



Department of Elementary Education

January 2014

## Department News

**Concept's Writing Contest:** This year's theme: "Put Down the Rage, Pick Up the Pen." The competition focuses on how writing can help us deal with issues of injustice that make us angry while giving us the opportunity to develop our essay writing skills.

Select the top five entries from your classes (5 per teacher total). With the help of a teacher or mentor, these five students should work to improve their essay and then submit their entries, as a Microsoft attachment, to [aflaherty@conceptschoools.org](mailto:aflaherty@conceptschoools.org) by 4:00pm (CST) March 2. 1st, 2nd, and 3 place prizes will be given in 3 categories – high school, middle school, and elementary; \$100, \$50, and \$25 respectively. Winners will be announced in March.

**Teacher of the Year:** Concept Schools' annual Teacher of the Year program continues to draw the best and brightest teachers throughout our network. Anyone can nominate a teacher (even a colleague!) The Concept Schools Teacher of the Year will also serve a community point person who both promotes charter community schools and innovative teaching strategies. He or she will receive a \$1000 monetary award for this recognition. <http://www.conceptschoools.org/teacher-of-the-year/>

The deadline for nominating a teacher is Feb. 27, 2015. The deadline for applications is April 17, 2015. The winner will be announced on May 21, 2015.

## Curriculum Updates

Unit 4 for 1<sup>st</sup> grade and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are finished and available on Concept SIS. As a new feature, I have included the CCSS standards as well as each state's social studies/science standards at the end of each unit outline (attached in the "Essential Questions" section on ConceptSIS.)

ConceptSIS now has the feature where teachers may collaboratively plan! Each teacher selected for access will be able to input lesson plans, add attachments and add notes for differentiation or accommodations

## Free?!

**Go Noodle:** This is sure to be one of your favorites. Go Noodle is a clearing house for brain breaks. They offer links to short video clips to use during morning meetings, calm down and rev up activities as well as a compilation of indoor recess activities. You can save clips in a favorites folder for easy access.

<https://www.gonoodle.com/>

**BBC Dancemat:** Most schools are not offering formal typing as part of the curriculum. However, kids MUST learn to type. Most specifically, students will need to type response answers on the new PARCC/Smarter Balanced assessments. Dancemat offers a free typing tutorial and practice that takes kids (even young Kindergarteners) through the steps in learning to use the keyboard effectively (even learning to use shift.)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z3c6tfr>

**Tumblebooks:** This will revolutionize your listening center!!! Although this site can require a \$300 classroom user fee, you can often gain access to Tumblebooks through many, many local libraries (I tried it; I can use my own Grayslake library.) You can connect directly through the public library site if you put in a library card number. For a listening center, there are connectors where you can hook up many sets of headphones to one computer/iPad. (see example: <http://www.belkin.com/us/p/P-F8Z274/>)

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## Top Things to Consider When Teaching ELL Students...

By Jennifer Sajovec

1. **Progression:** Be aware of the basic progression of acquiring language. A common mistake teachers make is assuming that a student who seems conversational on the playground can perform the same in the classroom. Social English language proficiency and academic English language proficiency are very different. There is often a 1-3 year gap between when an ELL student feels comfortable communicating socially with peers and when he/she can converse on academic terms in class. For instance, one student was able to recall all of the details of the newest blockbuster two-hour movie yet could barely recall the main events of the civil war. Be patient and understanding of this progression.
2. **Using Tech:** In the digital age, there are so many opportunities where technology can easily help an ELL learner. My favorite is Google Translate! Simply copy and paste a text into the first box and select a language in the second box. Voila—you now have it translated into almost any language. It also can work the other way. If a student is some written literacy in his/her native language, they can type into the box and it will provide the English translation for you!
3. **Visuals!:** When we don't speak the language, we all look for the signs, don't we? Many of our ELL learners rely heavily on visuals. Some simple things teachers can do are:
  - a. Print any visual images that match any content you are covering. For instance, if you are covering plants, you can print several diagrams of different kinds of plants with labels for the plant parts.
  - b. Use simple pictures for daily routine things. For instance, create a visual schedule for dismissal routine.
  - c. Use illustrations (either your own or have other students draw). Additionally, allow ELL students to draw their understanding.
4. **Repeat, Rephrase, and Paraphrase:** Our tendency as teachers is to get everyone working as quickly as possible. This rush can be very difficult for an ELL student to not only process the language but to keep up with the rest of the class. It's okay to repeat

directions or even give your ELL students specific one-on-one directions.

Additionally, be sure to rephrase often! Teachers should always use sophisticated vocabulary in their daily teaching. However, they should follow that up with more simple, clarifying statements. For example, if you are saying "a tree absorbs water through its roots for photosynthesis." Follow that statement up with the sentence, "That means, it takes in water through its roots in the ground in order to make food."

### 5. Other Considerations:

- a. It's always a good practice speaking, make sure to speak very slowly and clearly.
- b. Be very aware of your font choices. It can confuse any new learner the differences between an "a" and an "ɑ".
- c. The best practice wait time that should be given to any student is at least 8 seconds. That means, a teacher should wait at least 8 seconds between when a question is asked and when a teacher should ask for Responses. The expected wait time of ELL students should be at least doubled.
- d. Avoid using slang or idioms. -Can you imagine hearing "there's more than one way to skin a cat." As a non-native English speaker. Yikes
- e. Do not correct your student's errors when he/she attempts to speak in English. For example, if your student tells you "Mom have baby yesterday. Girl." you can respond, "Really?!? Your mom had her baby yesterday? The baby was a girl? How exciting!"
- f. Pair your new student with a buddy! Ideally, this buddy would be a patient, kind role model who speaks the same language as your student (and can translate!). When this isn't an option, however, choose a patient, kind English-speaking classmate, who will be agreeable to helping your new student follow your directions.