

STARTALK Principles for Effective Teaching & Learning

The STARTALK Principles for Effective Teaching and Learning describe characteristics of highly effective language teaching and learning. Each STARTALK Principle is focused on creating learning experiences that enable learners to develop linguistic and cultural competence. Educators apply the STARTALK Principles to ensure that learners are engaged in meaningful, real-world learning experiences that prepare them to use the target language beyond the classroom. Each of the STARTALK Principles is explained in the context of teaching and learning identifying learner experiences that are possible because of the work done by the teacher.

Implementing a Standards-Based and Thematically Organized Curriculum

Teachers use units that incorporate the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages*, providing a meaningful and purposeful context that is cognitively engaging and relevant to learners. Units follow the backward-design process by stating what learners will be able to do for each mode of communication, aligning performance assessment tasks and learning experiences. Lessons support the goals of the unit by sequencing clearly stated lesson can-do statements that indicate what learners will know and be able to do in order to prepare them for the performance assessment tasks.

Integrating Culture, Content, and Language

Teachers use units and design lessons that are culturally rich and cognitively engaging, creating a context in which learners use their language skills to learn more about the target culture(s) and the world they live in. Learners build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines and the world while using the target language. Learners interact frequently with authentic resources, exploring the products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture(s). They have opportunities to communicate and interact appropriately with others who speak the target language.

Facilitating a Learner-Centered Classroom

Learners benefit from an environment in which teachers and learners collaborate as partners in the learning process. Teachers make instructional decisions based on learners' ages, interests, abilities, and needs. Teachers create multiple opportunities for learners to engage in real-world tasks in the target language that spark curiosity and invite inquiry. Teachers plan multiple opportunities for learner-to-learner interaction, enabling learners to collaborate and communicate about topics that are meaningful to them.

Conducting Performance-Based Assessments

Teachers share unit and lesson goals with learners and monitor how well learners are doing in meeting those goals. Learners engage in relevant real-world performance tasks to demonstrate how well they are meeting the performance targets and goals of the unit for each mode of communication. Teachers use evidence from performance assessment tasks and formative checks for learning during lessons to provide timely descriptive feedback to learners and adjust instruction as needed.

Using the Target Language and Providing Comprehensible Input

Teachers plan how to facilitate learning through the use of the target language and ensure that the target language is used at least 90 percent of the time. Teachers deliberately determine if and when it is necessary to translate. Teachers use a variety of strategies to make the target language comprehensible and frequently check for understanding in a variety of ways in order to modify input as necessary. Learners have frequent meaningful opportunities for target language production and are able to engage in learning activities without resorting to their native language.

Adapting and Using Age-Appropriate Authentic Materials

Teachers select authentic texts and resources appropriate for the theme and performance targets of the unit. Teachers plan how to make the texts and resources comprehensible and accessible to learners. Learners engage frequently with age-appropriate resources that are intentionally selected to appeal to the interests of the learners.



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Learner Experiences & Teacher Responsibilities

The identified learner experiences are possible because of the work done by the teacher. The corresponding teacher responsibilities provide guidance for the teacher by indicating key criteria from the Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning (TELL) Framework.

- **Learners engage in activities that are appropriate for their age and proficiency level.**
The teacher uses units that are appropriate for the age and proficiency level of the students.
TELL Planning: PL1.a
- **Learners engage in activities that are interesting, relevant, and cognitively engaging.**
The teacher plans lessons that include learning experiences that are interesting and relevant to students. *TELL Planning: PL3.d*
- **Learners engage in meaningful and purposeful communication in a context that increases their ability to use language for real-world purposes.**
The teacher uses units that have clearly identified performance objectives in the three communicative modes. *TELL Planning: PL1.b*
- **Learners engage in activities that prepare them to work with vocabulary and structures needed to accomplish the performance tasks.**
The teacher determines the vocabulary and structures needed to meet the performance objectives. *TELL Planning: PL1.c*
- **Learners engage in activities that prepare them to meet program and lesson can-do statements.**
The teacher plans lessons that allow students to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to meet the performance objectives. *TELL Planning: PL4*



Explore the STARTALK Principles in action:
startalk.umd.edu/public/principles



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- **Learners engage in real-world performance tasks to demonstrate how well they are meeting the program can-do statements.**
The teacher uses performance tasks that provide feedback on how well students have met the performance objectives. *TELL Performance & Feedback: PF1.d*
- **Learners engage in learning activities that prepare them for the performance assessment tasks.**
The teacher ensures that students' learning experiences prepare them for the performance tasks. *TELL Performance & Feedback: PF1.a*
- **Learners reflect on their progress toward meeting the lesson can-do statements.**
The teacher provides opportunities for students to reflect on how well they meet daily learning targets and their own goals. *TELL Performance & Feedback: PF3.b*
- **Learners engage in frequent checks for learning that clearly assess whether the lesson can-do statements are met.**
The teacher uses daily checks for learning to collect evidence of students' growth toward the learning targets. *TELL Performance & Feedback: PF3.a*
- **Learners frequently receive timely and actionable feedback from the teacher.**
The teacher provides students with feedback that is supported by evidence from the student performance. *TELL Performance & Feedback: PF2.b*



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Integrating Culture, Content, and Language

Teachers use units and design lessons that are culturally rich and cognitively engaging, creating a context in which learners use their language skills to learn more about the target culture(s) and the world they live in. Learners build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines and the world while using the target language. Learners interact frequently with authentic resources, exploring the products, practices, and perspectives of the target culture(s). They have opportunities to communicate and interact appropriately with others who speak the target language.

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- **Learners experience an environment that accurately reflects the target language and culture in ways that support the program can-do statements.**

The teacher creates a learning environment that promotes intercultural thinking. *TELL Environment: EN5*

- **Learners engage in activities that prepare them to use their language skills and cultural understanding in order to interact appropriately in a cultural context other than their own.**

The teacher plans opportunities for students to investigate cultural products, practices, and perspectives in order to interact appropriately with others. *TELL Planning: PL1.d*

- **Learners engage in activities that prepare them to investigate the products and practices of a culture, gaining an understanding of perspectives while using the target language.**

The teacher facilitates activities that allow students to produce language in order to interact with language learners or other speakers of the target language. *TELL: Learning Experience: LE6.d*

- **Learners engage in activities that prepare them to explore other disciplines and make real-world connections while using the target language.**

The teacher uses units that allow students to build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines. *TELL Planning: PL1.e*



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Teachers how to facilitate learning through the use of the target language and ensure that the target language is used at least 90 percent of the time. Teachers deliberately determine if and when it is necessary to translate. Teachers use a variety of strategies to make the target language comprehensible and frequently check for understanding in a variety of ways in order to modify input as necessary. Learners have frequent meaningful opportunities for target language production and are able to engage in learning activities without resorting to their native language.

Learner Experiences & Teacher Responsibilities

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- **Learners are immersed in a language-rich environment in which they have frequent opportunities for interpreting, expressing, and negotiating meaning in a real-world context.**

The teacher ensures that at least 90% of what is shared with students is in the target language. *TELL Learning Experience: LE3.a*

- **Learners engage in activities to demonstrate comprehension in a variety of ways that do not require language production.**

The teacher uses a variety of verbal and nonverbal strategies to make language comprehensible. *TELL Learning Experience: LE3.c*

- **Learners demonstrate that they understand what they have heard, read, or viewed before engaging in interpersonal and presentational tasks.**

The teacher ensures that students have sufficient time to process in the interpretive mode before producing language. *TELL Learning Experience: LE3.g*

- **Learners engage in activities that require them to produce language in a meaningful context.**

The teacher consciously monitors teacher talk in order to maximize student opportunities to produce language. *TELL Learning Experience: LE4.e*

- **Learners use a variety of strategies that allow them to stay in the target language.**

The teacher provides students with strategies that enable them to stay in the target language. *TELL Learning Experience: LE4.d*



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Learner Experiences & Teacher Responsibilities

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- **Learners use the lesson can-do statements to identify what they will be able to do at the end of each learning episode.**
The teacher shares learning targets in student-friendly language. *TELL Learning Experience: LE2.a*
- **Learners engage in activities within the range of their abilities and have some choice in how they learn and demonstrate their learning.**
The teacher plans lessons that address the unique needs and interests of the students. *TELL Planning: PL3*
- **Learners collaborate using language to accomplish cognitively engaging tasks that are meaningful and interesting to them.**
The teacher plans activities designed to keep all students engaged all the time. *TELL Planning: PL8*
- **Learners interact with other learners and speakers of the language, creating a balance between learner-to-learner communication and teacher talk.**
The teacher consciously monitors teacher talk in order to maximize student opportunities to produce language. *TELL Learning Experience: LE4.e*
- **Learners engage in activities that gradually enable them to individually meet the lesson can-do statements.**
The teacher plans activities for students to produce language within the range of their proficiency targets. *TELL Planning: PL7.b*



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Adapting and Using Age-Appropriate Authentic Materials

Teachers select authentic texts and resources appropriate for the theme and performance targets of the unit. Teachers plan how to make the texts and resources comprehensible and accessible to learners. Learners engage frequently with age-appropriate resources that are intentionally selected to appeal to the interests, preferences, and life experiences of members of the target culture.

Learner Experiences & Teacher Responsibilities

The identified learner experiences are possible because of the work done by the teacher. The corresponding teacher responsibilities provide guidance for the teacher by indicating key criteria from the Teacher Effectiveness for Language Learning (TELL) Framework.

- **Learners work with authentic resources that are aligned with the program theme and program and lesson can-do statements.**

The teacher selects resources that allow students to interpret, analyze, and interact with authentic materials. *TELL Planning: PL6.b*

- **Learners work with a variety of age-appropriate authentic digital and print media as learning experiences move from input in the interpretive mode to output in the interpersonal or presentational modes.**

The teacher uses a variety of authentic digital and print media as stimuli for learning activities that ask students to produce language. *TELL Learning Tools: LT2.b*

- **Learners investigate and interact with age-appropriate authentic materials in order to develop their understanding of the perspectives behind the products and practices of the target culture.**

The teacher provides students with a variety of resources that support the development of intercultural communicative competence. *TELL Learning Tools: LT3*



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