Stages of Language Acquisition

National Geographic Reach incorporates Academic Language Frames, Multi-Level Strategies, Multi-Level Practice Sets, and more supports to help English language learners move through the stages of language acquisition. As you select strategies and monitor behaviors and progress, keep in mind that stages vary. For example, some students may be beginning speakers and advanced writers while others may be advanced speakers and beginning writers. Use the assessment instruments to measure and monitor language acquisition and adjust scaffolds, grouping, and challenges to support each student. For more information on scaffolding language development, see **Best Practices** (page PD1).

STAGES AND BEHAVIORS	TEACHING STRATEGIES
BEGINNING	
Newcomers & Beginners: • have little or no survival vocabulary or language structures • need to gain familiarity with the sounds, rhythm, and patterns of English • respond non-verbally by pointing, gesturing, nodding, or drawing • have little or no ability to understand spoken English used in academic and social settings • have little or no ability to speak English in academic and social settings • have little or no ability to use English to build foundational reading skills • lack the English vocabulary and English language structures necessary to address grade-appropriate writing tasks • understand new concepts best when previewed in their home language • begin to respond with yes/no or one- or two-word responses • read simple language that has already been experienced orally • write labels, patterned sentences, one- or two-word responses • repeat and recite memorable language; use routine expressions independently • respond with phrases, fragments, and simple subject/verb-based structures • read familiar, patterned text; read language experience texts • begin to apply reading strategies to aid comprehension of text • write patterned text, short captions; complete simple cloze sentences	**Newcomers & Beginners benefit when teachers:** • implement an intensive, individualized or small-group emergent literacy program, starting with the English alphabet • use gestures and other visuals to clarify concepts • provide ample age-appropriate oral-to-print and emergent literacy experiences • use visuals to teach key vocabulary necessary for academic discussion • use simple sentence structures and language patterns during instruction • provide abundant opportunities for active listening, utilizing props, visuals, and real objects • provide opportunities to read literature in short "chunks" • support reading with direct phonics instruction • avoid forcing students to speak before they are ready • model memorable language with songs and chants • pair or group students with more proficient learners • activate prior knowledge, build background, and use visuals before reading activities • ask yes/no, either/or, and Who? What? Where? questions • have students label/manipulate pictures and real objects • provide short frames for students to complete with one- or two-word responses or word banks
INTERMEDIATE	
Intermediate students: • understand simple, high-frequency spoken English used in routine academic and social settings • have the ability to speak in a simple manner, using English commonly heard in routine academic and social settings • have a limited ability to use the English language to build foundational reading skills • have English vocabulary and grasp of English language structures adequate to address grade-appropriate writing tasks in a limited way • understand simple messages with contextual support (gestures etc.) • understand "chunks" or gist of language, and the gist of group reading by relying on picture clues, titles, and summaries • respond to literature with structured support • respond using newly-acquired receptive vocabulary for messages in English • understand more details in spoken English • read resources independently following oral previews or experiences with print • apply reading strategies regularly to aid comprehension of text • write from models for a variety of purposes • respond with connected discourse, using more extensive vocabulary	**Intermediate students benefit when teachers:** • provide direct instruction in key vocabulary necessary for academic discussion • expose students to a variety of understandable texts • have students describe personal experiences, objects, etc. • use graphic organizers or storyboards for retelling or role-plays • structure group discussion to support application of language patterns • structure research projects and guide use of reference resources • ask open-ended questions; model, expand, restate, and enrich student language • provide frames for students to complete with short phrases • provide content-area texts, trade books, newspapers, magazines, etc., to promote conceptual development • respond genuinely to student writing and hold conferences that highlight student strengths and progress • provide frames that support and extend language patterns and structures

STAGES AND BEHAVIORS	TEACHING STRATEGIES

ADVANCED

Advanced students:

- understand, with second language acquisition support, grade-appropriate spoken English used in academic and social settings
- have the ability to speak, with second language acquisition support, using grade-appropriate English in academic and social settings
- have the ability to use English, with second language acquisition support, to build foundational reading skills
- have English vocabulary and grasp of English language structures adequate to address grade-appropriate writing tasks with second language acquisition support
- respond with longer phrases/sentences and increasing grammatical accuracy
- respond to literature by explaining, describing, comparing, and retelling
- participate more fully in discussions, including those with academic content
- understand and respond with increasing levels of accuracy and correctness
- respond with connected discourse, extensive vocabulary, and decreasing grammatical errors
- read and comprehend a wider range of narrative genre and content texts
- apply reading strategies consistently and skillfully
- read, write, and discuss content-area concepts in greater depth
- write connected narrative and expository texts

Advanced students benefit when teachers:

- provide opportunities to create oral and written narratives
- focus on communication in meaningful contexts where students express themselves in speech and print for a wide range of purposes and audiences
- structure group discussion
- guide use of reference resources for research
- facilitate more advanced literature studies

ADVANCED HIGH

Advanced High students:

- understand, with minimal second language acquisition support, grade-appropriate spoken English used in academic and social settings
- have the ability to speak, with minimal second language acquisition support, using grade-appropriate English in academic and social settings
- have the ability to use English, with minimal second language acquisition support, to build foundational reading skills
- have English vocabulary and command of English language structures necessary to address grade-appropriate writing tasks with minimal second language acquisition support
- respond with more complex language structures and patterns
- understand non-literal, idiomatic, everyday, and academic language
- read a wide range of grade-level narrative and expository texts in a variety of subjects, including self-selected resources
- apply reading strategies with automaticity
- write using standard forms with increased depth and breadth of topics and purposes and more creative and analytical writing
- respond using varied grammatical structures and vocabulary
- use a repertoire of language-learning strategies to self-monitor, correct, and further develop English language skills

Advanced High students benefit when teachers:

- facilitate advanced literature studies
- provide opportunities for more sophisticated writing
- continue on-going language development through integrated language arts and content-area activities
- provide opportunities for application of more complex language structures and patterns