Helping ELL Students Grow in Mathematics

Developing mathematical understanding in English language learners is the aim of a new professional development offering from NWREL's Center for Classroom Teaching and Learning. Created to support migrant educators in Montana who are members of the federally funded MATEMATICA consortium, the original course integrated two research-based approaches to instruction: Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI), a student-centered method for teaching mathematics to K–3 students, and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), a national model used to support high-quality instruction in the academic content areas for ELL students. NWREL has now broadened the offering, using other research-based best practices in mathematics instruction to meet the needs of educators teaching upper elementary and adolescent ELL students.

"The strategies I learned in this class allow me to focus on what I want my students to learn and accomplish, and has made teaching a lesson easier."
—Class participant

Intended for teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators who teach mathematics to ELL and migrant education students, this service can be customized to meet a school or district's specific needs. Courses are tailored for specific grade clusters—K–2, 3–5, 6–8, or 9–12—and consist of a combination of the following components:

- A series of workshops examining research-based best practices for mathematics and sheltered instruction. These can be delivered using both face-to-face meetings and videoconferences.
- Video Study Group meetings, facilitated on site by a NWREL staff member, where teachers examine and discuss videotapes of their own classroom instruction.
- Asynchronous online discussions and assignments.

NWREL mathematics expert Linda Griffin leads an interactive online session as part of a course that blends cognitively guided math instruction and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol techniques.

"What a difference [this course] has made already!" wrote one participant in the online class forum. She went on to reflect, "Creative problem solving had almost been taught out of my students. Now my students understand that math can be done using various strategies and I have seen a huge improvement in comprehension and problem-solving skills from those students who were struggling at the beginning of the year."

In addition to learning effective mathematical instruction practices and sheltered instruction strategies, participants benefit from working collaboratively with colleagues to improve teaching and learning for ELL students in mathematics.

To learn more about these services, including how to schedule a training for your site, contact Linda Griffin at 800-547-6339, ext. 169, or griffinl@nwrel.org. ■