



How to Use the IRLA: Modifications for English Learners (ELs)

A A Framework of Continuous Improvement for ELs

The IRLA is a powerful K-12 developmental scope and sequence for reading acquisition that prepares all students for success in college, career, and life, as articulated by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). For English Learners (ELs, also known as Emergent Bilinguals, ELLs, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students [CaLDs], etc.), reading uniquely unfolds from the totality of language, knowledge, and literacy funds that each EL student brings as part of the fabric of who they are. For teachers, knowledge of the English language, their ability to facilitate metalinguistic awareness, and an effective use of what students already know, are instrumental in promoting students' success as they develop English literacy. At its core, this improvement framework is equivalent for monolingual students and their EL peers: it's guided by an ability to see each student, know them, and affirm their linguistic and cultural advantages to accelerate growth.

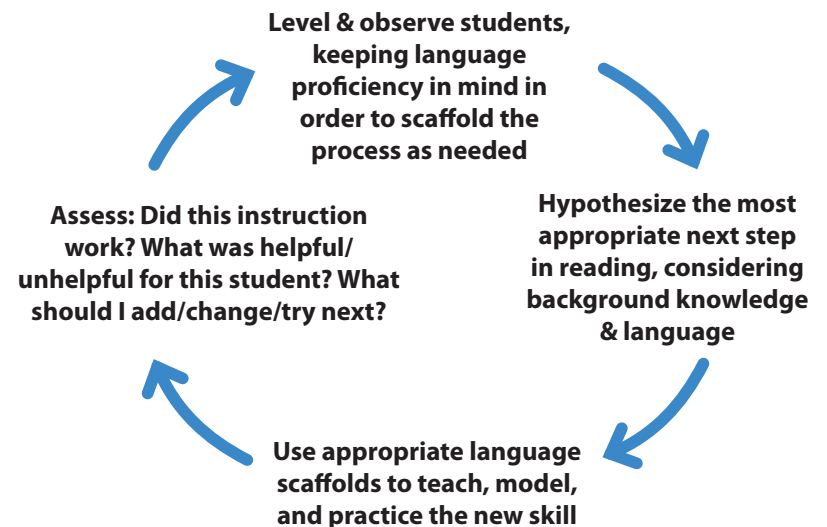
So what lens is necessary to continuously nurture the literacy skills of this diverse group? Three key components set the stage for a more holistic appreciation of our students so that the IRLA can be used equitably toward growth: (1) knowledge of the student, (2) appreciation of the context, and (3) awareness of the text.

- 1. Knowledge of the student:** Oracy and literacy skills both in the home language(s) and English, vocabulary repertoire, cultural context and content area knowledge, etc.
- 2. Appreciation of the context:** Background knowledge needed to understand a text and learn from classroom practices: What assumptions does the text/task make about what students should know?
- 3. Awareness of the text:** What words, phrases, grammatical structures, and text structures may pose challenges? What scaffolds might be needed in order to understand this text and task and convey that understanding?

When we see ELs with these clarifying lenses, we are better able to integrate language with literacy instruction and provide opportunities to continuously learn, practice, and apply new skills.

The use of the IRLA will allow you to locate each student on this standards continuum in order to:

- More accurately identify a baseline reading level
- Match ELs with engaging texts
- Develop a sequence of reading skills appropriate for each EL
- Design strategic instruction focused on accelerated growth
- Accurately progress-monitor ELs' reading growth
- Repeat in a relentless march toward grade-level achievement and beyond



B Getting Started—Initial Assessment for ELs

Note

If there is evidence on file that the student has some literacy skills in English, consider moving directly to **D: Modified 1G and Up Assessment Protocol** (page v).

1 **Explore basic demographics and comfort level conversing in English:** *Tell me about yourself: your name, age, where you are from, school before coming to the U.S.... What else would you like me to know about you?*

Variation: On a world map, you and the student take turns pointing to where your family is from and any places you've lived.

If appropriate, investigate relationship with reading: *Do you like to read? What do you like to read? Where? When?*

2 **Investigate literacy skills in home language(s):**

- *The Dual Language Showcase* is an extensive online corpus of student authored and illustrated books in 28 languages, augmented with English translations (<http://www.thornwoodps.ca/dual/index.htm>).
- Play a game of naming objects (using age-appropriate picture cards, magazines, etc.).
- Invite the student to bring in a favorite book in his/her home language(s) from which to read.
- Invite the student to write a letter to you in his home language.

3 If student demonstrates:

Oral English: **YES**
Home Language(s) Literacy: **YES**

Assess word recognition:
Go to the **Phonics infrastructure** and, pointing to the 1G/2G column, ask: *Do you recognize any of these words?*

If NO, ↓
If YES, →

Find reading level:
Go to **D: Modified 1G and Up Assessment Protocol**.

Oral English: **YES**
Home Language(s) Literacy: **NO**

Oral English: **NO**
Home Language(s) Literacy: **YES**

Will Yellow Books Help?
Go to **C: Modified Yellow Assessment Protocol** on the next page.

Oral English: **NO**
Home Language(s) Literacy: **NO**

Level: **RTM** (Read-To-Me):

- Give student a copy of the RTM for ELs skills card (located in the eIRLA Resource Center) to share with buddy readers.
- Enjoy a Yellow book together to end on a high note.

C Modified Yellow Assessment Protocol

The Yellow-level text can be appropriate for two different types of ELs:

- a. Has enough literacy skills in home language(s) (L1) to use Yellow text to build English (L2) language syntax and vocabulary.
- b. Has adequate oral skills in English (L2) to use Yellow text to learn literacy skills for the first time (where L1 instruction is not available).

For more on the supports and challenges that Yellow text might present for different populations, see page iv.

1 Have the student select a Yellow book (or Cold Read Text).
Read aloud the first few pages of a Yellow book (or Cold Read) to show the student how the sentence frame is used to “read” the book.

2 Can the student:

- follow the pattern?
- name many of the new words in English (either from English knowledge or phonics)?

If the new word/concept on the page doesn’t seem to be in her repertoire, invite the student to use her home language to fill in the word.
To help her match voice to print, point to the picture and the word and say, “In English, this is a ____.”

If NO,
↓
RTM

- Give student a copy of the RTM for ELs skills card to share with buddy readers.
- Enjoy a Yellow book together.

If YES,
↓
3

Concepts of print?
See if the student can point to each word while she reads.

If NO,
↓
1Y

If YES,
↓
2Y

Passing Lane
Does this reader demonstrate significant sight words/phonics skills in English?
If so, stop and try **Modified 1G and Up Assessment Protocol**, on page v.

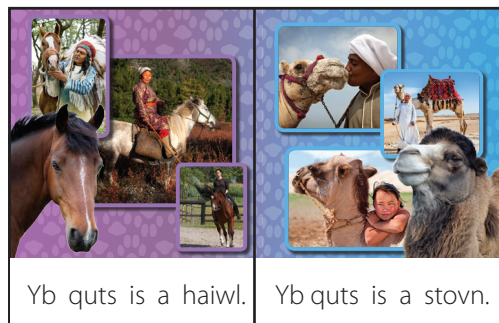
What About 3Y?

For a Yellow reader, the beginning consonant sound is not a useful prompt when the word (or the concept) is unfamiliar. That’s why 3Y is an infrequent stepping stone for ELs: it is usually the word itself, not the initial letter sound, that they need. This is especially true of students in intermediate grades and above and/or students with literacy skills in their home language(s).

If they don’t know the word, give it to them as you point to it on the page to help them match voice to print.

Yellow Challenges and Supports

Use this chart to support your interpretation of the behaviors you observe in beginning ELs using Yellow books to learn English.



		English Is Not the Home Language	
		Home Language Uses Same Alphabet as English	Home Language Uses a Different Writing System
Vocabulary	Supports	familiar	context of related words on a topic (i.e., lions, boats) provide semantic schema for learning new words
	Challenges		multiple words (including Power Words) and/or concepts may be unfamiliar
Picture Clues	Supports	picture matches the new word on each page	
	Challenges	student might be unfamiliar with some of the objects/concepts cued by the pictures	
Linguistic Clues	Supports	all systems are integrated into the "reading" of the book	
	Challenges		student won't be able to draw from linguistic clues (morphology, syntactic, etc.) unless they are already part of her repertoire
Sentence Pattern	Supports	repeated page after page	repeated page after page. Student might know some Power Words and use them as "islands of certainty."
	Challenges	1Y: memorize it to "read" the rest of the book	student might be able to repeat the pattern and track words (executive function skills), but that alone does not indicate she understands what she is saying.
Print Concepts	Supports	concept of word	written input might be somewhat transparent, which helps in the mapping of oral input
	Challenges	2Y: tracking	written input might be mostly opaque, so it won't help in the mapping of oral input (in fact, letters of the alphabet, concept of word, and other basic print concepts might be needed first).
Phonics	Supports		decoding skills in the home language might help student approximate the new word (and even learn it that way through print)
	Challenges	3Y: matching initial consonant sound with new word cued by picture ("camel," not "dromedary")	if the new word on the page is unfamiliar, the initial consonant sound won't be helpful—have her focus on learning the word instead

D Modified 1G and Up Assessment Protocol

Use this assessment for ELs who have:

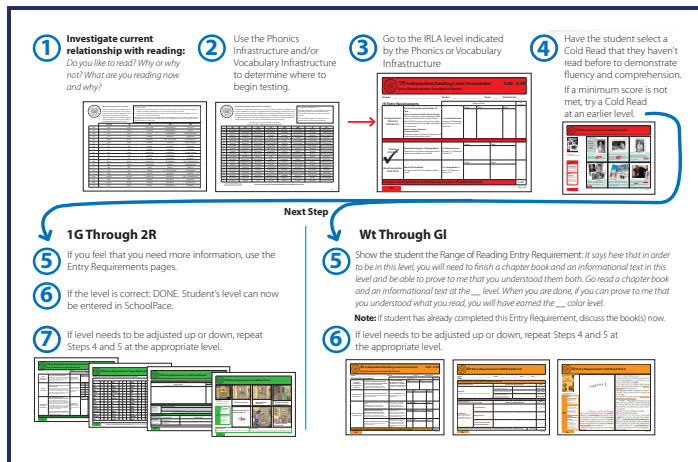
- Oral English, AND
- Literacy skills in either English (L2) or home language (L1).

Modifications for ELs Initial Assessment 1G and Up

1. On the *Phonics Infrastructure for Leveling*, stop periodically to ask: **Do you know what that word means? Can you use it in a sentence?** Many ELs have reading skills in their home language(s) that help them navigate decoding in English, but that doesn't mean they know the meaning of each word they decode.
2. Listen carefully for patterns in decoding errors and for vocabulary gaps, not pronunciation. **Do not hold students back for pronunciation.**
3. Allow the student to choose the **Cold Read text**. Often informational text is supported with clear photos/illustrations. Fiction can be culture-specific, and it may require additional background knowledge and inferencing.
4. **Point out the title and cover** of the Cold Read. Book cover and title serve as powerful scaffolds for comprehension.
5. If appropriate, allow the student to read the **Cold Read silently to himself/herself FIRST**. When reading aloud, the student devotes most cognitive resources to pronunciation, which may interfere with comprehension.
6. On the *Cold Read Record*, distinguish between **misprounciation, decoding, and vocabulary miscues**. Pronunciation errors are noted for future instruction, but should not impact the student level.
7. When assessing comprehension, **simplify the language demands of the question and allow for flexibility in the student's response** (including words/phrases in his/her home language, sketching or writing down her answer, etc.) so the student's ability to make meaning can become more visible.

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Go to page ix of the IRLA. Implement the following **Modifications** to the instructions provided there: