general information and ideas to utilize or modify Quaver lessons to help teachers reach English Language Learners.

The goal for teaching all English Language Learners (ELLs) is to help them achieve comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing competence in the English language. The requirements to meet the needs of language acquisition are consistent with many good teaching methods that most teachers already utilize daily.

The ELL classroom environment should be language-rich, always supporting the language development of students using realia (*real objects or pictures of real objects*), manipulatives, graphs, models, visual aids, and technology. Using QuaverMusic.com and the Quaver Curriculum readily addresses the classroom needs of ELLs and makes the music classroom environment language-rich. The Quaver Curriculum avidly supports ELLs in gaining English language skills in a fun way that supports the overall goal of comprehending, speaking, reading, and writing proficiently in English. In fact, the Quaver Curriculum is already in use in many districts that are overwhelmingly populated with English Language Learners.

Quaver contributions to teaching ELL education:

1. **Keyword Glossary**

To help teach important music vocabulary in English and their native language, the Quaver Curriculum includes a glossary of translated keywords in Spanish, French, and Haitian Creole. Keywords are featured in each lesson and easily accessible in the printable glossary.



2. **Closed Captioning**

Short segments of video content are used throughout the curriculum to engage students and reinforce concepts introduced by the teacher. To make these segments more accessible to ELL students, we've included Closed Captioning settings in both English and Spanish.

3. **Customization Capabilities**

As an educator, you are the expert on your classroom. Our curriculum is completely customizable and allows you to adjust lessons to meet your needs, and the needs of your students. Teacher notes throughout the curriculum offer suggestions like:

- turn an activity into group work so ELLs can work with peer buddies or collaborate with classmates
- shorten a lesson altogether or adjust assignment expectations to give ELLs more time
- use manipulatives or printables to offer another example of a concept
- create alternate assessments for ELLs

In addition to this functionality, Quaver's Beyond Marvelous Curriculum integrates common best practices for teaching ELLs

Best Practices for teaching ELLs in the General Music Class

The 14 best practices for ELLs discussed below are adapted from MusicEd.nafme.org (National Association for Music Education), citing articles in General Music Today, Winter 2007 & January 2011.

1. **Create a Low Risk Environment that is Safe and Nurturing**

Quaver's Seriously Fun approach to learning allows children to relax, laugh, and feel safe in tackling new learning challenges. Students learn without



even realizing it because they are having so much fun. This makes a potentially-intimidating music class into a low-risk environment for the ELL where learning is safe and students feel nurtured and therefore more willing to take risks.

2. Be Patient

Listening is the first step in comprehension. Students often understand what is being said to them in English before they can formulate a spoken response. It may take ELLs months or more to comfortably and confidently sing a song in English with the class. Yet, each time the teacher exposes the student to English, that student is gaining skills and confidence in the language.

3. Talk Less

Talking is a necessary skill for any educator! When working with ELLs, however, it is more beneficial to be concise and specific. Give short, clear directions with abundant visual and body language cues. For example, when giving the direction to stand or sit, show the students visually by standing up or sitting down while saying the words. Visuals used in the Quaver Curriculum include very clear and concise verbiage and are filled with graphic cues and examples.

4. Allow More Wait Time

Teachers must consider the language processing of a non-native English speaker. First, the student must hear what is said in English, translate that into their native language, formulate an answer in their native language, and finally translate that native thought back into English. What a feat! Allowing additional time for ELLs to formulate a response will increase the probability that they will participate in the conversation.

Prior to class time, teachers can use Quaver's customization tools to tailor the lesson to a specific class's needs. Even during class, teachers can easily adapt and navigate among lesson elements, allowing them to present material at a slower pace or in a different order for ELLs while still meeting the lesson's objectives.



5. **Incorporate Visual Aids**

Engaging all the senses in learning a language is key to success. A visual aid crosses the language barrier and allows ELLs to identify with the object or idea in their own language before attempting to understand it in English. This is an important step on the way to achieving the goal of language competence.

As a completely digital resource, the Quaver Curriculum is able to leverage the most advanced technology to bring visual aids to life in every lesson, including: illustrated lyric pages, animated songs, rich illustrations, visual representations of key terms, scores that highlight in time with the music, animated solfège and recorder demonstrations, and much more. Students are sure to remember the vivid visual aids in the Quaver Curriculum.

6. **Use Gestures and Facial Expressions**

Like visual aids, teachers can use gestures and facial expressions to communicate with students of any language. The energetic character Quaver, who appears in instructional videos throughout the Curriculum, makes ample use of gestures and facial expressions to convey meaning. Students and teachers alike identify with this approach and can't help but respond to and emulate his enthusiasm.

Teachers using the Quaver Curriculum can easily build on this foundation, and employ the same technique to reach their ELL students. The accompanying teaching notes for each lesson also offer suggestions for using gestures and facial expressions.

7. **Repeat Songs and Activities**

Repetition is a key tool in helping ELLs to internalize English language comprehension. Quaver's memorable songs, activities, and other learning devices can be revisited often to reinforce key concepts and vocabulary. Quaver has a knack for making repetition fun, not tedious. Plus, not only do students get the opportunity to practice their skills in a safe class environment, but the language and concepts being repeated will also likely be rehearsed internally throughout the rest of the student's daily activities.



8. **Provide Opportunities to Demonstrate Understanding in Creative Ways**

One way to measure ELLs comprehension of English lyrics is through storyboarding or illustrating certain phrases. This will encourage practice, recall, and proficiency, and demonstrate comprehension of the lyrics being learned. Each song in Quaver's ClassPlay library includes lyrics accompanied by descriptive illustrations to prompt students to remember the words. Other lesson activities include fun listening maps, writing exercises, and opportunities for students to write their own lyrics to familiar tunes. These activities help teachers strengthen vocabulary and understanding in ELLs.

9. **Incorporate Movement**

Gestures, motions, and movements also help students focus on word meanings and make them more willing to sing. Encourage students to create their own movements to music. The songs in the Quaver Curriculum lend themselves very naturally to movement, and some even include movement instructions in the lyrics. Additionally, there are suggested movements incorporated in the lesson teacher notes where appropriate.

10. **Use Cooperative Learning Strategies**

Especially with older students, employing cooperative learning while strategically matching students (most proficient language abilities with less proficient) will help with English language acquisition for students of varying levels. These interactions improve the skills of each student, foster a trusting peer relationship, and produce confident language role models. Cooperative learning creates leadership opportunities that bolster self-esteem. The Quaver Curriculum utilizes cooperative strategies in multiple lessons throughout the program, from short in-class activities to long-term group projects.

11. **Rephrase Vocabulary Terms**

Learning vocabulary is important to comprehension of any subject. The Quaver Curriculum goes beyond learning new terms by rote and includes fun illustrations, mnemonics, and associations to increase comprehension. Vocabulary words are presented in a variety of ways throughout lessons, and students are encouraged to use the new terminology in subsequent



activities. Key terms and concepts are explored throughout each Quaver lesson, not just reviewed at the end. This improves learning retention and student comprehension of terms and concepts.

12. Recognize the Student's Native Language and Celebrate their Culture

Using examples of the native culture of an ELL (as well as examples from other cultures) fosters a positive learning environment. Teachers can research folk songs, singing games, nursery rhymes, and children's literature from the specific native language and culture of students in his/her class. Recognize and celebrate nuances of the student's native culture as often as possible.

The Quaver Curriculum includes many well-researched and well-represented examples of world music and culture from across the globe. Students have the opportunity to sing songs in other languages and to see translations of the lyrics. In doing so they also learn about other cultures and traditions.

13. Reinforce Vocabulary Using Word Walls

One of the biggest obstacles to learning a new language is also one of the most important aspects: learning the vocabulary. Vocabulary is the key that opens the door of understanding, but it takes a lot of practice to retain. Word walls or living walls are a great tool to remind teachers and students alike to practice their vocabulary terms. Each time a new word is learned add it to the wall, perhaps with a picture or other definition to enhance retention and recall. Choose a creative way to group the words together – alphabetically, by topic, or sequence learned – to enhance comprehension in different dimensions. The Quaver Curriculum includes printable vocabulary terms with and without illustrations and provides a perfect springboard for creating your own word walls.

14. Explain Figurative Language, Including Jargon, Slang, Jokes, etc.

Colloquialisms, slang, jargon, figurative language, puns, play on words, and even strong regional accents ("Howdy, y'all") are understandably confusing to ELLs. It is important to help students understand that this type of language exists and acknowledge that it can be confusing. It is also important to assure ELLs that as their English proficiency increas-



es and improves, so will their understanding of these confusing words and phrases.

ELLs generally begin to understand this higher-level language skill as they approach High Advanced proficiency, but exposing them to the possibility of confusion between the literal meaning and the figurative wording might ease some anxiety as they journey toward High Advanced proficiency.

Quaver's Beyond Marvelous Curriculum strives to use clear and succinct terminology to explain all essential knowledge and skills. Yet, an important part of the Quaver mission is to use humor and fun to reach kids and help them to learn about music. Some jokes and wording used in lessons (and perhaps even Quaver's British accent) might require additional explanation for ELLs. We hope that all students will be able to laugh together and enjoy the fun of learning music with Quaver!

Conclusion

The Quaver Curriculum supports English language acquisition in many ways that are naturally embedded into the program. Quaver resources provide a natural way to meet the language needs of English Language Learners. Lessons are easily customized and modifications can be made with little need for additional teacher preparation or planning.

The Quaver Curriculum is made of engaging lessons that seamlessly teach music in a spiraling/scaffolding approach. Material is presented in a manner that also improves students' overall understanding and use of the English language. These improved English skills transfer back into the classroom and yield better success for ELL students in core curriculum classes. So while ELL students are learning music, they are also being fully supported in attaining English language proficiency using Quaver's Beyond Marvelous General Music Curriculum for Grades K-8.







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