

How to Use the Colorín Colorado ELL Strategy Library



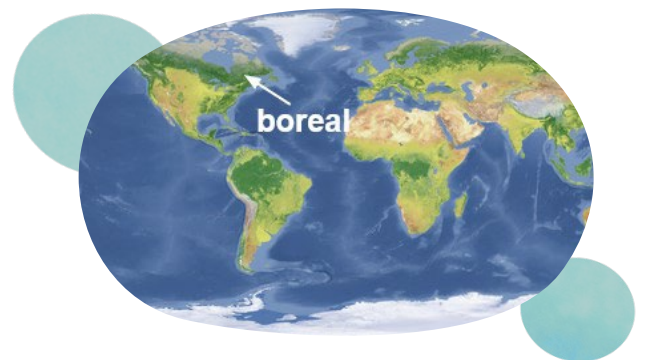
Overview

The [Colorín Colorado ELL Strategy Library](#) includes more than **30 research-based classroom strategies** that can be incorporated and adapted for K-12 instruction. While the strategies were written with multilingual learners and English language learners (ELLs) in mind, they can be used to support academic language and content instruction for all students.

The strategies were developed by ELL experts Beth Skelton *and* Tan Huynh, and some of the strategies are featured in their book, [Long-Term Success for Experienced Multilinguals](#). Additional strategies, visuals, and resources were developed by Lydia Breiseth, Director of Colorín Colorado.

In this guide:

- About the Strategies
- How to Use These Strategies
- Activity Ideas for Professional Learning
- Addressing Colleagues' Questions



See the [related slide deck online](#).

“The ELL Strategy Library from Colorín Colorado not only provides clear, step-by-step guidance but also suggestions for adapting instruction to meet the needs of students at different language proficiency levels.

With the inclusion of lessons learned, ideas for co-teaching, videos, images, diagrams, and detailed examples, teachers can confidently implement these strategies. They appreciate ideas that are both straightforward and grounded in the best practices and research.”



About the Strategies



You can search and filter the strategies by skill, proficiency level, language domain (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), and targeted keywords. In addition, each strategy includes the following components:

- **Strategy Overview:** A quick introduction to the strategy and its purpose
- **How This Strategy Supports Students' Language Development:** Additional information about how the strategy can support students' academic language development across different language domains (reading, writing, speaking, listening) and specific areas, such as vocabulary or background knowledge
- **Step-by-Step Instructions:** Instructions for using the strategy from start to finish, including tips on what to prepare beforehand and how to incorporate students' home languages within the strategy
- **Differentiation:** Ideas for differentiating strategies for different language proficiency levels (e.g., Entering/Emerging, Expanding, Developing)
- **Lessons Learned:** Tips to help maximize success based on educators' own experiences
- **Co-Teaching Considerations:** Ideas for how to collaborate around the strategy, including different roles for classroom teachers and ELL specialists
- **Examples:** Examples of what the strategies look like in practice, such as text, images, slides, videos, or related resources
- **Recommended Resources:** Additional information, research reports, or classroom materials related to the strategy

How to Share These Strategies

You are welcome to share these strategies in settings, such as:

- Email or newsletters
- Resource collections, lists, and Padlets
- Co-teaching, collaboration, and coaching
- Printing strategies for colleagues



“This is a game-changing resource for educators. I excitedly shared it with the site coaches I work with, and they loved it!”

How to Use These Strategies



To get started, we recommend choosing just a single strategy to explore. You may wish to browse the collection or try filtering or searching first.

Example: Vocabulary Strategies

For example, let's say you'd like to find some strategies related to vocabulary. You can filter for "Vocabulary" under "Academic Language Feature" and see what might be a good fit for your lesson and your goals for instruction. Some options include the following:

Introducing a new unit

- [Pre-teaching Content and Vocabulary](#)
- [Using Cognates](#)
- [Realia and Manipulatives](#)

Reviewing vocabulary

- [Match, Sort, and Order](#)
- [Photo Gallery](#)



Student Input

In addition, look for ways to engage students around strategies – not just by moving through the steps of the strategies, but giving them the tools to use these strategies independently and by asking them to pay attention to what supports their learning. You can learn a lot by asking students what is working (or not!).

For example, in their book, Ms. Skelton and Mr. Huynh share the following student response to the question, "What is your favorite class?" Here is one student's response.



Biology is my favorite class because I love learning about science. I want to study medicine after high school. The teacher gives step-by-step directions for every project, so I know exactly how to complete it. She also labels pictures and explains the concepts clearly. (p. 49)



Activity Ideas for Professional Learning

You can also use the strategy library as part of professional learning, giving educators a chance to explore the library and share what they are finding with each other. You can bring up the strategy library with [a link](#) or [QR code](#). The [related slide deck](#) provides prompts for these activities.

1. Strategy Library Exploration

Introduce the strategy library with the following activity in a group setting. (This works best if each person has a laptop, but it can be done on phones or tablets as well.)

1. Pair partners together and assign each person a role (Partner A/Partner B).
2. Ask each person to bring up the strategy library on their device. (You can also provide guidance on what type of strategy to look for.)
3. Ask each person to explore a single strategy.
4. Use a turn and talk activity so they can summarize what they learned. Ask Partner A to share what they learned, how they might use this strategy, and how they might describe this strategy to a colleague. Then ask Partner B to do the same.
5. Ask each person to fill out the [Strategy Library graphic organizer](#) at the end of this guide, which prompts them to write down how they might use and share the strategies they have explored.
6. If you have time, repeat the activity with a new strategy and ask people to share their findings and ideas with the larger group.

Discussion questions

Additional questions for discussion might include:

1. What strategy are you excited to take back to your setting and why?
2. How can you use this strategy in your instruction or collaboration?
3. What is an example of how you might use this strategy in content instruction?

2. Strategy BINGO!

After exploring the strategy library, participants can also play ELL Strategy BINGO! This will likely work best in a group of people who are meeting in person and can move around the room. A related [BINGO! Board](#) is available at the end of this guide.

3. Strategy Focus



Another option is to take a deep dive on a particular strategy. You may wish to choose a strategy ahead of time, or you can poll participants about the strategies they'd like to learn more about.

A deep dive could include sharing an overview of the strategy, asking participants to read through the strategy, and then inviting participants':

- Observations
- Questions
- Ideas for how and where to use the strategy

To take it a step further, you could then try a strategy brainstorm activity, described below.

For example, let's say that your attendees have questions about reading grade-level text with ELLs (or they are getting those questions from colleagues). You might focus on [Text Engineering](#), which includes a related slide deck, activity, and graphic organizer.

After reading the strategy and discussing ideas for application, you might ask participants to think of a situation where this strategy would be relevant, try their own text engineering exercise, and plan how to introduce and practice this strategy with students.

4. Strategy Brainstorm

You may also wish to try an activity where participants get practice looking for strategies around certain topics. This is good experience to prepare for co-teaching situations where teachers may be working on a wide range of topics, sometimes with little advance notice.

Here's how it could work.

1. Share a sample topic or a few topics that might come up in a lesson.
2. In pairs or small groups, ask participants to choose a couple of strategies that they could use to support that topic. (You can also ask them to write their answers in a shared document or use the [graphic organizer](#) at the end of this guide.)
3. Then ask the pairs to share their ideas with the larger group so that people will hear a range of ideas on the same topics.
4. You could then repeat the activity, asking participants to choose a topic they have recently co-taught or will be teaching soon.

Sample Topic: Community Helpers (Elementary)



During this exercise, a group of elementary teachers came up with the following strategies that could be used to teach about community helpers.

- [Picture Retell](#)
- [Realia and Manipulatives](#)
- [Using Multimedia Resources](#)
- [Images \(Photos, Illustrations and More\)](#)
- [Sentence Expansion](#)
- [Match, Sort, Order](#)
- [Student-Generated Questions](#)
- [Picture Word Inductive Model \(PWIM\)](#)

One group wrote, "Using the PWIM, we might label a community helper scene with nouns first (name, equipment, places). Then we would add sentences describing what they are doing/what is happening. We would also color code nouns and verbs. Students could use content words and sentences to share information with a partner using the annotated image, rehearsing orally and in writing."

Sample Topic: Invasive Species (Secondary)

In the same session, a group of secondary teachers came up with these ideas about invasive species.

- [Using Multimedia Resources](#)
- [Student-Generated Questions](#)
- [Sentence Starters/Frames](#)
- [Collaborative Reading Protocol](#)
- [Sentence Deconstruction](#)
- [Text Engineering](#)
- [Cognates](#)
- [Annotated Diagrams](#)

Their ideas included the following:

- Show images of the zebra mussel.
- Working in pairs, students chunk and summarize text.
- Use images with labels to reinforce cognates and make connections to prior knowledge.
- Identify words with multiple meanings ('lantern' vs 'lantern fly').
- Ecology: Explain the ecological consequences when foreign species are introduced into a system by using a "before" and "after" photo. What do you see and notice? What do you think happened? Use claims, evidence, and reasoning.
- Take a stance! Determine if introducing an invasive species is "good" or "bad." What are benefits/consequences? Use "turn and talk" and use evidence to support reasoning.

5. Strategy Modeling



For further extension, you may wish to have participants use the strategy as part of the activity. For example, you can model the [Collaborative Reading Protocol](#) as partners read through one of the selected strategies together:

1. Partner A reads the first chunk of text or first section of the strategy.
2. Partner B starts a discussion about that section by asking a question, making a connection, or summarizing the information.
3. Partner A adds ideas to the discussion.
4. Partner B reads the second section aloud.
5. Partner A starts a discussion about that section by asking a question, making a connection, or summarizing the information.

After they read and discuss that one strategy together, have them go to the Collaborative Reading Protocol strategy and quickly review the steps they just experienced with their partner. Debrief how the protocol worked for them and what other modifications they would make.

Addressing Colleagues' Questions

Some colleagues may raise questions about whether it's "fair," appropriate, or helpful to learners to use scaffolds and ideas featured in the Strategy Library. The goal of the strategies is not to water down the content, but rather to increase students' access to more rigorous content.

Ms. Skelton and Mr. Huynh have heard this question many times in their work. They write,

When we share these strategies to make assessments more equitable, some teachers express concern that they give experienced multilinguals an "unfair advantage"...In response, we share that even highly experienced and skilled mountain climbers use scaffolds such as ropes and harnesses. Their tools do not shrink the height of the mountain. They just make climbing the mountain possible. (p. 62)

One suggestion they offer is to share examples of student work produced with and without these kinds of strategies and scaffolds. You can also encourage educators to do their own research by trying a strategy and comparing how students did before and after. While it may take some trial and error, many educators embrace these ideas (and share them with others) once they see what is possible!

References

Huynh, T. and Skelton, B. (2023). [Long-Term Success for Experienced Multilinguals](#). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.



ELL Strategy Library: BINGO!

Use this board to play BINGO after exploring the Colorín Colorado ELL Strategy Library! Find colleagues whose strategies include the features below.

Teaches background knowledge	Involves complex sentences	Relates to data	Includes ideas for incorporating students' home languages
Uses visuals	Supports listening	Teaches vocabulary	Uses technology
Supports writing	Uses sentence frames	Supports comprehension	Involves peer collaboration
Involves questioning	Can be used to review content and vocabulary	Teaches sentence structure	Supports reading
Can be used to introduce a new concept	Can be used in social and emotional learning	Supports speaking	Involves movement

ELL Strategy Library: Graphic Organizer



Use this graphic organizer to make notes about the strategies you explore in the Colorín Colorado ELL Strategy Library!

Name of strategy:	
My questions:	My ideas for using / sharing this strategy:
Name of strategy:	
My questions:	My ideas for using / sharing this strategy:
Name of strategy:	
My questions:	My ideas for using / sharing this strategy: