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Succeeding with English/Multi-Language Learners: Workshops/Course For Paraprofessionals and Assistant Teachers[1]

Five modules that can be taught live, in a self-paced and scheduled online, or live-online via Zoom

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This 15-hour program may be completed live, asynchronous self-paced online or synchronous online. Those paraprofessionals and assistant teachers who complete this program will receive a Ribas Associates Assistant Teacher Certificate for ELL Competency. Ribas Associates also has programs for Ribas Associates Assistant Teacher Certification Competency in Special Education and in Social-Emotional Learning.

For pricing call or email Dr. Ribas at the phone or email noted at the top of the page. Interested participants may receive 1 graduate credit for an additional $210.

EL/ML Module One: Overview of the English Language/Multi-Language Learner Experience

While some educators have had the personal experience of learning a second language at some point in their lives, few have been called upon to actually develop proficiency, or even more challenging, to try to learn something new using only a language that is very new to them (second language proficiency). Acquiring English language proficiency (ELP) is the daunting task set before our English Language Learners. Moreover, research has shown that it takes considerably more time on task than we realize for an individual to gain true academic and conversational fluency in a second language. Tapping into the personal and professional experiences of the participants, this session provides an orientation to the challenges of students attempting to learn in a language that is new to them. While all learners must work to acquire new understanding and skills, second language speakers must also process the language in which the work is being done. Using video, simulation and active learning practices, participants in this session will explore unexpected ways in which children struggle, compensatory strategies they often employ in an effort to fit in, and initial ways in which teachers and administrators can begin to support these learners in their struggle.

After this session of the program, the participants will be able to:

[1] This program also fulfills the MA ESE requirement for 15 English Language Learning PDPs for educator license renewal. For other states, each of the modules provides 3 CEUs, for a total of 15 CEUs.

- Empathize with the experience of non-English speakers as they are tasked with navigating a world where they do not fully comprehend the language.
- Identify ways in which non-English speaking students may mask a lack of comprehension.
- Identify strategies non-English speakers use to support their understanding and begin to plan with language objectives and strategies teachers use that support those efforts.
- Distinguish learners' stage of language acquisition from monolingual to complete bilingualism.
- Recognize components of the English language that can prove particularly problematic for non-native speakers and develop strategies through which educators can mitigate the negative impact of their own language choices on their ELL and FLEP students.

EL/ML Module Two: Questioning and Assessment for Non-English Speaking Students

Too often, educator questions and assessment tools measure something other than the goals for which they were intended. Even the simplest question, if not phrased carefully, can prove incomprehensible to a student who otherwise understands the material being discussed. This session focuses on the role of educator-language, practice and expectations and how these factors can impact second language learners in their classes. We will explore through the lens of non-English speakers the strategies and materials often used in the classroom. In the process, educators will be called upon to share their current learning goals, instructional practices and favorite tools in light of this new perspective.

After this session of the program, the participants will be able to:

- Rework assessment tools currently used in their practice to ensure that the language used, as well as supporting visual contexts, are best suited to evaluate the importing thinking and learning of non-English speaking students.
- Develop questioning strategies (such as extended wait time) and additional assessment tools that are crafted to be easily comprehended by non-English speaking students.
- Identify non-verbal cues, visuals, and tasks that can help ELL students better demonstrate what they know and are able to do.
- Develop ways to differentiate instruction for ELL students on the basis of formal and informal assessments.

EL/ML Module Three: Teacher Language and the Social-Emotional Domain

Considerable research has been devoted to the role that a student's emotional development, beliefs, and socialization play in ensuring academic success. In the case of ELL students, these social-emotional skills are impacted by language and culture.
In this session, the participants will be able to:

- Develop strategic approaches to encouraging ELL students as they acquire language skills, cultural competency in an unfamiliar environment, and academic knowledge and skills without diminishing the student's sense of confidence or personal competence.
- Identify areas of language that are predicated on a broader cultural knowledge, such as idiomatic speech, and develop strategies to either compensate for, or directly address those potential areas of confusion.
- Discuss ways in which different languages of origin can cause unique issues for individual students.

EL/ML Module Four: Special Education and EL/ML Learners

Far too often, educators confuse problems of language with deeper cognitive issues, referring students to Special Education when their issues are the result of a non-English speaking background. By the same token, students in any subgroup population (English speaking, ELL and Formerly ELL) can also struggle with learning difficulties. For the English speaking educator, distinguishing and applying the appropriate interventions for non-English speaking students can be a significant challenge.

In this session, the participants will be able to:

- Consider how to detect ELL students who may have Special Education or other non-ELL learning needs. The learn the steps to take to better determine whether the block to learning are second language acquisition or other learning needs.
- Identify several ways to differentiate practice in our instruction that can benefit both Special Education and General Education students.
- Understand assessment tools used by special educators when working with non-English speaking student.
- Consider the ways in which Special Education and referral of students can be viewed in different cultures.
- Plan strategies for working with the parents of students who may themselves struggle in a new culture and in a less than familiar language.

EL/ML Module Five: Where Culture and Language Intersect

Cultural differences - those easily identified by nationality or language and more significantly the subtle differences of family - compounding the learning challenges for ELL students. This final session continues the conversation as we focus on general issues differences in school readiness, school versus home norms and expectations, unexpected pitfalls of student cultural backgrounds, and ways in which language exacerbate those differences.

In this session, the participants will:

- Identify the many complex cultural profiles of students whose first language is not English, recognizing differences that often go unnoticed.
- Describe the concept of school readiness and parental expectations in different cultures and how these issues can inhibit or enhance student learning.
- Discuss ways in which gaps in background knowledge can impact learning and plan strategies that will help teachers compensate for those gaps.
- Identify strategies for vocabulary development in a variety of contexts, often the most noticeable area of weakness for students with limited background knowledge.

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