TEACHER RESOURCE FILE

BIG ENGLISH PLUS

INCLUDES GRAMMAR HANDBOOK

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CONTENTS

TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

Big English Plus is a comprehensive learning program designed to motivate and instruct English learners. Components have been carefully created to allow teachers to make the most of limited classroom time and resources and construct a playful, meaningful, and effective learning experience for all students. Specific lesson and unit support is provided in the Teacher's Edition for each level. The following general ideas will help you implement the program's resources successfully.

Planning Classes

Big English Plus is designed so that one level can be completed over the course of one school year at the rate of two to three Student Book pages most weeks. (Time Guidelines are provided on pages xxix–xxx.) If you have more time available, the following strategies can help you fill the time with carefully targeted learning opportunities.

- Implement enrichment, extension, and review activities highlighted in the Teacher's Edition materials for each lesson.
- Launch additional activities suggested by the Teacher's Resource Book.
- Explore ways to incorporate other *Big English Plus* components, such as the CD-ROM, Content Reader, ActiveTeach digital software, Interactive White Board, and MyEnglishLab.

Effective Warm-Ups As outlined in the Teacher's Edition, each *Big English Plus* class period begins with a Warm-Up activity designed to help students switch from thinking and speaking in their first language to English, to help them recall what they learned in earlier lessons, and to help them begin each class feeling confident. Warm-Up activities have been designed with a light touch, including many games and other types of meaningful play. Launching language lessons with enjoyable activities encourages students to adopt a positive attitude toward language acquisition.

You may choose to vary Warm-Up activities based on the other work you have done in the classroom during the day. If students have been sitting at their desks for a long time, you might decide to adapt the Warm-Up activity to include physical movement that will energize as well as motivate students. For example, to review vocabulary, you might display words or pictures on the board or classroom walls. Divide the class into two teams and give each team a flyswatter or pointer. Call out (or spell) a word as a member from each team tries to be the first to swat or point to the corresponding word or picture.

On the other hand, if students have recently engaged in physical activity, a calming Warm-Up activity will help them settle down and concentrate. For example, many "envelope activities" work well to help students focus their energy on a learning task. Give pairs or groups envelopes filled with paper slips showing vocabulary words or pictures. Students empty their envelopes and complete an activity such as matching words and pictures, drawing pictures to match words, using words in original sentences, or sorting and classifying the words.

Daily Lessons Each Warm-Up is followed by a daily lesson. An essential part of the *Big English Plus* Assessment for Learning (AFL) technique is making sure that students understand what outcomes they will achieve. The Teacher's Edition notes provide suggested language for explaining learning outcomes clearly and directly to students. Establishing this technique as a routine part of classwork involves students in their own learning, creating engaged learners who take an active role in their education.

Following the activities as presented in the student text provides a complete and comprehensive exploration of a language topic. Individual activities have been selected to support all learning styles by varying visual, auditory, tactile, and social experiences. You may wish to include your own activities from time to time to make your students feel special and empowered.

For example, using resources specific to your geographic region or to dominant cultures within your classroom can help students connect with the language goals they wish to achieve.

As learners complete daily activities, stop from time to time for quick concept checks to be sure they have understood. For example, if you have just had students learn about places in the community and want to check their understanding of the word *bakery,* you might ask a series of quick questions: *Can I buy shoes at a bakery? What can I buy at a bakery? Give me an example of a bakery near here.*

You will often need to check or review exercise answers that students found while working individually, with a partner, or in groups. The following techniques will help you vary your answer-checking routine for checking answers to ensure that students remain engaged:

- randomly call on students to give answers
- have pairs of students check each other's answers
- distribute index cards that show the answers
- make a photocopy of the answers given in the Teacher's Edition and invite students to take turns playing the role of teacher
- invite teams to write answers on the board

Application and Practice Activities Each lesson closes with an application and practice activity designed to consolidate knowledge and reinforce what has been taught. The Teacher's Edition offers specific suggestions for an engaging way to wrap up each lesson. Like Warm Up activities, these final activities are to be playful and engaging, encouraging students to recognize their strengths and acknowledge their accomplishments.

You may wish to conclude some lessons with a "Take a Minute" feedback activity. Feedback activities give you valuable information about your teaching and help you plan upcoming classes. For "Take a Minute," have students respond in writing or aloud to questions such as the following:

- *What did you learn today?*
- *Is there something you don't understand?*
- *What activity did you like best today?*
- *Is there something you want me to explain again in class?*

If you have students complete "Take a Minute" in writing, tell them NOT to sign their names on their answers and give them a minute or two to write responses. Some students will provide more honest assessments of lessons and their own progress when they know that their responses are anonymous.

Pacing Classes

Pacing refers to the rhythm and speed of the lesson or how much time is allocated to each activity. (See Time Guidelines on pages xxix–xxx and in Teacher's Edition.) The following suggestions will help you make effective pacing choices.

- Keep explanations brief and to the point in order to allow students more time to interact in English.
- Use a variety of activities to maintain interest and enthusiastic participation.
- Set clear goals and time limits for activities.
- Monitor students' performances to ensure that they spend sufficient (but not too much) time on a task.

- Move on to a new task when two-thirds to three-quarters of students have a good grasp of the activity. Note students who require further exposure to achieve similar levels of comfort with a task.

You may have a few students who finish quickly and then sit impatiently waiting for the rest of the class to catch up. They may become restless, disruptive, or misbehave. It is always a good idea to have a basket or box of extension activities for these students. Your box can include comic books or magazines in English, cartoons mounted on construction paper, word games, questionnaires, jokes, and recorded materials such as English songs or stories. Allow students to choose something from the box to occupy themselves until it is time for the whole class to move on to the next activity.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays a key role in the learning of any language. Without vocabulary, communication is impossible. Words, however, can be difficult to remember and acquire unless items have real meaning and relevance to the student's world. Students learn vocabulary naturally and instinctively when they have a real need for the words. For younger children, many vocabulary items are related to concepts they are learning in their first language, such as colors, shapes, and numbers. For older children, vocabulary items are related to their own lives (daily routines, chores, leisure activities, likes and dislikes), to their relationships (as family members, friends, and members of a community), and to their learning in school (social studies, mathematics, language arts, health, and science).

Activities in *Big English Plus* help learners learn vocabulary through a variety of tasks that stimulate a desire to communicate. The key vocabulary in each unit is presented in context and then recycled several times throughout different components. *Big English Plus* includes two necessary types of vocabulary:

- **active vocabulary**—core terms selected for their usefulness and frequency of occurrence in real communication and receptive vocabulary

- **receptive vocabulary**—non-target language that enriches thematic contexts

Every opportunity should be taken to involve students in the vocabulary learning process through a variety of techniques and activities. Use *realia* (objects from real life), pictures and picture cards, posters, kinesthetic procedures such as TPR (Total Physical Response, as developed by James J. Asher), games, craft activities, and role-playing. Have students make their own sets of flashcards, picture dictionary, word mobiles, posters, and so on. Display their work and change the displays periodically. Have teams of students make vocabulary quizzes and puzzles for each other; award team points and tally them at the end of a unit or term.

Promote awareness of language learning strategies by demonstrating techniques such as paraphrase and circumlocution; for example, "the thing you make a pencil point with" for *pencil sharpener* and "to walk or go behind someone" for *follow.* When applicable, show students that English words are often similar in form and meaning to words in other languages. Help students recognize cognates, but caution about the danger of false cognates. Point out the value of word associations to clarify meaning; for example, students can compare the meanings of the phrases *run out of time, run out of milk, run out of money,* and *run out of chalk.* At higher levels, show students the value of building word family charts listing the different parts of speech and forms a word may take, such as the nouns *photograph, photographer, photography,* the verb *photograph,* the adjective *photographic,* and the adverb *photographically.*

In addition, provide class training in effective use of dictionaries and other reference sources. Help students realize that dictionaries provide more information than just the meaning of words: draw their attention to parts of speech, pronunciation guides, examples of words in sentences, symbols, spellings, pictures, and word origins. (See Using a Dictionary on page 100.) Encourage the use of level-appropriate monolingual English dictionaries, such as the following:

- *Word by Word Basic Picture Dictionary* (Longman)
- *Photo Dictionary of American English* (Longman)
- *Basic Dictionary of American English* (Longman)
- *Essential Activator* (Longman)

Finally, encourage learners to take advantage of media and technology resources, such as radio stations that play songs in English, TV programs that may be subtitled, comic books, magazines, newspapers, and Internet sites.

Vocabulary Notebooks

Encourage students to develop personal vocabulary notebooks in which they collect words they know, as well as words they want to learn.

- For beginning students, notebooks may involve cutting pictures out of magazines or drawing pictures. A blank address book is very useful as a personal picture dictionary because it comes divided alphabetically. Encourage students to write the corresponding English word next to each picture.
- For advanced students, notebooks can include words as well as parts of speech, definitions, synonyms, and antonyms. Have students copy target language into their vocabulary notebooks, but also allow them to include words that they find on their own. They might include words they have heard in songs or jokes, words that relate to hobbies and interests, words that look strange or have interesting sounds, and so on.

Grammar

The activities in *Big English Plus* are designed to involve students in the discovery of the language as they work with the Student Book, classroom activities, Workbook, and other components. Grammar lessons are integrated into many strands, including Grammar focus pages in both the Student Book and Workbook.

Introducing Grammar to Younger Learners

Few younger learners benefit from memorizing rules and analyzing grammatical forms. Students under the age of eight or nine are better served by seeing repetitions of grammatical structures in a wide variety of meaningful contexts and by using grammar as unanalyzed "chunks" that help them say or write what they need to communicate.

For this reason, the Grammar Boxes in the Student Book and Workbook show grammar within sentences that can be used as models for producing specific forms and structures. As students develop cognitively from level to level, the Grammar Boxes begin to include brief details about grammar rules and formulations for students to notice and consider. In addition, there are Grammar and Writing Handbooks at the back of the Student Book for teachers and for students ready for additional information, as well as related practice pages in the back of the Workbook.

Unit Posters provide another opportunity to reinforce grammar through visual reinforcement of language patterns. Set aside a specific classroom position for these posters, and involve students in switching posters from one unit to the next in order to engage their interest in new information. Remind students to refer to these posters when they are speaking, listening, writing, or reading.

Teaching Older Learners Grammar

As students develop cognitively, they are more able to elicit and apply rules to language structures. *Big English Plus* recognizes this development by gradually including more rules in Grammar Boxes and classroom activities.

Older students will often benefit from creating personal grammar reference notebooks. Suggest that students follow these guidelines when creating their grammar notebooks.

- Give each grammar point its own page. Include specific grammar rules, as well as examples of the rule in action.

- Invite students to share their work with a partner or group, comparing both rules and examples.

- Encourage students to write grammar rules themselves, based on observation. For example, show students a chart of regular singular and plural nouns and ask them to write the rules for forming plurals. In this way, students will need to choose and work with English words in a meaningful context. Thus rule-writing becomes another opportunity for constructing and using effective language structures.

- Direct students' attention to additional information in the Grammar Handbook at the back of the Student Book and related practice pages in the Workbook. Suggest that they incorporate ideas from these pages in their own grammar notebooks.

Error Analysis Another way to encourage students to further process language is to ask them to reflect on the language errors they frequently make. Remind students that making errors is an important part of learning a language: no one gets everything right the first time, or remembers all the rules all of the time. Encourage students to take an active and non-judgmental view of their own progress by keeping a list of their most frequent errors, as well as a self-corrected version for each mistake.

Peer correction can also be a useful technique to heighten grammar awareness. Have students exchange and correct classwork or homework. Remind students to share corrections politely and always consider their partner's feelings. Make yourself available to answer any questions students have as they check one another's answers.

Whole-class correction can encourage all students to participate in the hunt for grammatical errors. Try an activity called "I Bet." Create or select ten items, of which two or three are correct and the rest are incorrect. Choose items from errors you notice in class, from homework, or from tests. Divide the class into two teams and give each team 100 points. Show one of the items and have the first team place a bet about whether the item is correct or incorrect. If the team bets on the right answer, it receives the number of points bet. If the team bets on the wrong answer, subtract the number of points bet from the total score. The team with the highest point total when all items have been evaluated is the winner.

Listening

In the primary grades, interaction through oral language is by far the most common and most important way children learn about other people and the world around them. Young language learners in the classroom need many opportunities to recognize and practice routine language, vocabulary, and basic structures and patterns. While listening and speaking are naturally paired skills that can and should be practiced together, it is also important to provide a number of listening-only activities. These activities should focus on learners' ability to discriminate sounds and words and to identify when spoken words, phrases, and sentences start and stop. They should expose learners to natural stress, rhythm, speed, and intonation in the target language.

Students also need considerable practice in the use of listening strategies, such as listening for the main idea, listening for details, and listening for language that signals concepts such as cause and effect *(why, because)*, sequence *(first, next, then, last)*, and time frame (present, past, and future verb forms).

Big English Plus provides a range of activities that promotes the development of listening comprehension. These include "listen-and-act" tasks, in which learners listen and then point, mime, match, circle, check a box, draw, complete a chart, or write. Another variety of enjoyable and effective listening activities involve movement, such as those in games like Simon Says and commands requiring action, as exemplified in Asher's Total Physical Response.

Music and chants are another essential part of the *Big English Plus* program. Each unit begins with its own catchy song that highlights unit concepts in a rhythmic setting. These songs can be revisited frequently throughout a unit to provide an enjoyable auditory reminder. The more often students hear these songs, the more easily they will hear the words and absorb the embedded concepts.

Speaking

In addition to understanding spoken input, learners need to be able to respond to it through speech. The natural combination of listening and speaking reflects oral language use in the real world, and is the foundation for language learning. In the language classroom, paired question and answer tasks play a major role both in student-teacher and student-student interactions.

For beginning learners, questions that elicit one- or two-word answers and simple, formulaic expressions are a good way to begin helping children develop the confidence needed to respond in English. At first, learners often memorize language as routines. It may be difficult to gauge their level of deep understanding. That's why it is important to introduce new material to ensure more authentic communication as soon as students can handle it. One way to check understanding is to introduce a surprising or nonsensical item into a question and answer routine. For example, if all students are confirming how old they are by answering *Yes, I am,* ask a student expecting a question about age a different question, such as *Are you married?* or *Are you a doctor?* Other ways to extend students' language use include combining speaking with gestures, *realia* (real objects), pictures, or mime.

Consider the types of questions you include in classroom discussions.

- **Display questions** require students to show that they understand the question itself. Answers are obviously known. Many classroom question and answer routines are display questions: *How many arms do you have? Is your hair long? What color is your shirt?* and so on. Students answer display questions to show their understanding of the question itself. They may also be practicing intonation or pronunciation. All of these are legitimate learning objectives, but they are not examples of authentic communication, in which answers are not known until they are provided.

- **Authentic questions** require active thought and reflection. Answers are not known until they are provided: *Do you have your homework today? What is your favorite animal? What does a pig look like?* and so on.

It is important to balance both types of questions, moving gradually from display questions to authentic questions. When introducing new concepts, display questions are useful and can provide encouragement and promote confidence. Use authentic questions to explore a concept more deeply and engage students in active exploration of ideas.

Reading

Reading is an invaluable way to expand vocabulary, to increase content knowledge, and to improve critical thinking skills. *Big English Plus* provides opportunities to develop both top-down and bottom-up processing through many different types of texts: songs, chants, poems, stories, folktales, factual articles, dialogues, letters, reviews, recipes, and jokes. All of the texts have been carefully chosen to be age-appropriate, informative, and motivating, based on the belief that learners need to read texts that offer the following rewards and challenges:

- Texts that offer opportunities to relate reading with students' own experiences.

- Texts that promote the use of strategies and thinking skills, such as figuring out meaning from context and relating charts to a text.

- Texts that help students develop criteria for understanding, judging, and defining opinions.

- Texts that provide integrated educational content (See Content Language Integrated Learning on pages xxv–xxvi.)

Big English Plus Student Books provide opportunities for both reading aloud and silent reading. Poems, chants, songs, and dialogues lend themselves to reading aloud. They encourage students to recognize and practice natural English rhythms and intonation patterns, as well as to

simply enjoy what they are reading through oral participation. For younger learners, additional practice in recognizing sound-spelling relationships to develop fluency in reading aloud is provided by Sound Cards and the Letter, Word, and Picture Sound Cards located in this book. Longer texts, such as stories and articles, are better processed through silent reading, as students have many opportunities to practice efficient reading strategies as they work through the text. Throughout the program, Content Connections and Around the World Connections provide high-interest articles that engage readers in the process of constructing their understanding of the world.

Reading Stages Many teachers find it useful to divide reading into prereading, reading, and postreading stages. Focusing on these stages can help students develop the ability to approach and understand new texts with confidence and enjoyment.

Prereading activities help prepare students to interact with a text. They also encourage good reading habits, such as previewing the title of a selection, as well as any illustrations, photos, captions, charts, or graphs. These previews help students access what they already know about a topic or format, predict what the reading will be about, and construct a mental framework into which they can fit the information they are about to discover.

Reading itself includes actively interacting with a text. You can use the following strategies to encourage students to engage with a text:

- Ask students to look for specific information or set their own goal for reading.
- Have students ask themselves questions about the text as they read, using Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How?
- Ask students to underline or highlight key words or ideas and mark vocabulary words for later study.
- Encourage older or more advanced students to take notes, make a simple outline, or use a graphic organizer to record important information. Early exposure to these skills will help prepare students for academic reading required in later courses.

Postreading activities help students review and digest what they have read. Have students answer different types of questions about the reading, beginning with questions about factual details and gradually moving to interpretative questions. *Think Big* questions that follow reading texts require students to engage in higher-order thinking. There are many ways you can help learners process and review material.

- Ask students to prepare summaries, graphic organizers, or reports.
- Invite them to retell a story or act out events from a story or poem.
- Encourage them to illustrate their favorite part of a story and summarize the scene in a caption under their drawings.
- Challenge students to retell a story, but provide their own ending.
- Ask students what they liked or disliked about a text, and what they would do to change it.

Motivating Readers Some students are naturally motivated to explore texts; others require additional motivation to enjoy reading. Creating a supporting reading environment is essential to the development of language skills students will use both in English and their first language. To encourage students to read, consider creating a classroom chart to record each student's reading progress. Paste stars or stickers by students' names as they finish readings, or allow them to decorate bookmarks to keep as prizes for completing required assignments.

For younger learners, you might want to start a "book train." First, make the train engine from colorful paper and pin it to the wall. Each time the class (or individuals, or reading groups) finishes a book, add a paper railroad car behind the engine. Each book train car should name the

title of the book or article and the author's name. It might also include a key phrase from the text. Challenge students to make the book train as long as possible before the end of the school year.

Writing

The writing skills that *Big English Plus* helps students develop will help them achieve academic and lifetime goals in English as well as their first language. Writing in context helps students apply and remember vocabulary and language structures, providing them with a natural motivation to practice and expand upon key ideas.

In the lower primary grades, *Big English Plus* systematically introduces the written word and builds upon it until learners are capable of writing two- or three-sentence paragraphs (Level 3). Any production of the written word is a significant part of the language learning process and helps to plant the seed for further development of writing skills. Young learners can unscramble words, copy sentences, put sentences into logical order, complete puzzles, give and copy short dictations, and so on. For these learners, the physicality of transferring information from one place to another through writing is important for long-term memory retention of sound-spelling correspondences, words, and structures. Beginning steps in writing are provided throughout these activities in the Student Book, Workbook, and MyEnglishLab.

In higher grades, *Big English Plus* builds upon these skills by introducing study of the parts of a paragraph, paragraph function, unity, and so on. By the end of Level 6, students are capable of tasks that require several paragraphs. As students write, they gain awareness of different types of writing as well as the different stages of the writing process, which is presented in the Writing Handbook.

The Writing Process

As students begin to complete more complex writing tasks, encourage them to become familiar with the stages of the writing process, which helps students stay on-task and assess their own writing throughout the production of any text.

- **Prewriting** activities are presented in each unit of the Workbook and in the Writing Handbook. Students require many opportunities to practice planning strategies such as brainstorming, using word maps, Venn diagrams, note-taking, and outlines. These activities may be done individually or in small groups.

- **Drafting** focuses on getting ideas down on paper. Encourage students to focus on content and successful communication of the message over grammatical and mechanical perfection. Remind students that first drafts are a starting place, not a final product. As students write non-fiction or informational texts, they learn to focus on the basic structure of a paragraph: drafting a topic sentence that states the main idea of the passage, continuing the body of the paragraph with supporting sentences that support the main idea with details or examples, and ending with a concluding statement that sums up the main idea in different words. Reading passages in the Student Book can serve as models.

- **Revising** offers students multiple opportunities to review and improve their drafts. Remind students that even famous authors write many drafts before they consider their work ready for presentation. Help students realize that the revising stage can include more than one review of the draft. One review might focus on accuracy, another on interest level and clarity of communication and organization. Students should gain an increased awareness that revising can include making changes to words, phrases, or sentences. Details can be added, deleted, or rearranged in order to improve a draft. *Peer editing* can be a useful strategy for both improving writing and integrating speaking and listening skills into the writing process. As students comment on each other's work, they gain an awareness of what is relevant, accurate, and appropriate when writing.

- **Editing and Proofreading** focus on mechanics (spelling, paragraph conventions, capitalization, grammar, and so on). Once again, peer editing can be a valuable technique for improving student writing. Many students will find it easier to identify errors in other students' writing than in their own.

- **Publishing** involves any form of sharing written work with an audience. Providing students with a variety of publishing options promotes an awareness of the power of writing as well as pride in a job well done. You might create classroom displays featuring student works, allow students to read their writing aloud to classmates or wider audiences, post works on a website dedicated to student writing, and encourage students to e-mail their works to friends or family members.

As students work through the stages of the writing process, they also gain understanding of different types of writing. In high primary levels, students practice writing descriptive paragraphs, explanatory paragraphs, opinion paragraphs, reviews, autobiographies and personal narratives, biographies, comparison paragraphs, and letters.

Evaluating Writing

Assessing student writing can take several forms. Individual writing projects may receive a number or letter grade or brief comments; evaluation rubrics can also help students understand how well their writing achieves specific goals. One of the most effective tools in helping writers measure and understand their progress is the writing portfolio, a folder of each student's written work collected over a period of time. When applicable, students should be allowed some input as to which pieces remain in their portfolios for evaluation. Effective portfolios contain more than final drafts; they might also include outlines, word maps, journal entries, first drafts, and peer editing comments. Review writing portfolios at regular intervals to track a student's development, identify difficulties, and note improvements in all stages of the writing process.

Pair Work and Group Work

Big English Plus offers learners a balanced set of learning activities, including work as a class as well as in small groups, pairs, and individually. While learners may favor one type of classroom interaction over another, it is crucial for them to experience all types of interactions. The core of active learning is the development of skills through interaction in social contexts. Therefore, *Big English Plus* offers many opportunities for pair and group work in order to maximize student use of the language. By sharing ideas and information in pairs and groups, students have the opportunity to negotiate meaning as they use language in a non-threatening setting. (See pages xiii–xiv for more information on pair and group work in the classroom.)

An obvious but important reason for pair and group work is to provide students with enough time to repeat speaking, listening, reading, and writing goals. An overemphasis on whole-class work drastically limits the amount of time that each student has for active language production. Working with one or more partners allows students time to repeat new vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. This repetition is essential for language acquisition.

Pair Work

Several factors determine the success of pair work tasks.

- There should be a clear purpose for the exchange of information and a genuine gap in the information each partner has. As a result, the completion of the activity depends on sharing information.

- Tasks will motivate learners more if there is an end product, such as a completed chart, a timeline, a survey, or a skit.

- The abilities and language backgrounds of students may be considered when forming pairs. For some activities, advanced students may be paired with beginners in order to facilitate the flow of information. In others, pairing students of like ability will foster skill development.

Group Work

Factors to consider for successful group work include group formation, group size, student roles, and task goals. Group size is generally determined by the nature of the task. Remember, however, that the larger the group, the less time there is for individual member participation.

Use a variety of strategies for forming groups quickly. Introducing an element of chance can help avoid students' preferences for working only with their close friends. Try to follow these suggestions for forming varied groups:

- Have students "count off" by fours, and then have all the *ones* work together, the *twos* work together, and so on. Later, you may want those groups to recombine with one of each different number in a new group (for example, a group with a *one,* a *two,* a *three,* and a *four*).
- Invite students to draw straws or colored *Bingo* markers from an envelope or box; students with matching colors or lengths work together.
- Write students' names on index cards and shuffle the cards into groups.
- Place sticky notes below animal photos and have students take turns choosing a note; then students who chose the same animal work together.

Student roles vary with a group according to the activity. Groups often function best when students select their own roles, although you may wish to assign roles in order to encourage student interactions or provide individuals with new experiences. The following roles may be incorporated into many groups:

- a **leader** who makes sure that everyone has a chance to participate
- a **secretary** who copies or writes down answers, ideas, or results
- a **manager** who is in charge of materials needed
- a **timekeeper** who keeps track of time and makes sure the group is on task
- a **summarizer** who relates a group's answers and conclusions

Be sure that all group members have an equal chance to participate and that no single member dominates the group. To ensure equal participation, you may want to use "talking chips." These are typically colored *Bingo* chips, game markers, or paper clips. At the beginning of a group discussion, each student receives four or five chips. Each time a student participates in the discussion, he or she puts a talking chip in the center of the table. No student may contribute a second time until each group member has contributed a chip. If using paper clips, encourage students to link their markers to create a visual model of the growing breadth of group participation.

Grouping By Age

Children of different ages have specific needs and aptitudes for pair and group work. The following suggestions can help you integrate pair and group work effectively into any elementary classroom.

Ages 6–8

- Some children in this age group prefer to work individually but are willing to share what they have worked on with a partner afterwards. This allows for a gradual, smooth transition to true partner work later.
- Most children are willing to work in pairs or small groups with help. They need very clear instructional goals. Be sure to explain what they are doing and how long they have to do it. Students benefit from teacher modeling and several rehearsals before true tasks are undertaken.
- A reasonable time limit is 10 to 15 minutes for each activity. Most children in these grades will have difficulty focusing on longer tasks.

- Students need to understand that there are rules to follow whenever they engage in pair and group work. Introduce or review these rules with each new class. Allowing students a small element of choice in the rules helps them agree to follow them. For example, have students choose from two sanctions for disrupting pair or group work significantly. Post a list of rules on the classroom wall and review it as needed.

- Provide visual recognition of progress in working in pairs and groups. You can create a chart that includes each student's name and a place for checkmarks, stars, or stickers for successful group work. Other visual encouragements include adding segments to classroom worms, snakes, or trains; or adding leaves to trees or flowers to paper gardens.

Ages 9–10

- Most children in this age group willingly work in pairs or groups for 15 to 20 minutes at a time, depending on the task assigned. Make sure they understand what they are to do and how long they have to do it.

- Children still benefit from teacher modeling and rehearsal before doing a task.

- Rules for pair and group work should be posted on the wall. Students can begin to control and monitor their behaviors. For example, if a student is disruptive, others can say, "Remember the rules" as they point to the classroom poster.

- Tasks move beyond sharing students' individual work. Students can do simple classifications, make some generalizations, form predictions and hypotheses, and identify simple sequences, steps in a process, and basic cause-and-effect relationships.

- Many students enjoy repeating favorite activities.

- Pair and group activities provide strong assistance with memorization.

Ages 11–12

- Most children in this age group can understand more abstract concepts. Pair and group activities can help them develop problem-solving strategies, predict and check their predictions, identify where an idea went wrong, and use reference resources to support their ideas.

- A time limit between 20 and 30 minutes is reasonable, depending on the complexity of the activity.

- Students still benefit from brief teacher modeling and rehearsal, especially if the activity type is new or complex.

- Rules should be posted and students should be aware of how these rules help them gain control when distractions or disruptions arise. They should be able to handle their own group's behavior in most cases by referring to the rules.

- Students are more self-motivated and are becoming more independent learners. They may enjoy dividing the parts of a group task into individual roles and then coming together with their contribution to complete the task.

Managing Pair and Group Work

Training should be gradual and stress-free. Begin with pair work, and then move to groups of three. Next, move to larger groups with specific tasks, and last to discussions.

Most of the time, any combination of students is fine for group work. However, you may wish to combine students strategically to achieve specific teaching goals. Consider choosing partners and groups according to these criteria.

- **Stronger and weaker students together** Stronger students can help weaker students without the teacher's presence. Weaker students may be more forthcoming with peers about what they don't understand than with teachers. Stronger students, in addition to helping others, have the opportunity to review and solidify what they have learned.

- **Stronger students together** Grouping strong students together can challenge these students to interact with material at a higher level.

- **Weaker students together** Weaker students can also benefit from working together. They are at a similar level, which reduces the stress of trying to catch up or ask for help. They can also consolidate what they know and work at their own pace.

- **Talkers and listeners together** Structure groups so that no group has all the dominant talkers. Aim for a balance of talkers and listeners, but be sure to encourage all students to contribute and participate.

Supporting Cooperative Discussions

You can help students develop the communication skills they need to work successfully in pairs and groups by providing them with useful language they can use in many situations. The following phrases, sentences, and sentence frames can help students negotiate a wide variety of collaborative situations. You might create a set of classroom posters showing some of these phrases, or encourage students to write them in their notebooks to refer to during activities.

Discussion Tools

- **Polite Agreement and Disagreement**

I think so.	*I don't think so.*
I agree with (José).	*I don't agree with (Amy).*
That's a good idea.	*Are you sure about that?*

- **Clarification**

  I'm confused. Say that again.
  I don't understand. What do you mean?
  So you are saying that _____.
  Could you explain that again?
  I need help.

- **Suggestions and Solutions**

  What if we _____?
  I have an idea about _____.
  We could _____.
  Maybe this would work.
  What do you think we should do?

- **Pros and Cons**

  The advantages of that are _____.
  The disadvantages of that are _____.
  What's good about that is _____.
  What's bad about that is _____.
  Are there more good points or bad points?

Closing a Discussion or Activity

- **Warning**
  We have about five more minutes.
  Let's finish up.
  We're almost out of time.
  We have until (11:30).

- **Closing Preparations**
  Do we have all our work?
  Who wants to present our work to the class?
  Is everything ready?

- **Recognizing Cooperation**
  Good work, everyone. Thanks.
  We did a good job.
  Thanks for your hard work.
  Congratulations, everyone. We did it!
  Thanks for your participation.

- **Ending**
  Well, time's up.
  OK, that's it. We're done.
  Our time limit is up.

STUDENTS AND LEARNING STYLES

Big English Plus recognizes that not all students learn the same way. The program provides ample opportunities to teach students according to their specific strengths and learning styles.

Sensory Modalities

Students process information about the world through their senses. The sensory learning styles include visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic modalities. Effective teachers recognize students' preferences for one or more of these modality to present and review concepts, and to reach students in ways that favor comprehension and retention.

- **Visual learners** tend to create an orderly work environment and notice the details of their surroundings. They watch teachers' faces intently, but may be distracted by visual displays on classroom walls or items other students have on their desks. They understand directions better if shown rather than told what to do. They tend to work quickly in class, finish tasks early, and may not speak as much as other students. Visual learners use color, shape, and physical position as memory aids, and can reproduce information by visualizing the text page. These students enjoy puzzles, board games, video segments, posters, pictures, arts and crafts projects, and class displays.

- **Auditory learners** tend to do well acting out examples, performing songs and chants, and role-playing. They make good group leaders, as they aren't shy about giving orders, sharing ideas, and involving others. Often the class clowns, they have many creative excuses, tell stories and jokes fluently, and may find it hard to stop whispering or chattering during class. Auditory learners can memorize fairly easily, and can retell a story or message with high accuracy after one repetition. They use rhythm and sound as a memory aid. Written tests may be challenging for these learners, who often seem brighter than their test scores indicate.

- **Tactile learners** are good at manipulating things, tend to have short attention spans, and have trouble learning abstract symbols. They often find it hard to keep still and may fidget, run their hands through their hair or over their desk surface, flip pencils, or touch objects in their pencil cases or pockets. They need to physically carry out a set of directions to understand a task. At times they may seem overly familiar with the teacher or other students. Tactile learners need physical release of tension through touch and movement, and benefit from using concrete objects as learning and memory aids.

- **Kinesthetic learners** require space and movement to learn effectively. Like tactile learners, they tend to find it hard to keep still, and may touch, fiddle, fidget, or twitch. They doodle, fold and unfold papers, write words over and over, and frequently get up during class to sharpen pencils or throw things into the trash basket. They cannot sit still for as much time as other learners. At their desks, they need adequate arm and leg space, and so should not be too close to others. They are good at manipulating objects and working with their hands, enjoy physical tasks and sports. They use movement and rhythmic routines as learning memory aids, and learn best with a combination of quiet and active periods.

Multiple Intelligences

Dr. Howard Gardner of Harvard University, the author of the Frames of Mind: Theory of Multiple Intelligences, describes intelligence as a phenomenon of nine separate but interrelated areas that, taken together, provide "the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings." Gardner has identified nine intelligences (some of which overlap with the sensory modalities).

- **Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence** includes the ability to manipulate words and language for self-expression, and to use language as a means to remember information. Those strong

in this Intelligence are active listeners, fluent speakers, and persuasive writers. They enjoy telling stories, explaining procedures, using humor, and learning languages. They tend to think more in words than in images.

- **Logical-Mathematical Intelligence** refers to the ability to manipulate numbers in calculations and formulas, to reason deductively, and to use logic to solve problems. Learners strong in this Intelligence make connections between pieces of information, recognize patterns, identify cause and effect, question and experiment, and enjoy using computers and other technology. They tend to think analytically.

- **Musical-Rhythmic Intelligence** includes the ability to appreciate and/or produce music, beats, and rhythms. Learners who favor this Intelligence recognize tonal patterns, understand the structure and rhythm of music, and easily remember melodies and chants. They enjoy singing, chanting, whistling, whispering, and tapping out beats with their pencils, hands, or feet. Sensitive to environmental sounds, these learners tend to use sound and rhythm as a means to remember information.

- **Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence** refers to the ability to manipulate the body using fine and gross motor skills and to handle objects with dexterity. Those strong in this Intelligence use their mental abilities to coordinate their body movements, and enjoy dancing, playing sports, and acting. They prefer hands-on experimentation to abstract discussions and enjoy discovering how things work by taking them apart. These learners tend to use the body, touch, and movement to remember information.

- **Visual-Spatial Intelligence** includes the ability to recognize and use patterns of wide space and confined areas, and to create and manipulate images in dimensions. Learners strong in this Intelligence can visualize and mentally manipulate objects in space and orient their bodies in space. They understand maps, charts, and graphic organizers, and enjoy drawing, painting, and board games. They tend to think in images more than words.

- **Naturalist Intelligence** refers to the ability to appreciate, understand, and manipulate the environment, plants, and animals. Those who favor this Intelligence are keen observers of characteristics, behaviors, and habitats of living things, as well as the nonliving factors upon which they rely. These learners show sensitivity to weather patterns and to the natural order, and can classify and describe the natural world. They enjoy caring for plants and animals. These learners tend to use nature-related analogies to remember information.

- **Interpersonal Intelligence** includes the ability to communicate with, relate to, and understand other people and their behaviors. Those strong in this Intelligence are good at listening and empathizing, and can notice and correctly interpret the body language and facial expressions of others. They enjoy working collaboratively, managing discussions and leading projects, organizing social groups, and conversing. They tend to use social interactions as a means to remember information.

- **Intrapersonal Intelligence** refers to the ability to consciously identify and control one's own inner emotional state and thinking processes. Learners who favor this Intelligence are aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, and often analyze their own motives, behaviors, and relationships. They nurture their own dreams, goals, and feelings. These learners tend to work independently, and use self-reflection and their own strengths to remember information.

- **Existential Intelligence,** the most recently identified of the nine, includes the ability to engage in abstract thinking and to investigate life's paradoxes and mysteries. Those strong in this Intelligence have the propensity to identify and contemplate deep questions about human existence, such as our purpose on earth, justice, and the inter-relatedness of things and people. Self-motivating, these learners use mental questioning as a means to remember information.

Big English Plus includes activities designed to facilitate learning for all students, no matter which sensory modality or Intelligence they favor. Activities also recognize the fact that many students exhibit characteristics of several modalities or Intelligences. The following activity types address students' learning styles and strengths in the classroom.

- **Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence:** comic book stories, content posters, cooperative groups, created posters, dramatic reading, films, game boards, graphic organizers, labeled diagrams, picture cards.
- **Logical-Mathematical Intelligence:** categorizing, CD-ROM, counting tasks, conducting surveys, graphing, mazes, puzzles, sequencing, Venn diagrams.
- **Musical-Rhythmic Intelligence:** choral reading, content chants, created chants, content songs, created songs, creating and using musical instruments.
- **Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence:** building projects, chanting with movement, dance, manipulating cards, meaningful play, mime, race games, role-playing.
- **Visual-Spatial Intelligence:** applying stickers, building projects, collages, comic book stories, films, game boards, picture cards, posters, projects, puzzles.
- **Naturalist Intelligence:** describing the city, country, foods, and weather patterns; study of farm animals, wilds animals, and pets; classifying animal abilities.
- **Interpersonal Intelligence:** board games, CD-ROM, conducting interviews, group work, graphic organizers, leadership opportunities, modeling tasks, pair work, projects, videos.
- **Intrapersonal Intelligence:** checkpoint assessments, journal writing, problem solving, self-reflection, visualization.
- **Existential Intelligence:** comparing how people live in different parts of the world, defining abstract concepts such as heroism, connecting ancient cultures to contemporary lives, discussing values, exploring what it means to be famous in one part of the world, using and evaluating technology.

Social-Emotional Intelligence

Teachers have long known that the social and emotional development of children is as important as their academic development. Recently, new attention was brought to this concept by Dr. Peter Salovey of Yale University and Dr. John Mayer of the University of New Hampshire in their theory of emotional intelligence, also known as EQ (emotion quotient). Psychologist Daniel Goleman expanded on their ideas and identified five categories of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, other-awareness, relationship skills, and problem-solving. These dimensions also overlap to some degree with Gardner's interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. *Big English Plus* provides opportunities for students to develop social-emotional intelligence by relating tasks to student's personal lives and value judgments.

Encourage students to be aware of using their intelligences as they participate in the many activity types *Big English Plus* offers. Point out how a student is approaching a task or solving a problem. Say: *Look, (David) is drawing pictures to help him remember our new vocabulary. (Linda) is making a crossword puzzle to help her remember the same words. (Mark) is whispering the words to himself over and over. (Julia) is reviewing Unit 6 with (Ana) to prepare for the test.* Drawing attention to the variety of intelligences helps promote students' confidence in their own learning capacity.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Learning strategies are generally defined as thoughts or actions that students use to understand and complete a task. Incorporating learning strategy instruction into the classroom draws students' attention to their own current strategy use and helps them acquire more strategies that eventually lead to more successful, independent learning. When employing strategy instruction with children, it is important not to overdo the "this medicine is good for what ails you" approach. Instead, try whispering as if revealing information known only to teachers. In this way, you can involve students in their own use of strategies by sharing secret tricks for learning.

Types of Learning Strategies

Dr. Ana Chamot and Dr. Michael O'Malley divide learning strategies into three broad categories: metacognitive, cognitive, and social-affective. Self-questioning is an essential tool for developing each category of strategy.

Metacognition

Metacognition involves "thinking about our thinking." In other words, metacognitive strategies include activities such as planning for a task, monitoring during the task to determine the level of comprehension, and evaluating the degree of learning success.

To help students develop metacognitive strategies, encourage them to ask themselves questions such as the following:

- *Why am I doing this? What is the purpose of this task?*
- *How will I use the information?*
- *What information is the most important?*
- *What is the best way to do this?*
- *Do I understand this?*

Cognition

Cognitive strategies are directly related to individual learning tasks, and include actions most teachers are familiar with, such as accessing prior knowledge about a topic, categorizing vocabulary items, predicting, guessing meaning from context, or summarizing.

To help students develop cognitive strategies, train them to ask themselves questions about the current task or activity.

- *What do I already know about this?*
- *How does this new information connect with what I already know?*
- *Where can I find out more about this topic?*
- *How can I remember the most important information?*

Social-Affective Learning

Social-affective strategies, as the name implies, involve social interactions. These strategies, such as asking for clarification or working cooperatively in groups, are particularly effective in language learning, as students need to negotiate meaning and practice specific structures and vocabulary sets.

To help students develop social-affective strategies, encourage them to ask themselves questions such as the following:

- *Who can explain this to me?*
- *How and when should I ask for help?*
- *How can I work with my classmates to get this done?*
- *Who can give me feedback on my work?*
- *How can I convince myself that I can do this?*
- *How would I teach this to a student who wants to learn it?*