

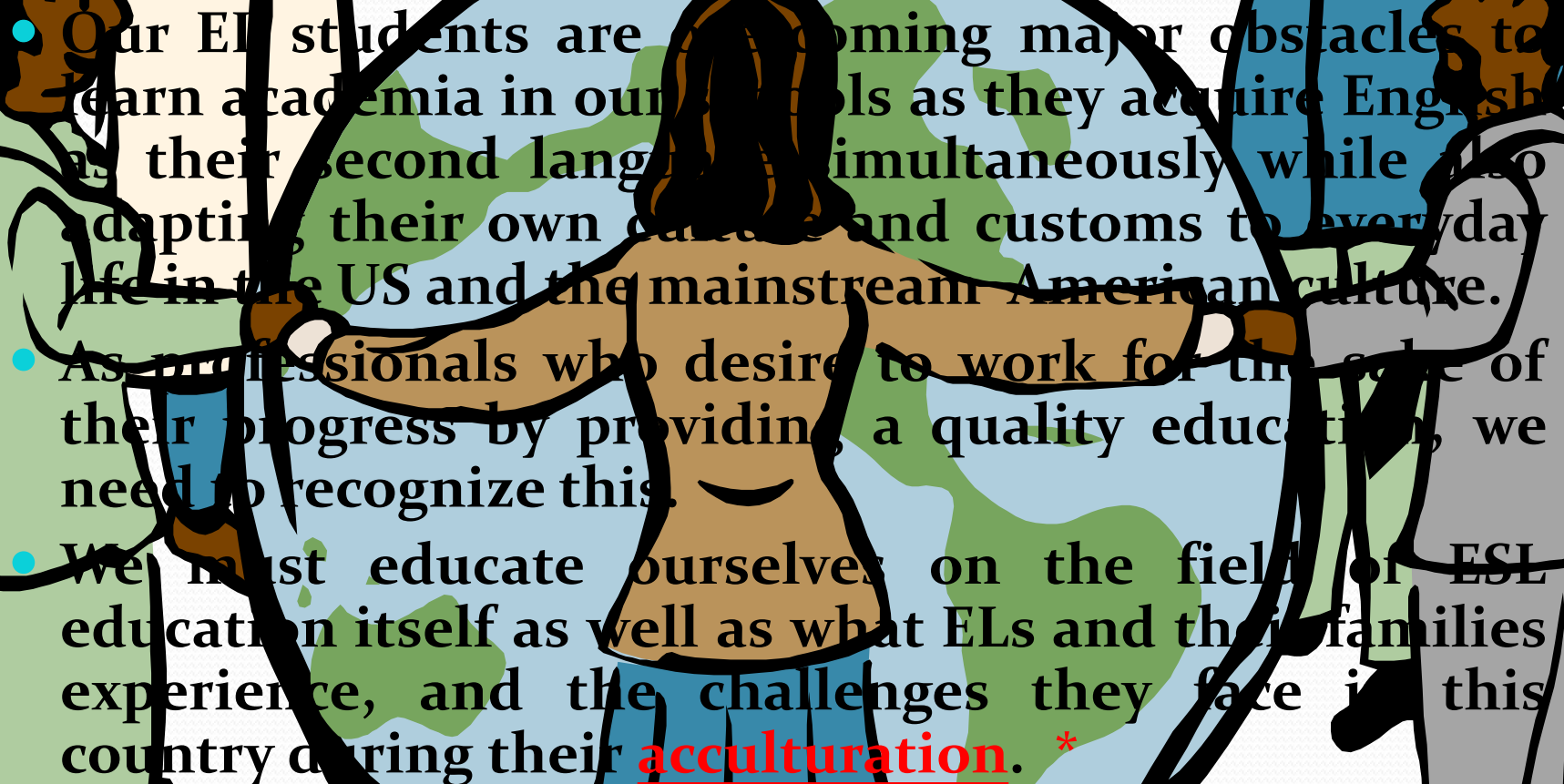
An illustration on a blue background with white clouds and green trees. A woman in a white shirt and black skirt is jumping rope over two people lying on the ground. The text is overlaid on the scene.

ESL Education: Understanding ELs and their families

**What we can do to help improve EL student learning
and close the communication gap with parents of ELs**

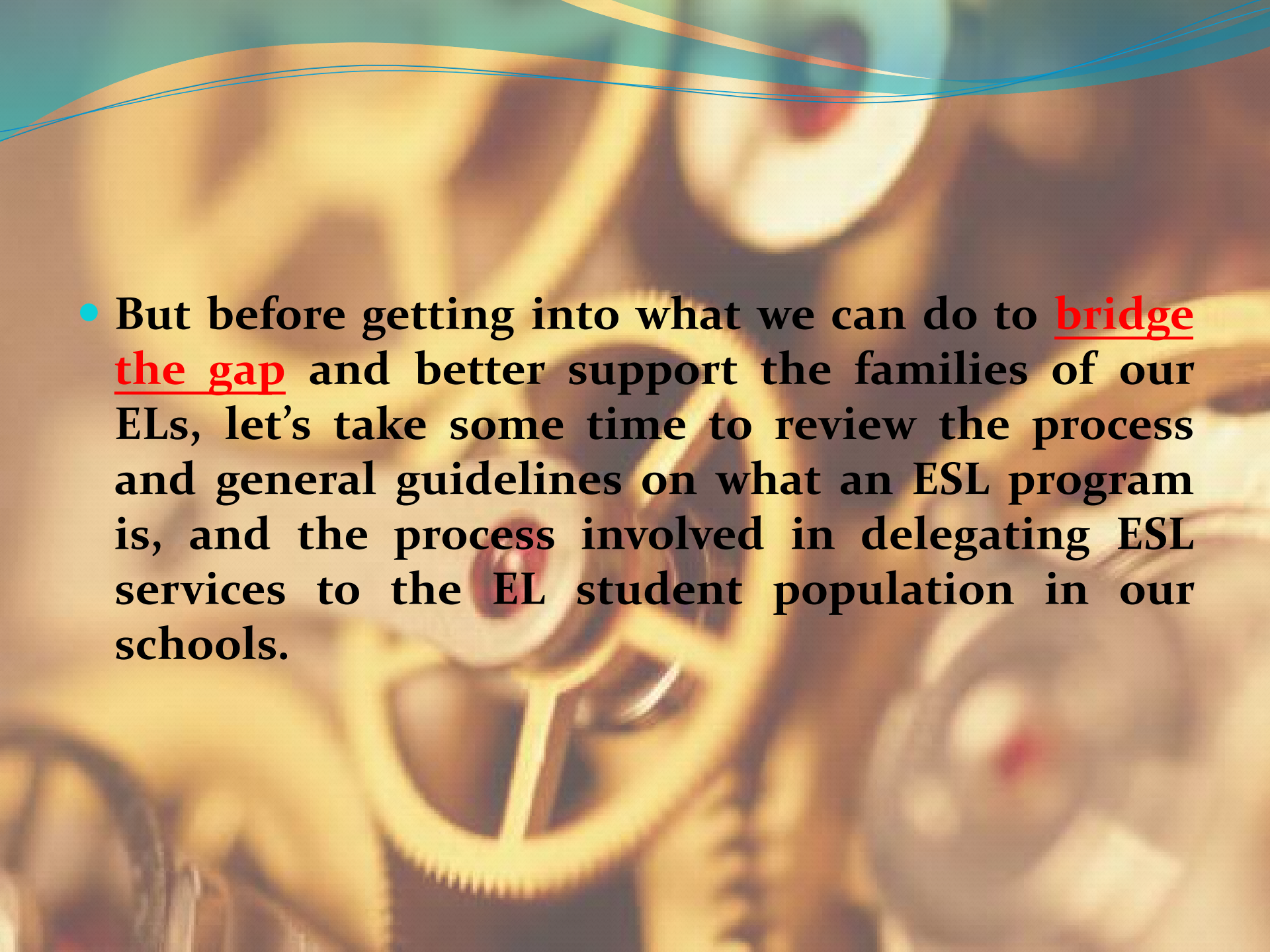
Becoming more familiar with ESL Education . . .

- There has been much research throughout the past 40 years on second language acquisition.
- Scholars in the field such as Stephen Krashen, Lev Vygotsky, Merrill Swain, Joseph H. Greenberg, Noam Chomsky, Jim Cummins, and Michael Marzano and others have contributed remarkable findings and solutions on how we develop and acquire language, and the best ways to go about teaching a second or foreign language.
- In order to truly understand the field and the situation, there must be a strong background knowledge of second language learning and the aspects that affect those learners we are challenged to educate. The latter involves ruling out misconceptions of second language acquisition that for years have plagued the progress of EL students in our American school systems.

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- An illustration of four diverse people of various ethnicities holding hands in a circle around a stylized globe. The globe shows continents in green and oceans in light blue. The people are drawn in a simple, bold style with thick black outlines. The background is a light blue gradient with some white lines.
- Our EL students are becoming major obstacles to learn academia in our schools as they acquire English as their second language simultaneously while also adapting their own culture and customs to everyday life in the US and the mainstream American culture.
 - As professionals who desire to work for the sake of their progress by providing a quality education, we need to recognize this.
 - We must educate ourselves on the field of ESL education itself as well as what ELs and their families experience, and the challenges they face in this country during their acculturation. *

Acculturation

- Acculturation is a developmental process of change in which individuals usually **adjust to a new culture** by **merging** their **native traditions** with those of the *new culture*.
- From this process stress results, which can and does hinder the progress of our EL students and their families. They may be coping with:
 - Anxiety and/or depression (by not feeling accepted or tolerated)
 - Feelings of marginality and isolation (think of the only Muslim student in a class who celebrates Ramadan while the rest of the children in class share stories of Christmas)
 - Identity confusion
 - Difficulty in school performance
 - Family stress

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- But before getting into what we can do to **bridge the gap** and better support the families of our ELs, let's take some time to review the process and general guidelines on what an ESL program is, and the process involved in delegating ESL services to the EL student population in our schools.

The First Steps of an ESL program

- A school needs to first identify students who may require ESL services, and this is done through a multi-step process:
 - At registration, the home language survey (HLS) is given for parents/guardians to fill out. We have several different translations of the document. *
 - The **Home Language Survey (HLS)** is the initial document ESL teachers use to identify *potential EL students as meeting the criteria of LEP status*. Following the review of the **HLS**, an oral assessment (or speaking test) is first administered to those students whose first language is not English.
 - The assessment used by Winthrop is the W-APT exam, which entails subtests in speaking, listening, reading and writing. The W-APT is standard-based and measures English language proficiency, and is also used for placement purposes for the ACCESS for ELLs. If a child tests as fluent (Level 5 or 6), he/she does not require services, but if so, then the next step is to decide how much instructional support needs to be provided.



“To be or *not to be* serviced.”

- Assessment is an integral piece of identifying those English learners (ELs) who need specialized instruction (available in such programs as sheltered English, ESL, or bilingual education). The W-APT therefore becomes the basis for placement in an appropriate program of instruction. Assessment data will reveal in which tier an EL is placed; thus the required services times of ESL instruction *to be delivered* can be decided.
- In the fall of 2013, Massachusetts began using the **ACCESS FOR ELLs** and the **W-APT** through **WIDA** which is directly aligned with the **Common Core State Standards**.
- **It is crucial to try to avoid generalizations. Just because a student may speak another language; that does not necessarily mean he/she requires linguistic support through an ESL program.**

EL Student Placement

- Once a student is identified as a limited English proficiency speaker (LEP), the next step is to delegate ESL services, which should adhere to official state guidelines (proposed by the DESE) of required hours of direct ESL instruction as presented below:

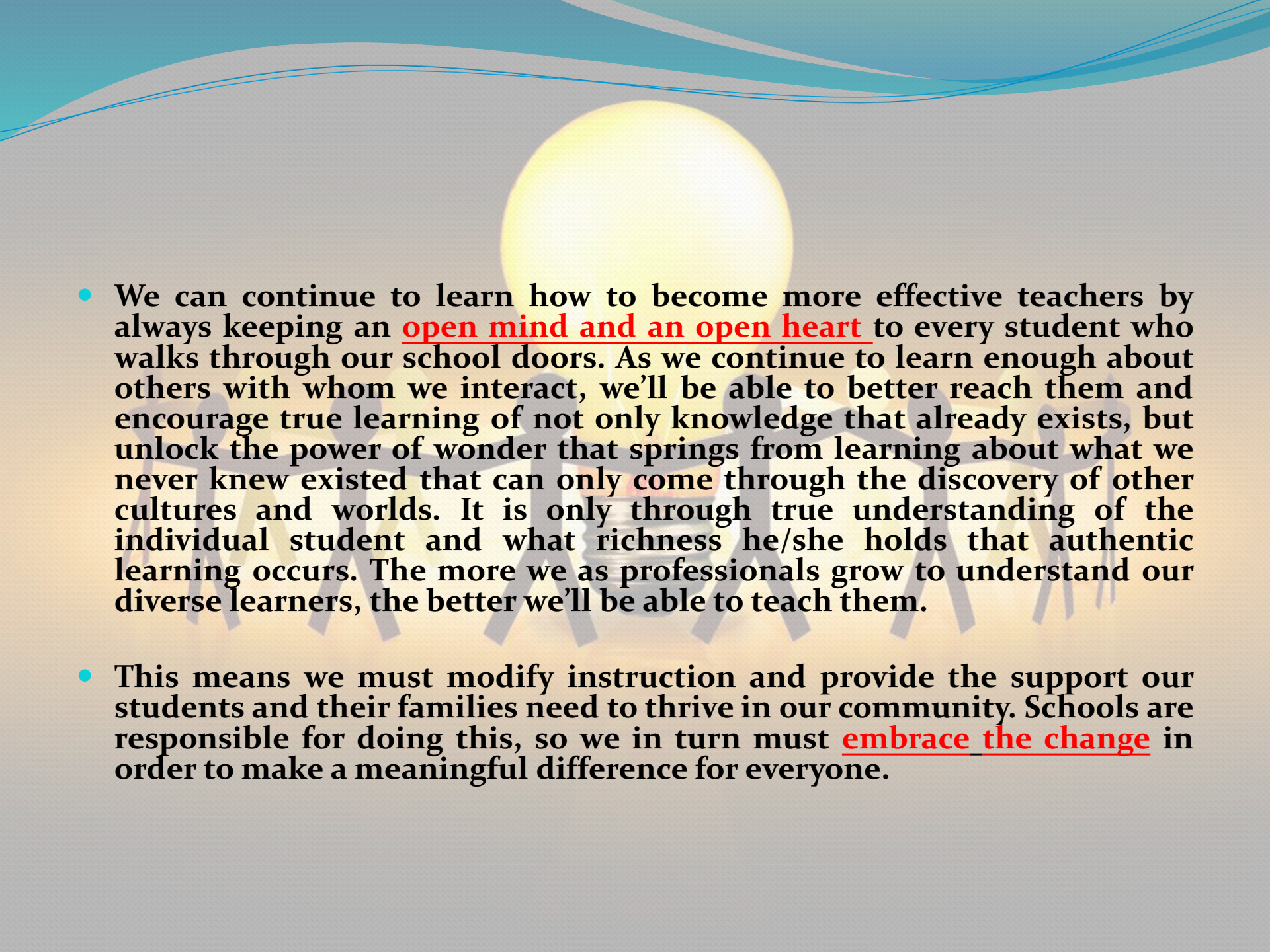
Levels 1-3	At least 90 minutes or up to 2.25 hours daily— Level 1 ELs or low Level 2 are recommended for 2.25 hr.
Levels 4-5	At least 45 minutes daily
Level 6 (May be students recently reclassified as FEL)	Fluent English speakers (No services), or ELs recently reclassified as FEL and monitored for four years.

EL Placement (continued)

- When placing ELs, educators must consider a variety of factors. Here are the **most important factors**:
 - student language proficiency level (as determined from assessment data)
 - student educational background (there may be gaps in a student's education)
 - students' language groups
 - staff (who is trained or would be the best fit for ELs in her/his classroom)
 - program models (co-teach, pull out, push in, etc.)
 - available resources
 - student age (a student may be older than the average age at same grade level)

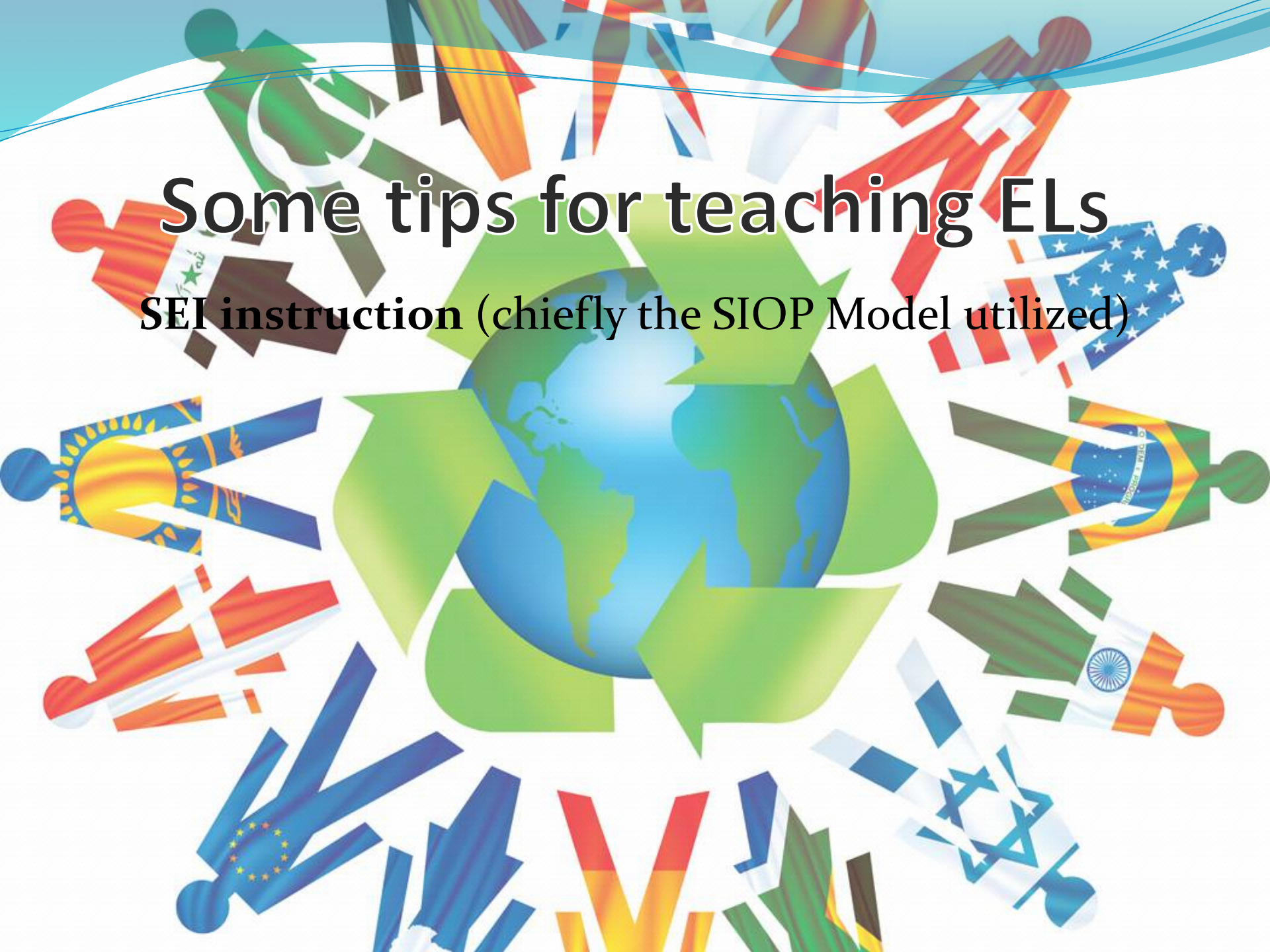
What Can We Do to Help?



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- We can continue to learn how to become more effective teachers by always keeping an **open mind and an open heart** to every student who walks through our school doors. As we continue to learn enough about others with whom we interact, we'll be able to better reach them and encourage true learning of not only knowledge that already exists, but unlock the power of wonder that springs from learning about what we never knew existed that can only come through the discovery of other cultures and worlds. It is only through true understanding of the individual student and what richness he/she holds that authentic learning occurs. The more we as professionals grow to understand our diverse learners, the better we'll be able to teach them.
 - This means we must modify instruction and provide the support our students and their families need to thrive in our community. Schools are responsible for doing this, so we in turn must **embrace the change** in order to make a meaningful difference for everyone.

Some tips for teaching ELs

SEI instruction (chiefly the SIOP Model utilized)



Modify + scaffold + engage + accommodate + progress monitor

- There are many tips and strategies to support ELs in the general classroom. Here are some key strategies (Échevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008):
- **ALWAYS** use visuals (either written on the white board or handed out) Use picture dictionaries such as bilingual Oxford picture dictionaries. *You can also do an image search on Google and print out pictures corresponding to lessons or specific vocabulary, or simply use the classroom computer as a resource for lessons or activities (Clip art in Microsoft Word works as well).*
- **Total Physical Response (TPR)**: As you model procedures, be very expressive and use gestures to help with directions such as “flip your book over.” Actually show such actions as you speak of them. Act out Math problems. Have the students act out what new words mean. In other words, connect with all types of learners; the auditory, visual and kinesthetic. Please don't rely on lecturing; be hands-on and engaging.

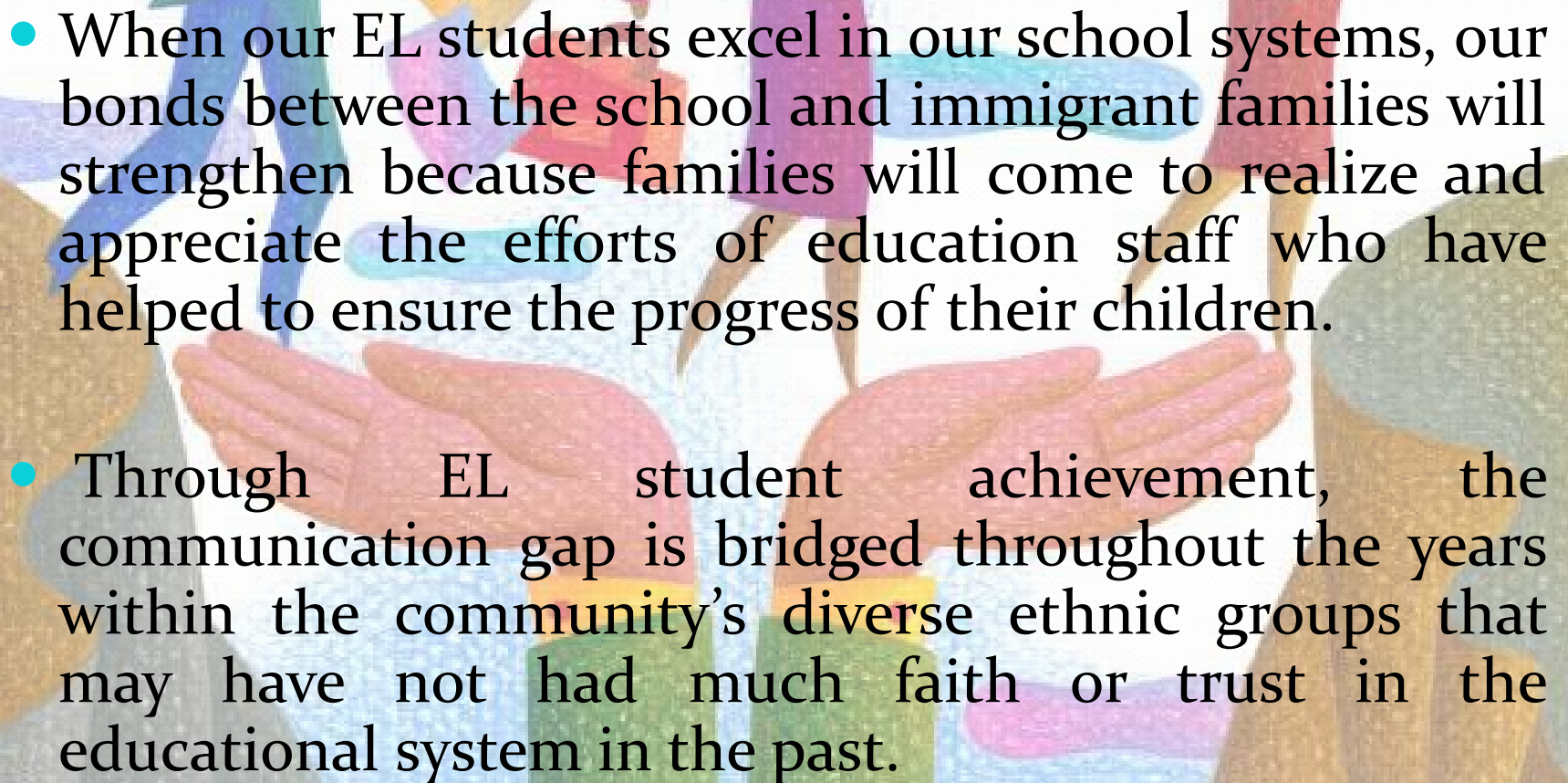
- **Label objects** in the classroom with masking/painter's tape. It will only take you a one-time effort of 15-20 minutes to do this, and it will be of use the whole year. This proves to be an effortless way to direct Level 1-2 ELs in learning/retaining everyday vocabulary simply by referring to labeled objects such as *chair, desk, table, clock, etc.* Just physically direct the EL student to the labeled objects in the room. Also, be sure there's job charts and calendars with pictures posted in the classroom.
- **Speak slower (slightly) and clearer** when speaking directly to an EL student and try to stray away from idioms as much as possible (*Idiomatic expressions will confuse any individual whose native language is not your own, especially when a child's culture is very different than yours. They simply won't "get what yah sayin'" or "catch your drift" or "feel you" or "follow you."*)
- Always try **to provide a list of key vocabulary for each lesson** so it is easier to follow and understand the content (In a sense you are introducing and teaching the meanings of such words before they are encountered in text) Pre-reading exercises ALWAYS WORK.
- Understand the difference between BICS and CALP and that progressing across the second language continuum is a process, not a set formula (Cummins, 1979).

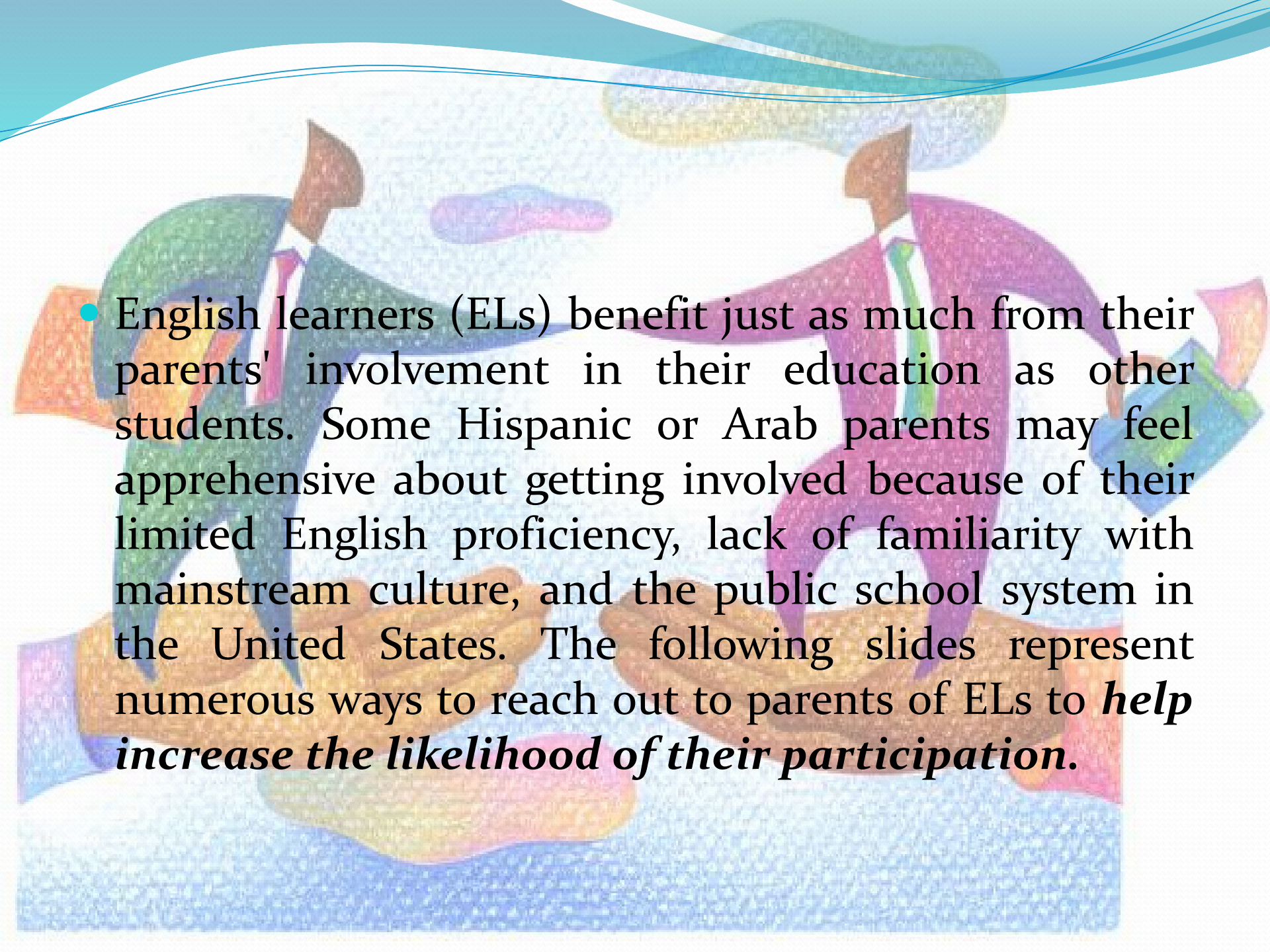
Offer relatable texts to link to your diverse students' cultures

- “In a 1979 study on cross-cultural comprehension, subjects from the U.S. and India read letters about an American and an Indian wedding and recalled them following interpolated tasks. When subjects read the passage about the wedding from their own culture (*the native passage*), researchers observed the following behaviors: subjects read the passage more rapidly, recalled a larger amount of information, and produced more culturally appropriate elaborations of the content. When the subjects read the *foreign passage* about the other culture's wedding, they read the passage more slowly, recalled much less information, and produced more culturally-based distortions. The results indicated that cultural context influences comprehension, and that this phenomenon occurs regardless of an individual's background.” (Steffensen, Joag-Deve, & Anderson, 1979)
- Providing relatable texts can help decrease feelings of isolation and anxiety as other students learn and show interest in new cultures and ideas associated with the more diverse student body (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).
- Teach about different traditions and holidays **to ALL as part of the core curriculum.** Try to make this a school goal, *not just a goal for ELs.*

Supporting Families and Increasing Parental Involvement



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- When our EL students excel in our school systems, our bonds between the school and immigrant families will strengthen because families will come to realize and appreciate the efforts of education staff who have helped to ensure the progress of their children.
 - Through EL student achievement, the communication gap is bridged throughout the years within the community's diverse ethnic groups that may have not had much faith or trust in the educational system in the past.

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- An illustration of two men in suits shaking hands over a globe. The man on the left is wearing a green suit and a pink tie, while the man on the right is wearing a purple suit and a green tie. They are standing on a blue and white globe. The background is a light blue and white pattern with colorful abstract shapes. The text is overlaid on the globe and the men's suits.
- English learners (ELs) benefit just as much from their parents' involvement in their education as other students. Some Hispanic or Arab parents may feel apprehensive about getting involved because of their limited English proficiency, lack of familiarity with mainstream culture, and the public school system in the United States. The following slides represent numerous ways to reach out to parents of ELs to ***help increase the likelihood of their participation.***

Welcome Parents into the School

- **Arrange for a "tour" of the school** within the first semester; an orientation session for parents of English language learners. With a bilingual facilitator, explain and answer any questions about things such as state standards, assessments, school expectations, language program options, etc. It would be helpful to actually walk parents around the school and introduce them to the staff.
- **Recruit parent volunteers**
 - If parents are willing to volunteer their time, find out what their interests and skills are. Parents of ELs may be able to help with a variety of activities, such as telling stories, teaching a dance, teaching a craft, or making a presentation.

Webcast with Dr. Rebecca Palacios

<http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid61485783001?bckey=AQ~~,AAAAAFwNJhQ~,2UA9EcWU7ePGeIldbqtVyVPBCqxmomOQO&bclid=79582357001&bctid=79404554001>

Clip: 2:10 to 5:43

Use Families' Preferred Language(s)

- Without a common language, very little communication can occur. Find a bilingual interpreter who can translate for parent-teacher conferences, back-to-school nights, meetings, and regular communication.
- Translate the written communications that you send home (if you can).
 - Find a way to send home personal notes and materials in the native language of each family. Reputable translation software is a great resource for this. This will keep parents in the loop on issues such as report cards, school events, and homework. **You can use a free online translator that despite not being accurate, may still help** parents understand the school and/or important documents. (Due to free online programs' inaccuracy, you should still provide the text in English)
- Learn some of another language yourself.
 - Even if it is just some common words and greetings, using a family's home language with parents/guardians will make them feel more welcome (Colorín Colorado, 2014).

Educate parents about the U.S. school system and how your school operates

- To support their children's education, the parents of your EL students need to understand how the U.S. school system and culture work. Listen to parents' concerns, answer their questions, and provide them with written materials in their native language (or at least in English) in a way that may be more simple and comprehensive to them.
- Most misconceptions about diverse families stem from their responses to mainstream culture which they do not yet quite understand, so coming off as “rude” may occur. It can be bewildering for diverse families if the difference from US culture to theirs is too drastic. The important thing to remember is **not to judge**, but to kindly address and accommodate families so they are more aware of the school's expectations and guidelines.

Explain how the School Works

- **Review school hours, school vacations/holidays, school rules and the school's administrative hierarchy.**
- **The school curriculum, standards, benchmarks, and materials**
- **Teacher/school expectations**
 - **Explain that teachers hope and expect that parents will help with homework, read books, tell stories, take their children to the library, visit the classroom, and become involved in the school.**
- **Parent rights**
 - **Make certain that your EL parents know about their rights regarding access to interpreters and translated materials from your school, free lunch programs, your school's EL curriculum, supplementary school services that may be available to their children, and anything else that parents at your school have a right to know (Colorín' Colorado, 2014).**

Encourage parents to maintain the home language

- Working with parents around the issue of home language use can be challenging, as parents may hear from many sources that it is important for them to start speaking English with their children as soon as possible.

The important messages to get across to parents are:

- Children will need to continue to speak their home language if they are to become and remain bilingual.
- Communication within the family provides children with necessary information about the world.
- Families should communicate in the language they feel most comfortable using.
- Research shows that children with a strong foundation in their home language achieve greater long term success in school. (Tabors, 1997)

Establish collaborative relationships

- **Reaching out** and attempting to collaborate with families is **so important**. School professionals must remember that immigrant families might not share a philosophy of active participation in schools. Furthermore, immigrant families in need or in crisis may not consider approaching an outsider for help. Nevertheless, the benefits of home-school collaboration are well established, and culturally competent school professionals can help bridge the differences between the home and school cultures (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992).

We can do so by providing:

- After-school child care programs that provide homework support
- Family involvement programs that support the development of reading and mathematical reasoning
- Parenting workshops and parent support groups
- Special services through community-based, culturally based social service agencies

Addressing Parental Concerns

- Some parents have shared that they thought it would confuse their children to learn two languages at once, or may slow the child's ability to learn English, thus compromising their academic progress and eventual success in an English speaking environment.
- Some parents reported a communication pattern emerging over time where their child spoke to them only in English, and they spoke to their child only in Spanish. But when it came to communicate with their *abuela* (*grandmother in Spanish*), their child could no longer communicate with her.
- Some parents reported trying to speak to their child only in English even though their English was limited. **Over time, this stunts the richness of conversations at home with their child. This effort has also been a common mistake educators have made over the years, which generally reflects a negative attitude towards being bilingual.**

Shed some **light** on the topic

The truth about learning a second language

- It's an **advantage**, **not a stigma!**
- Speaking a second language such as Spanish will in most cases increase job opportunities in the future as Spanish continues to become more prevalent in the US.
- Modeling language that is more complex and complete; therefore expressing content that is more cognitively challenging is pertinent. If this isn't done in either the home language or the target language, we aren't helping anyone.
- It is neither beneficial nor desirable to encourage the use of a second language by parents whose proficiency is very limited. This only reduces the quality of interactions in the home, and takes away from the exposure to richer language which would be used in a family's native tongue.
- Numerous studies have revealed there is a social and cognitive advantage to being bilingual. There was a recent article published on www.wired.com:
 - **The Benefits of Being Bilingual** By Jonah Lehrer
 - <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2012/05/the-benefits-of-being-bilingual/>

Useful and Interesting Links



- **The Benefits of Being Bilingual** By Jonah Lehrer
• <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2012/05/the-benefits-of-being-bilingual/>
- **Dual Language Learning: What Does It Take?**
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/eecd/dual%20language%20learners%20and%20their%20families/learning%20in%20two%20languages/duallanguagelea.htm#Findings>
- **Color in Colorado**
• <http://www.colorincolorado.org>

A dirt path winds through a lush green field, bordered by a rustic wooden fence and a line of trees. The scene is bright and vibrant, suggesting a peaceful, rural setting. The path leads towards a distant horizon where a white building is visible through the trees.

Questions?

The path to the greatest progress is paved on the grounds of a quality education.

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