

# ENL DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER



## Culturally Responsive Celebrations

*The United States has more religious diversity than almost any other nation, which can make the “holiday season” tricky for schools. While it is okay to acknowledge holidays in the classroom, it is important to take a culturally-responsive approach to these celebrations. Here are some tips:*

### **Move Beyond December**

*It is imperative that teachers recognize that many holidays fall outside of the month of December and, in fact, the season of winter altogether. Lessons should focus on more than just Christmas, Kwanza, and Hanukkah to include other important religious and cultural dates. For example, Passover and Yom Kippur are major holidays in the Jewish religion, but are often taught less than Hanukkah simply because they don’t fall in December. Muslims celebrate Ramadan based on the lunar calendar, which means that it is celebrated at a different time each year. Moving beyond December can help create an inclusive classroom for those who aren’t celebrating a holiday during the “holiday season.”*

### **Use Holidays as a Way to Explore Important Themes**

*Rather than focusing on the basic who, what, where, why, and how questions surrounding celebrations, lessons should instead focus on identifying and explaining universal themes, such as peace, thankfulness, caring, and renewal. Students should have opportunities to investigate similarities between the cultures, and also to explore texts and resources that highlight the differences even within a cultural or religious group.*

### **Encourage Students to Explore their Own Identities**

*ALL students, whether they celebrate the mainstream holidays or not, have diverse traditions and beliefs. Allowing students time to reflect on their own celebrations can help them draw connections and see the diversity present within their own classroom. However, teachers should also be mindful that a student does not become the sole representative of a particular culture or holiday. Unless a student feels comfortable, they should never be responsible for teaching the class about their culture.*

*[Click For More Information](#)*

## Teaching Tip



### Gradual Release of Responsibility Model

Did you know that a recent study showed that on average teachers are talking up to 70-80% of the class period (Gewertz, 2020)? If that is the case, how do you think our ELLs are getting enough time to think, analyze, and respond when they are being “talked at”? Over the past few years, there has been a shift in becoming less “teacher-centered” and moving towards being “student-centered,” but there are still some major areas of improvement that we must focus on in order to create classroom learning environments for our ELLs to thrive in.

If you are trying to set up your classroom for success with ELLs in mind, incorporating the gradual release of responsibility model is one of the best ways to do that.

Here are 3 reasons why:

- It will give your students clear expectations to imitate and follow.
- It will help bring balance to teacher talk vs. student talk.
- It will help our ELLs slowly take in the information, have scaffolded support, and push them to independently work on the skills they have been focusing on.

## Family Communication

There are many ways that educators and administrators can connect with families of English language learners (ELLs). This communication can be challenging to figure out, but in many cases, it can make a tremendous difference in students' learning.

Talking Points is an app that translates messages between teachers and families in many different languages. Here's how it works:

- Parents receive the messages as a text message and do not need to download an app.
- It's free for individuals.
- Translations are done automatically but human interpreters are available if needed.
- You can send mass texts as well and teachers' numbers are protected.
- This is a district approved method of communication.
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[CLICK HERE for the Talking Points Website](#)

Communicating with Families About Academics  
Dos and Don'ts

Communication should be...	Do...	Don't...
<b>manageable for teachers and families.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pick info that is the most important for families to know.</li> <li>• keep learning support recommendations short and sweet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collect new information just to send.</li> </ul>
<b>regular.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• share on a consistent basis (Doesn't have to be every week).</li> <li>• pick how often you will be sharing information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• spend more time than you have to send information home.</li> </ul>
<b>explicitly explained to families.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• follow up with families who are unfamiliar with the system to make sure they understand it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• forget about families who aren't responsive to or seemingly interested in the system.</li> </ul>

For a full list of Do's and Don'ts - [CLICK HERE](#)

## Where Are They Now?



*Nini Doan-Nguyen is a Gates Chili Graduate ('14) and former ENL student who has just been accepted to medical school! "Even though it was a long time ago, I definitely remember my time in ESL class at Armstrong with Miss Taylor and Mrs. Reilly."*

*Nini studied Medical Humanities and Bioethics at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry. She also studied Biology/Pre-Med and cognitive neuropsychology at Nazareth College.*

*She has worked as an emergency department medical scribe and is currently working as an Outpatient Access Specialist at University of Rochester Medical Center. Gates Chili is so proud of you, Nini!*



Mrs. Reilly (former teacher) and Nini in ENL Class

## Where Are They Now?



*Minh Cao came to Gates Chili Middle School in grade 6 from Vietnam. Minh owns a nail salon in Canandaigua where he lives with his wife and two daughters. "My best memories at Gates are going on field trips with all my classmates. I loved the ENL family picnic at the end of the year where everyone brought food from their home country and played games with each other. I always love Ms. Taylor, Mrs. Ordway, Mrs. Braid, Mrs. Quinlan, Mr. Chase, Mrs. McAtee, Mrs. Knapp, Mr. and Mrs. McBride, Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Howlett, Mr. Pollock, Mrs. Salgado-Givens, and Mama J (Karen Jefferson). Mama J walked me around my first year telling everybody, 'I love Mama J!'" Gates Chili couldn't be more proud of you, Minh.*



Ms. Taylor and Minh - Genesee Country Village