

Learning Environment & Situational Factors to Consider

1. Specific Context of the Teaching/Learning Situation

How many students are in the class? Is the course primary, secondary, undergraduate, or graduate level? How long and frequent are the class meetings? How will the course be delivered: live, online, blended, flipped or in a classroom or lab? What physical elements of the learning environment will affect the class? What technology, networking and access issues will affect the class?

- The number of students in each class varies from campus to campus. The number of students in each class typically ranges from 5 – 42 depending on the campus' scheduling.
 - Note: Some campuses are sheltered per grade level, and others have mixed grades levels in each class.
- The English Learners Language Arts class is a secondary course for students in middle school grades 6 – 8.
- The length and frequency of class meetings depend on the campus.
 - Some campuses meet daily for 50 – 90 minutes.
 - Others meet every other day for 75 – 90 minutes.
- The course is set to be delivered live with components that can be blended and or flipped depending on student technology availability.
- Certain campuses with high numbers of newcomer emergent bilingual students have excessive students in each class. This is a challenge due to limited staff and the ability to split sections into smaller sizes to relieve large class sizes.
- The availability of Chromebooks/laptops for at-home use can affect the blended/flipped portions of the lessons, but there are alternative options which limit the impact if technology is unavailable. Additionally, wi-fi connectivity occasionally presents a challenge for teachers.

2. General Context of the Learning Situation

What learning expectations are placed on this course or curriculum by: the school, district, university, college and/or department? the profession? society?

- The Texas Education Agency adopted the English Learners Language Arts (ELLA) standards in 2017, as a response to the influx new immigrant students in the state of Texas who do not speak English as their native language and need supports to acquire it.
- The ELLA standards have complementary standards which match the general ELA/R learning standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)) but include linguistic accommodations for students who are learning English.

3. Nature of the Subject

Is this subject primarily theoretical, practical, or a combination? Is the subject primarily convergent or divergent? Are there important changes or controversies occurring within the field?

- The English Learners Language Arts (ELLA) course is primarily a combination of theoretical and practical knowledge. It involves learning the theories and concepts of language arts, such as the elements and features of different genres and forms of literature, the rules and

conventions of grammar and punctuation, and the strategies and techniques of reading and writing. It also involves applying the theories and concepts of language arts to practice, such as reading and writing various texts, using digital tools and media to create authentic pieces, and collaborating with peers and other stakeholders to create and share meaningful products.

- The ELLA course is primarily divergent. It encourages students to explore and express their own ideas, emotions, and values through various texts, and to appreciate the diversity and complexity of human experiences, perspectives, and cultures, as represented in literature. It also encourages students to use their imagination to create original products, and to experiment with different genres and styles of literature that appeal to different audiences and purposes.
- There are some important changes which include the recognition and integration of the linguistic, cultural, and educational diversity and assets of emergent bilingual/multilingual students, and the need for culturally responsive and inclusive pedagogy and curriculum.

4. Characteristics of the Learners

What is the life situation of the learners (e.g., socio-economic, cultural, personal, family, professional goals)? What prior knowledge, experiences, and initial feelings do students usually have about this subject? What are their learning goals and expectations?

- The life situation of learners who are newcomer emergent bilingual students vary depending on their individual circumstances, but some common factors that may affect them are: their immigration status, their reasons for leaving their home country, their level of education and literacy in their native language, their exposure and proficiency in English, their access to technology and resources, their cultural and religious background and beliefs, their family and community support and involvement, and their personal and professional goals and aspirations. All of these factors work to influence the individual learner's initial feelings, motivations, goals, and expectations about the ELLA course and learning in general.

5. Characteristics of the Teacher

What beliefs and values does the teacher have about teaching and learning? What is his/her attitude toward: the subject? students? What level of knowledge or familiarity does s/he have with this subject? What are his/her strengths in teaching?

- The teachers' beliefs and values about teaching and learning in relation to newcomer emergent bilingual students vary. Some teachers are enthusiastic and welcoming toward having newcomer emergent bilingual learners, while others unfortunately have a negative and resistant view toward them, depending on their beliefs and values about teaching and learning, their attitude toward the subject and the students, their level familiarity with the subject, and their overall strength in teaching.
 - Effective teachers of newcomer emergent bilingual students hold a deep-seated belief in the power of education to transform lives. Their approach to newcomer students is one of unwavering support and cultural sensitivity, recognizing the challenges and strengths that come with being a new language learner.

- The teachers who hold negative views towards newcomer emergent bilingual students typically view them as a burden or a challenge rather than an opportunity for growth. These teachers often lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support language learners, perpetuating cycles of disengagement and academic struggle.