



Guiding Research

Cummins (1991) demonstrated that acquiring academic literacy for a non-native speaker of English is a cognitively challenging and time-intensive process with very specific context-related demands. Bigelow and Tarone (2004) and Gibbons (2009) put forth that academic language proficiency for language learners encompasses a subset of vocabulary and skills that must be explicitly developed in order for language learners to have full access to academic content. Further, Halliday and Hasan (1985) and Derewianka (1991) suggest that each genre and academic discipline have context-specific strategies, vocabulary and conventions that must be identified, modeled and taught.

Similarly, research (Vygotsky, 1978; Collier, 1989) also informs us that students benefit from receiving instruction at a level that is proportional to their ability and skill. In this sense, Daystar believes that academic content should be differentiated in such a way as to keep cognitive rigor high, but the lexical load appropriate.

Conjointly, with differentiation, Feldman and Kinsella (2005) discuss the need to equip students with grade-level appropriate and deliberate scaffolds that allow students to show the breadth and depth of what they know and can do.

Expanding on this, many researchers have shown that language instruction is more equitable and effective when educators help students make connections from students' own lives, cultural assets, and prior knowledge to the academic content they are learning (Cummins, 2007; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008; DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009).

It is largely agreed upon that, in order to accurately measure whether students are hitting these targets, it is necessary to employ research-based and standards-driven assessment tools and practices. These tools serve to differentiate and guide instruction in addition to gauging content mastery and academic language competence.



Guiding Principles

LEAP's guiding principles align with the overarching principles detailed above, including:

- Interwoven language and content instruction designed to concurrently develop conceptual understandings and language proficiency so that students are set up to thrive independently in a variety of real-world and scholarly settings. *Language is the vehicle through which learning occurs.*
- Standards-aligned instruction for ELLs that:
 - o Affirms and leverages students' cultural assets and prior knowledge, including mother tongue as integral to the learning experience.
 - o Explicitly identifies and teaches specific context-related interdisciplinary vocabulary, strategies, and conventions that are part and parcel to academic language proficiency.
 - o Advances ELL academic proficiency by considering students' previous learning experiences and current level of academic proficiency.
 - o Maintains grade-level appropriate rigor differentiated by specific linguistic complexity and density.
 - o Scaffolds temporarily and appropriately so that students can demonstrate the breadth and depth of what they know and can do.
- Research-driven formative and summative assessment that informs instruction and provides the means for students to set meaningful goals regarding academic language proficiency.