

Sheltered Instruction and the SIOP Model

Texas districts are implementing sheltered instruction in schools in an effort to better support English language learners (ELLs). Sheltered instruction is an approach in which students develop knowledge in specific subject areas through the medium of English, their second language; teachers adjust the language demands of the lesson in many ways, such as modifying speech rate and tone, using context clues and models extensively, relating instruction to student experience, adapting the language of texts or tasks, and using certain methods familiar to language teachers (e.g., demonstrations, visuals, graphic organizers, or cooperative work) to make academic instruction more accessible to students of different English proficiency levels

There are six key questions to consider in evaluating whether sheltered materials are appropriate for your second language students:

1. Is the content rigorous and commensurate with mainstream, grade-level texts?
2. Is the language of the text linguistically challenging, using rich and varied vocabulary and syntax?
3. Does the instruction employ contextual clues (e.g., visuals) and multisensory techniques (e.g., audio-visual, hands-on materials) to make the content comprehensible?
4. Does the content build on students' prior knowledge and experiences and advance their literacy skills?
5. Does the content promote higher order cognitive skills (e.g., problem solving, synthesizing, evaluating)?
6. Is there a range of ongoing assessment tools and checks to evaluate student progress?

If your answers to all these questions are "yes," chances are that your educational materials are suitable for all your ELL students.

One model of sheltered instruction currently being encouraged for use in Texas is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). The SIOP is research-based and field-tested. Research has shown that teachers who used the SIOP checklist for lesson planning became more proficient in linking language and content in their instruction, feel more in control of their professional development, and increase their ability to accommodate different levels of proficiency in their classrooms. The thirty components of the SIOP lesson-planning checklist can be used with any curriculum or program and for students at any age or level of English proficiency.

For more information about the sheltered instruction and the SIOP model please visit the CTSP Center website.

Suggestions for Parents

You are vital to the success of your child's SIOP program. Become your child's supporters and act as advocates of the program. Volunteer in the classroom and learn as much as you can about sheltered instruction. Find out if your child's school offers language classes to help you develop bilingualism along with your children. You can also reach out to reach out to other parents of prospective sheltered instruction students and act as their mentors to give them the benefit of your experiences.

Finally and perhaps most importantly meet with the teachers frequently to discuss program design and theory, performance expectations, and your child's progress.