



THE PMSD ESL CONNECTION

A Message from Dr. Catherine Sweeney

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How to be a better reader

The importance of reading

Reading is an extremely important skill. It is by reading that you learn much of what you need to know for your different school subjects. Reading is also an excellent way to improve your general English. You can only learn from reading, however, if what you read is not too difficult. For this reason, it is important to know what makes texts difficult and how you can improve your chances of understanding them.

What makes texts difficult to understand?

Most of your reading difficulties will be caused by a problem on the list below. Of course, when two or more of these problems happen together, your chances of understanding will be even smaller.

- the text has many unknown words
- the text has long, complicated sentences
- the text is about a topic you know nothing about
- the text is about a topic you find boring
- the text has small print, long paragraphs, no pictures
- the text has been badly written
- you are feeling tired
- you are distracted
- you don't know why you have been asked to read the text

How to understand more of what you read

You can do nothing about some of the reading difficulties: for example, you can't change the print in a book or make poor writing better. But there are many things you **can** do that will give you a better chance of understanding what you read. Here are some suggestions:

- 1. Know your reading purpose** - The way you read a book or a text depends very much on your *reasons* for reading it. This is why it is so important to know your reading purpose. You should read a question in your math exam differently from an entry in an encyclopedia which you are looking at quickly to find out the date of an event. The kind of reading you do in class or for your homework is different from how you read a novel for pleasure on the summer vacation.
 - ◇ If you know your reading purpose - perhaps by looking first at the questions you must answer after reading - you can choose the best reading method.
 - ◇ If your teacher gives you something to read and doesn't tell you what you need to find out from the text or what you will do after the reading, ask her (or him)!
- 2. Choose the appropriate reading speed** - ESL students often take a long time to do their work because they read everything slowly and carefully. Often, however, one of the following speed-reading methods will be the best choice:
- 3. Skimming** - this is reading a text quickly to find out what information it contains. You should skim when, for example, you want to check if a text has the information you need to answer some questions or write a project. It is often enough to look at the first (and last) sentences in each paragraph.

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3. Scanning - this is reading quickly to find a specific piece of information. You should scan when, for example, you are looking for the answer to a question which you know is in the text. In general, students should be trying to increase their reading speed.

4. Get background information - Find something out about the topic you have to read. The more background information you have, the easier it will be to understand the text. You can get this background information in your own language. For example, if you are studying the Italian Renaissance, you could read an encyclopedia or textbook in your own language to find out the most important details about this historical period. Your parents may also be able to give you useful background information. Talk to them in your language.

You can sometimes get background information from the text itself. Many writers include a conclusion or summary; if you read this first, it may give you a good start.

5. Use all the information in the book - Good textbooks are well-organized, with titles, sub-titles, introductions, summaries or conclusions. Many books also have pictures with captions. Look at all these first before starting to read.

Another aspect of good writing is that each paragraph has a topic sentence. A topic sentence is a sentence, usually the first one in a paragraph that contains the main idea of the paragraph. If you concentrate on understanding the topic sentence, this may help you to understand what comes next.

6. Increase your vocabulary - Of course, reading itself is an excellent way to improve your vocabulary, but there are many other things you can do. The better your vocabulary, the easier you will find your reading.

7 Use your dictionary sensibly - A common mistake of ESL students is to look up each unknown word in the texts they are given to read. Occasionally this is necessary - for example, when reading examination questions. But it takes a long time and can be very boring. It can even make understanding more difficult because by the time you reach the end of the paragraph you have forgotten what you read at the beginning!

8. Learn the important words that organize text - When you read texts in your science or history books, you will find that most good writers organize their writing with cohesion markers (also called *transition words*). These are words that connect different parts of the writing and help writers structure their thoughts. If you learn the important cohesion markers, you will find it easier to understand the text.

Here are some important cohesion mark-

ers: *also, therefore, except, unless, however, instead, (although, furthermore, moreover, nevertheless, on the other hand, as a result, despite, in conclusion.*

9. Choose the right place to read - You can't really expect to understand a difficult book if you are trying to read in the same room with the television on and your little brother distracting you. The same goes for reading in the bus on the way to school. You also can't expect to read a textbook and listen to music at the same time. Try to find a quiet and comfortable place with good light, and your dictionaries and other materials nearby.

10. Choose the right time to read - If you have a difficult text to read for homework, it's probably best to do this first. If you leave it until last when you are tired, you will find it even more difficult.

Important: If you have tried the advice above and you still cannot understand a text, then it is simply too hard for you. Stop reading and ask someone to help you (your ESL teacher, for example!). Nobody likes to give up, but you will just be wasting your time if you continue to work at a text that is beyond you.

What to read

Most of the time you have to read what your teachers tell you to read. But as you know, reading is an excellent way to improve your English, and so you should try to do some extra reading each week. Here is some advice on how to choose what to read:

o **Try not to read something too difficult** - There should be no more than about 6-10 new words per page; reading for pleasure should not be hard work!

o **Reading easy books is good for you** -You will improve your reading skills even if you read simple books, as long as you read *lots* of them. (But you may find you don't really enjoy stories written in English that has been over-simplified.)

o **Try to read some non-fiction** - Reading non-fiction books or magazines will help you learn some of the words you need to do well in your subject classes. There are millions of pages of non-fiction on the World Wide Web!

o **Choose something that is interesting to you** - This is clear. In fact, if you are really interested in a topic, you will probably be able to understand texts that would normally be too difficult for you.

o **Surf the internet** - You can learn a lot of English just by surfing around on the websites that interest you. This is particularly true if the webpages contain pictures that help you understand the writing.



Pennsylvania Department of Education's Mission for the Education of English Language Learners

Provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of education which includes the provision of quality, culturally-responsive and equitable educational programs for English language learners and assurance of their appropriate participation in all aspects of the educational system. The Department ensures that its programs will address the needs and rights of English language learners in all its initiatives throughout the entire process of planning and implementation.

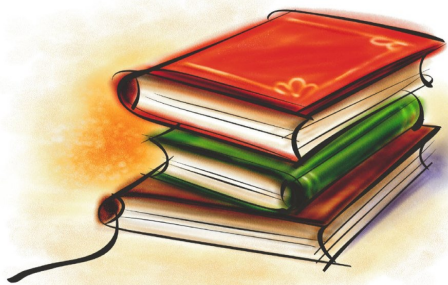
Pennsylvania Department of Education's Vision for the Education of English Language Learners

The Department promotes the recognition of these students and their parents as cultural and linguistic assets to the Commonwealth's global initiatives. The Department is committed to using its Standards Aligned System to ensure that English language learners receive core curriculum instruction and achieve high levels of academic success.

The Pocono Mountain School District provides an ESL instructional program that promotes the natural abilities of bilingual children to acquire language. It is characterized by creative teaching strategies, which both inspire and challenge students.

The district values the knowledge, culture and language each student brings to school. The variety of cultural backgrounds provide experiences that relate the student's foundation of prior learning to the acquisition of English, making the transition into the new culture a comfortable one.

Second language instruction incorporates the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. All modalities of cognitive and learning styles are included to make instruction relevant and comprehensible.



ADULT ESL

Adult ESL: At this time, there are no Adult ESL classes scheduled.

Watch for the new Adult ESL program format and schedule coming Fall 2018. Any questions can be directed to: mmascia@pmsd.org

EDUCATING ENGLISH LEARNERS

There are more than 61,000 English Learners (ELs) speaking more than 200 different languages in Pennsylvania. The education of students whose dominant language is not English and who are ELs is the responsibility of every Local Education Agency (LEA). Title 22, Chapter 4, Section 4.26 of the Curriculum Regulations requires the LEA to provide a program for every student who is an English learner (EL).

The goal of language instruction educational programs (LIEPs) is to facilitate the development and attainment of English proficiency and academic achievement of students whose native or first language is not English. Without instruction in social and academic English and appropriate support for learning academic content, these students are at risk of losing the educational opportunities provided to non-EL students.

<http://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/Curriculum/English%20As%20A%20Second%20Language/Pages/default.aspx#tab-1>

Test-taking tips for your child:

With the PSSAs upon us and Keystones quickly approaching, here are some test-taking tips for parents and students to keep in mind for standardized testing.

PARENTS:

- * Make sure your children have eaten well on test days. Studies suggest that good nutrition is related to improved attention and concentration.
- * Help your children by encouraging a good night's rest before exams. Children who are tired will have difficulty focusing on their work.
- * Make the morning of test days pleasant. Stress will impair your children's ability to perform their best.
- * Remind your children to dress comfortably, perhaps in layers, so that they are able to adjust to the temperature in the room.
- * Ensure that your children make it to school on-time so that they do not miss any instructions and are allowed ample time to settle in and relax before the test begins.
- * Have students attend school regularly and be on time every day.



Sources:

http://www.keydatasys.com/common/downloads/Parent_Test_Taking_Tips.pdf

<http://www.scholastic.com/resources/article/standardized-tests/>

DATES TO REMEMBER



- ☺ Kindergarten Registration:
ongoing
- ☺ PSSAs and Keystones: April and
May
- ☺ May 16th: Act 80 Day: 3 hour
early dismissal
- ☺ May 28th: Memorial Day: no
school
- ☺ June 15: Last day of school



STUDENTS:

- * Come to school prepared, rested, and ready to learn every day.
- * Get a good night's sleep the night before the test.
- * Eat a good breakfast before the test.
- * Read/listen to the directions carefully. If something is unclear, ask for clarification.
- * Read every possible answer--the best one could be last.
- * If you get stuck on a question, mark it and move on. You can come back to it later.
- * Make sure to record the answer in the correct place on the answer sheet.
- * Only change an answer if you are sure the first one you picked was wrong. Be sure to completely erase changed answers.
- * After completion of the test, use any remaining time to check your answers.
- * Keep a good attitude. Think positively!

A Glance at ESL Around PMSD

SECONDARY NEWS

WJHS: As we continue to work on our English language, reading, and writing skills and strategies, we are learning to apply them to our everyday reading, writing and speaking. We have been busy reading about fascinating non-fiction topics in our Achieve 3000 reading program. Seventh grade students are enjoying reading the novel "Walk Two Moons" and discussing themes and figurative language. Happy Spring!

PMWHS: Tenth grade students are working to prepare for the ELA Keystone Exams. We wish all success! Continuation of vocabulary development and striving to improve our writing skills are never ending in our ELA class. We anticipate the arrival of warm weather and patiently await it!

EJHS: Happy Spring! Students are reading exciting non-fiction articles in our Achieve 3000 reading program. We continue to learn and apply new English language, reading and writing skills. Eighth grade students are working on "The Diary of Anne Frank" while 7th grade students are working on the novel "Walk Two Moons."

PMEHS: It's been a great but busy year in ESL at the EHS! Seniors are currently enjoying Julius Caesar and preparing for their last quarter before graduation! Freshman are studying the Holocaust and Reading Night. Tenth graders are preparing for the many Keystone exams as we focus on skills specific to test taking success. All classes are continuing with Achieve 3000 and vocabulary builders. All will soon be working on research papers and presentations. Looking forward to spring!



ELEMENTARY NEWS

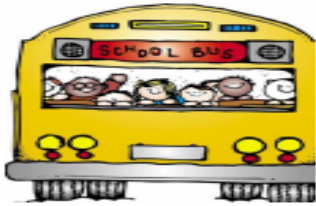
SEC: Spring is finally in the air! Our students are blossoming with learning. Kindergarteners are working on blending sounds, word families, sight words, diagraphs, and increasing listening comprehension. They are also learning to identify narrative elements like characters, setting, and more. Our 1st graders are writing personal narratives using sequential words and adding interesting adjectives. They are working on a Social Studies project named "Our World". Second graders continue to learn how to answer comprehension questions about their readings by utilizing Text Evidence from the text. Third grade is doing well with the Wonders Series and getting ready for the PSSA. We have worked on poetry such as limericks, cinquains, and haikus. We have also worked on various types of writing such as Opinion Writing and Personal Narratives.

SIS: At Swiftwater Intermediate School, we are anticipating the arrival of sunny, warm days! Our students have been busy with their academic subjects and many school activities. Also, we congratulate our students who have worked hard to qualify for the Student of the Marking Period, Student of the Month and Citizen of the Month. Also, we are so proud of our Honor Roll Students. Keep up the good work! Please continue to encourage your children to read daily. Twenty minutes of reading practice at home will help their skills to improve greatly. Mrs. Malinowski and Mrs. Hall wish you all a wonderful, safe spring.

CRIS: CRIS English Learners have all been anticipating the arrival of spring along with Mrs. Garrett, Mrs. Haggerty, and Mrs. Murphy. The ELs recently finished their opinion/argument writing projects and are now in the midst of taking the PSSAs. Poetry and Fictional Narratives will be next for the students' upcoming writing projects. Happy Spring everyone!

CREC: Many exciting things are happening at CREC. During the week of March 26th-30th, second graders presented delightful musical performances for parents and fellow students. Second grade field trips to Crayola Factory occurred during April. CREC is also preparing to celebrate the Week of the Young Child later this month.

TEC: English Learners (ELs) are doing a marvelous job this school year. They are learning new vocabulary words, phonics skills, spelling patterns and grammar skills while using the Wonders for English Learners. Some of the ELs have been preparing for the PSSA tests that are happening now. All of the ELs are progressing in their writing skills. They are learning how to compare and contrast stories as well as incorporating text evidence into their writing. TEC is very proud of all the ELs.



ATTENTION!

Calling all **2018-2019** Kindergarten students!

We need you to schedule your appointment to register your child!

If you have a child who meets the eligibility for the 2018-2019 school year Kindergarten class, please contact the Pocono Mountain School District Central Registration Office at 839-7121 ext. 40400 to schedule an appointment. The child must be five (5) years of age or more, on or before September 1, 2018.

After the registration process has been completed, your child will be scheduled for a Kindergarten orientation session sometime in the spring at their respective school building.

The required documents are available on-line at www.pmsd.org

It is strongly recommended that you complete all required documents prior to your scheduled appointment.



My Child is an ELL: A Parent's Guide

There are **4.6 MILLION** English language learners in the U.S.



How was my child identified?



Your child qualified for English language support services

Talk to your child's educators about how they can help your child learn English and succeed in school. As a parent, you have the right to accept, decline, or request language program support.

WIDA Screener measures English language proficiency

1.0 BEGINNER

Students score between 1.0 and 6.0 in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

6.0 ADVANCED

DOMAINS



OVERALL SCREENER SCORE

Need Additional Information?

Watch our webinars for families of ELLs

Part 1 My child is an ELL, what does this mean?

[English](#) | [Spanish](#)

Part 2 How is my child's language development supported at school?

[English](#) | [Spanish](#)

Part 3 How do I know if my child is making progress?

[English](#) | [Spanish](#)

Data retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics

