



Hands-On, Plug-and-Play!

An English Language Development Program That Builds Routines & Confidence for Newcomer and Beginner English Learners

Located outside the bustling city of St. Louis (MO), Hancock Place Elementary School serves a PreK–5th grade student body of more than 600. With its nearly 80 English learners (EL) representing 12 languages, Hancock’s two EL teachers had been piecing together materials to create lessons for several years because their existing English language development (ELD) curriculum was no longer meeting their needs. According to EL teacher Danielle Hicks, “I had a hodgepodge of everything.”

Taking the Leap

With a caseload of 47 students in grades K–2, Hicks, who has taught at Hancock for 26 years, knew there had to be better resources available for their pull-out model of instruction than what they had been using. In the summer of 2021, she was given the green light to adopt a new ELD curriculum.

“I got on a Facebook page for ELL teachers and asked, ‘What are you using?’ Hicks explained. “And *Hands-On English* kept coming up. And it’s not super easy to find resources for ELLs, so I started there and I really liked it, and I like it even more now that I use it.”

After researching a variety of ELD programs, Hicks advocated to purchase Ballard & Tighe’s *Hands-On-English* (for grades K–1), *Carousel of IDEAS* (K–5) and *Frames for Fluency* (K–12).

After just one semester, Hicks, alongside the school’s other EL teacher, are finding the new curricula and resources to be even more useful and fun for students than they expected.

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From Hodgepodge to Sequence & Routines

If anyone knows the ins and outs of teaching ELs using supplementary components, it's Hicks. Even though the school licensed National Geographic Cengage, Hicks admitted that she hadn't used it in the last five years. Instead, she chose to hodgepodge her lessons and activities together using Teachers Pay Teachers and other resources she came across. As a seasoned educator, this didn't bother Hicks, but she did note that once she began using *Hands-On English*, its sequence and routines took on a life of their own with regards to language retention and development in her classroom. "The kids are really taking off with it," she shared.

The follow-along, plug-and-play structure of *Hands-On English* makes lesson-planning easy for new teachers. For experienced teachers like Hicks, the structured lessons serve as a guide. Hicks implements more extensions as needed based on student proficiency. When she was evaluating ELD programs, the ease and simplicity of *Hands-On English* really stood out for her, along with the routine structure students look forward to.

"You could just follow what it [*Hands-On English*] says minute by minute and day by day if you had to or if you didn't know your kids very well until you got to know them," she explained. "Because writing is one of our weakest areas on the Access test, I try to make sure we do some kind of writing at least every other day."



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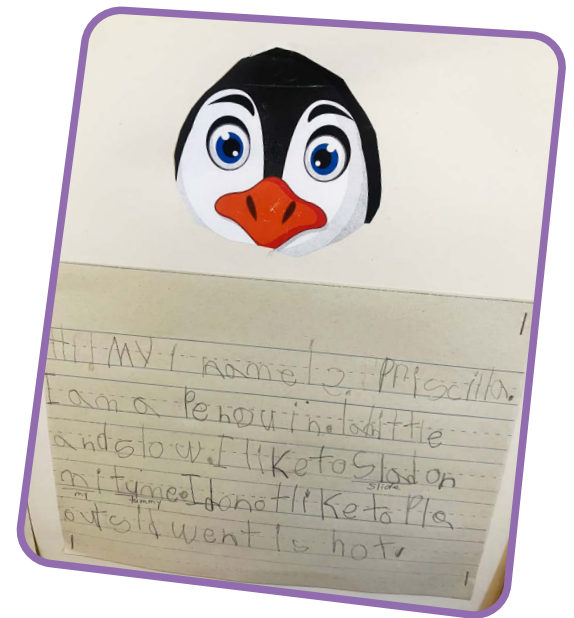
Puppet Shows & Dioramas — An Active & Engaged Classroom of Learners

Keeping young ELs engaged in learning is top of mind for teachers like Hicks who, prior to using *Hands-On English*, had to dig around to find fun activities for her antsy ELs. If you've ever been in a classroom of kindergarten or first graders, she mentioned, you'd understand.

"I love how [*Hand-On English*] is so active! And it gives students a chance to practice all four parts of language without me trying to figure out how to get it all into one lesson. It does it all for me."

When Hicks began using *Hands-On English* at the beginning of the school year, she noticed students were drawn to many components of the program, from the routine building, to the interactive projects, songs, and read-alouds.

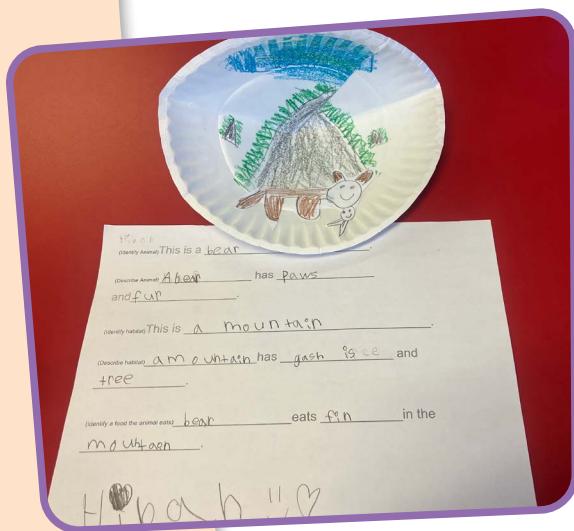
"My first graders absolutely loved the chant in chapter five," she exclaimed. "They would sing it on the playground. They sing it when they're walking to my classroom. They sing it when we're trying to do something else. They loved it!" The routine of singing the chant everyday built student confidence much so they insisted on continuing it after the chapter ended. "They were having fun," she said, "So why not?"



I love how this (*Hand-On English*) is so active! And it gives students a chance to practice all four parts of language without me trying to figure out how to get it all into one lesson. It does it all for me.

Because of the variety of activities, the students are never bored, an absolute must when considering a room full of youngsters, Hicks noted. She also thinks the lessons translate really well into other subject areas. In one *Hands-On English* unit students learned about animals which blended perfectly with a science class field trip to the zoo. Hicks was impressed by how students pointed out certain characteristics of animals they saw at the zoo using new vocabulary they'd learned in class.

"It makes you feel like, 'Oh wow, what I'm doing is making a difference!'" she said. The repetition of using the same vocabulary cards every day for a few weeks was extremely helpful for students with low Access scores and Hicks noticed students using the same vocabulary from a prior chapter even after they were done practicing it.



The versatility of print and online components of *Hands-On English* was an added bonus for Hicks. She likes being able to read the big books to the kids first and then moves to using the digital version on a smart screen. This flexibility alongside the engaging photographs of real animals and humans help students feel like they are learning real world, applicable things, she said. A far better teaching tool than cartoons and sketches.

“They’re having fun and I’m having fun. More fun than when I was creating my own curriculum and just winging it. I feel better about what I’m doing every day using it.”

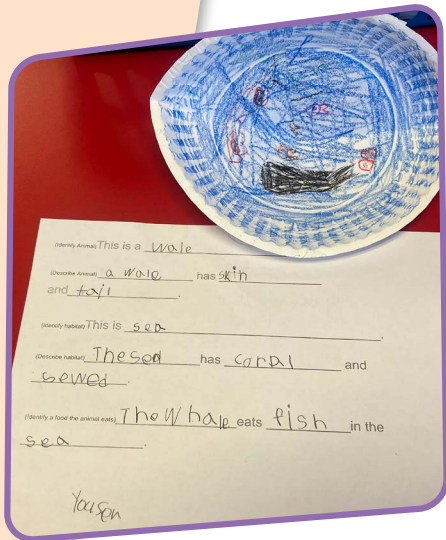
Building Language Confidence

Since writing has proved to be more of a struggle for Hicks' young ELs this school year, she makes a point to add additional writing prompts into daily lessons. Using the supplemental ELD program, *Frames for Fluency*, Hicks is able to bridge the gap from speaking to writing while giving her young ELs confidence in the process.

“I’m trying to push them with the writing and because of the sentence frames, it’s not stressing them out!” Hicks explained. “I think they like the writing because they feel successful doing it. And when they answer me, I tell them they cannot speak to me in a single word, they have to use a sentence. If they don’t, then I help them use the frame to speak in sentences and now they’re catching each other.”

The support of *Hands-On English* and flexibility of *Frames for Fluency* allows opportunities to scaffold for each learner. “Writing five sentences about one thing is not something they do very well on their own,” Hicks explained about one of the prompts from chapter five. “We did three sentences, very, very guided, and then the last two I made them use their sounds to figure out more of it. And they were so proud of themselves.”

Hicks believes that using *Hands-On English* will pay off when it comes to Access scores in 2023. Before she tests her ELs, she’s hoping to remind them of everything they’ve learned and feels positive about their ability to do well. “I’ve been **impressed!**” she said.



I feel _____ because _____.

C6F2

What is the _____ doing?

C6F13



Take a Closer Look at *Hands-On English* An English Language Development Program

Hands-On English is an English language development program for grades K-1 (newcomers and beginners) that delivers age-appropriate content grounded in state and national English language development (ELD) and subject-matter standards, including English language arts, math, and science.

With an emphasis on engagement, the program immerses students in interesting, meaningful tasks that contextualize and promote language learning.

Contact Us
for a Demo &
Free Trial

- Focus on language
- Build oral competency
- Engage students with peers
- Introduce academic skills
- Teach essential content

ELD
Standards

Content
Standards

CA
ELPA 21
TX ELPS
WIDA

CCSS ELA
CCSS Math
NGSS
National Social Studies

Components

The program consists of components that teachers can use flexibly according to their students' needs. All materials are available in print as well as digitally through the Teacher e-Port. *Hands On English* is easy to use in remote, hybrid, and in-person settings.



Frames for Fluency, Grades K-12, All Proficiency Levels

Ballard & Tighe's award-winning *Frames for Fluency* oral language development tool provides 550 ready-made sentence frames with targeted scaffolds to help English learners of all levels achieve grammatical accuracy and oral fluency.

