

The **More**-Than-Just-
Surviving
Handbook

ELL FOR EVERY CLASSROOM TEACHER



PORTAGE & MAIN PRESS

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Portage & Main Press

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Dedication

We would like to dedicate this edition of *The More Than Just Surviving Handbook* to two of our biggest supporters: Dorothy Eckes and Dolores Mullane. Thank you for believing in our efforts over the years and helping to promote (relentlessly) each edition of our books. And, as always, thank you, John; your consistent insight and support has been invaluable. And to our children, our passion and our fulfillment: you've made us laugh and provided wonderful examples of kid stuff to look at and consider, and we know we gave you lots to complain about!

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Preface

Third Edition

When Sevdet was five, all the people in his village were rounded up and herded to a meadow. They were told they were going to be relocated. Sevdet's mother knew better. They were going to be murdered. When the guards who patrolled the meadow weren't looking, she and her mother, carrying Sevdet and his younger sister, slipped into the woods and escaped. Although they tried to convince others to leave with them, those they talked to believed that everything would be all right. It wasn't. Eleven thousand people were massacred in four days.

People arrive on our shores for many different reasons: to escape religious or ethnic persecution, to escape war, to find economic opportunities. They all have dreams. Our job is simple: to help those dreams come true. And we, as ELL teachers, are one of the main instruments in making that happen.

So much has changed since *The More Than Just Surviving Handbook* was first published. Our children, babies when we first held this new book in our hands, now are grown, in college, and on their own. We are older, wiser (?), and still racing to keep up with the evolution that has occurred in education and filtered down to our schools. Technology has altered our classrooms, our vocabulary, and our ability to communicate and study. Academic research has developed better methods to provide our language learners with the skills they will need to advance and succeed. Our students are challenged to think critically as they never have been before, because of the expanded reaches of information provided by the Internet, online periodicals, and the multiple means of research available these days.

We have extended this edition of our book to include all these changes, so you will have the tools you need to succeed in your classroom. We discuss the new options technology leaps offer teachers, and how to help students acquire the academic English they need to succeed in the classroom. You will also learn how to encourage students to think critically and manage their resources effectively. Each chapter has a reflection section and a series of case studies to help you personalize the material with the resources available to you. There are no right or wrong answers to issues raised in these sections,

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just the opportunity for you to examine your priorities and best prepare for your students.

As always, we have filled the book with the most wonderful examples and compelling stories we could find, so that it isn't just theory and practice, but fun to read. We believe this is the best edition yet, and we are very excited to share it with you. We hope you will find this new edition thought provoking; but more importantly, we hope it is a resource that validates your good instincts and suggests directions you may not have thought of. Most of all, we hope we have encouraged you to more than just survive the challenges that arise in your classroom, and instead you are able find solutions to each hurdle with resourcefulness and success.

We have many people to thank for their help with this third edition. We thank all the teachers who willingly and generously shared their expertise, their ideas, their students' work, and their stories: Maddy Hutter and Janet Mason, Nanci Smith, Meredith Fox, Carol Haddaway, Edith Chen, our dedicated Syrian colleagues Srour Shalash, Nibal Hanna and Hala Halak. We thank all the students who have passed through our lives, who made us laugh, who were honest, forthright, funny and hardworking, who make it all worth the effort, and make going to work a pleasure. We thank our editors at Portage & Main Press, Catherine Gerbasi, Annalee Greenberg, Marcela Mangarelli, and Leslie Malkin for their faith in us and their careful attention to detail. And, as always, we thank our loving families for their patience, their tolerance, and their continued support.

About Our Chapter Titles

In keeping with our companion book, *Assessment and ESL*, our chapter titles are named for the wonderful language errors we have collected during our careers, while also conveying the theme of the chapter. Although most of these are self-explanatory, such as "After Seeing the Doctor," some titles take some thought to understand the meaning that the writer or speaker intended to convey. Others need explanation. When Mary's kids went out on a Saturday night, she habitually said, "Don't be wild." Ta, her beloved exchange student, would turn with a grin and say, "I'm gonna wild, Mom."

Introduction

We're Gonna Wild: A Consequence of Rabid Growth

Each day during the first few weeks of school, several new students show up—Hmong, Lao, Hispanic. Two of them are also special ed. There are no translators available, and students have to be called out of other classes to translate. The influx continues through the month of October.

It can be a daunting prospect to be faced with one or more students who can speak no English. It might make you feel helpless, maybe even resentful. When a new English language learner (ELL) enters the classroom, you ask yourself: What can I do with this student? How can I teach him anything if he is not able to understand even the simplest words in English? How can I, who can't speak a word of his language, communicate with him? What can I best do to help him become a member of this class? Many times our first impulse is to panic and say, "Send him to someone else—anyone!—who knows what to do."

But resources are not always available. There may not be anyone in your district who can speak your student's language. There might not be an ELL specialist available. You might be miles and miles from the nearest library or university, or even from a sympathetic colleague. You may have so few ELL students that your school district isn't eligible for funding to buy the most fundamental of necessities. You might have one PC in your classroom, or a whole row of them in the library, which haven't been upgraded in years. Even if your school or district has an ELL teacher, she¹ may only be able to spare two half-hour sessions a week for your student. Or, your student may be getting ELL help, but may already have been mainstreamed into your science, math, or social studies class. Ready or not, he is there.

Many books have been written for ELL teachers, but these almost always presuppose a working knowledge of second-language theory, methods, and techniques—and that the teacher is working solely with ELL students. For regular classroom teachers these books are not helpful. You may have 25 students,

¹ To retain writing clarity while ensuring gender balance, plural pronouns have been used whenever possible. When unable to avoid a specific singular pronoun, we have chosen to use masculine pronouns in reference to students and feminine pronouns in reference to teachers.

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15 native-English speakers, and the rest non-English speakers. This means that you must meet the needs of many types and levels of students—your regular students, who can understand the language and keep up with the mandated curriculum, and your ELL students, who may or may not have any English at all, who may or may not know how to read. Being successful with this range of students requires a totally different set of strategies.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1, First Days—Using Chapsticks to Have a Snake, introduces you to a hypothetical classroom made up of a range of students (both native-English-speaking and ELL students) we have known over the years. We discuss strategies for coping and for helping your ELL students get acquainted with school and classmates. We make suggestions regarding immediate activities to occupy these students until they can pick up enough English to function as regular students. And, we discuss priorities—things they must know first—as well as how to set short- and long-term goals.

Chapter 2, Testing and Placement—After Sawing the Doctor, is of special interest to principals and counselors, as well as classroom teachers. We address the issues of placing the student in the most appropriate grade; measuring reading, writing, speaking, and listening fluency; and strategies for grading.

Chapter 3, Language Learning for Students *and* Teachers—The Faucets of Language, discusses the principles of second-language learning; the factors that affect the success of the learner; what the teacher can do to promote success; and behavior—how to understand and assist your student when his behavior is inappropriate.

Chapter 4, Literacy and the Four Skills of Language Acquisition—Gun the Accelerograph Immediate, deals with basic literacy and promoting learning in every class from English to math.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7, Reading—First Meaning is Lost Cautious; Writing—A Pig Broplem; and Speaking and Listening—Winning the Rottery, discuss, in detail, these four skills. We answer frequently asked questions, give suggestions for teaching, and show when and how to correct errors.

Chapter 8, Content-Area Instruction—The Impotence of Science, is written specifically for content teachers. We show how to modify lessons so that students who are not fully fluent in English can succeed in content-area classes.

Chapter 9, Resources—Earnestly Extract the Lesson, discusses the most effective use of other school personnel, such as the ELL teacher, aides, and interpreters, and how to tap the resources of your school and community.

A Word About Labels

There are many different labels given to non-English-speaking students: ESL, LEP, LES, NES, FEP. None of these are very satisfactory. ESL, English as a Second

Language, is somewhat misleading, because many of our students arrive with English as their third, fourth, or even fifth language. In addition, not all ELL students have poor skills in English or require the services of a trained professional. Their reading is often on par with our English-speaking students, and their knowledge of grammar is sometimes even better, although their spoken English may be a little difficult to understand. LEP, Limited English Proficiency, LES, Limited English Speaking, and NES, Non-English Speaking, and even FEP (fully English proficient) all carry negative connotations, as if the students arrive with a deficit, needing instruction to fill the gap. In truth, they arrive with a perfectly good language of their own in which they are fluent, able to think and speak their needs with ease. They have simply been placed in a situation where the language they have is not the language they need to function in school and in the larger society. Although ESL is one of the most common terms, it is being supplanted by ELL, English Language Learners, so we have chosen to use it in this book.

Recurrent Themes, Critical for Maximizing Learning

There are several recurrent themes that we believe are critical for maximizing learning:

The Classroom Environment Is Critical

Language is learned best when the learner feels safe in his environment. The kind of atmosphere that pervades your classroom can make the difference between silent non-learners and eager learners. All students need

- A classroom where all students are wanted and respected for themselves and for the contributions they can make
- A classroom that is as stress-free as possible, where students can feel free to attempt to use their new language without fear of correction, ridicule, or punishment
- A classroom that validates the students' experiences and uses them for learning purposes

Using an Integrated Approach to Language Learning

Language is learned best when it is learned in context. In an integrated approach, the focuses are on meaning in language and on using language to communicate. The four skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening—are parts of a whole, and all four skills are essential components of each activity. Reading does not occur in isolation, but is extended to include discussion and writing; composing does not take place without a great deal of prior discussion and reading. And opportunities to learn the language arts are not limited to language arts classes, but are integrated across the curriculum to include content classes too.

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An integrated approach also means that, instead of concentrating on component parts—the alphabet and phonics before learning to read; vocabulary, then sentences, then paragraphs before learning to write; grammar and the correct pronunciation of English words before being allowed to engage in conversation—students learn to read and write by reading and writing whole stories and texts, and they learn to speak by jumping into conversations regardless of whether or not their English is correct and complete.

An integrated approach means that all teaching and learning activities have meaning and purpose. This means finding things out because the answers have real, practical value, or writing well because the work is going to be shared with others.

It means the teacher has faith in the learners and sets high expectations for them, whatever their literacy level or competence in English.

Teachers recognize that there is no “right” age or sequence of learning the strands of language, but that there is “a continuum of learning” on which students learn according to their own individual stage of development.

The Importance of Models

Language is learned best when the student is surrounded by real language used for real purposes by real people. Being exposed to the language and having good models are both essential to becoming competent readers, writers, and speakers in that language. The classroom should be set up so that communication in the new language is essential to your ELL students, and so that they are not ignored and forgotten because they have not yet mastered the intricacies of the English language.

Errors Are Just a Part of Learning

Language is learned best when errors are viewed in their proper perspective, as just a normal—and integral—part of learning (Samway and McKeon 2007). Any attempt to master a skill, whether skiing, skateboarding, writing, or learning another language, involves trial and error during the course of practice. Many of us who studied a foreign language in high school or college learned the hard way that errors were viewed as faults, as graphic demonstrations that something was not learned. Errors were punished and eradicated. The current focus on testing and accountability, as well as the trends in reading instruction (for example, a resurgent focus on phonics), perpetuate this viewpoint. Perfection is the goal, whether in grammar, pronunciation, reading aloud, or writing.

Research has shown that errors should be viewed as stages in the learner’s progression toward competent reading, writing, or speaking in the new language (Corder 1967). Learners start with the big issues, such as getting their thoughts articulated and their needs met. Gradually they sort out the details—the correct tenses, the word order, the right words—refining and honing their knowledge of the language. This doesn’t happen overnight; it is a long, slow

process. Recognizing learning as a process and errors as a natural phenomenon involves an entirely different attitude toward errors. They are not signs of incompetence or faulty learning, only that something has not yet been learned; therefore, they are not to be pounced on and “fixed” immediately, but considered as indicators of progress, to be noted and tolerated.

Change

Many things have changed in the two decades since we first conceived of and wrote the first edition of this book. Things we never even dreamed of—the Internet, cell phones, podcasts, YouTube, Facebook, video consoles for online gaming—are now such an integral part of our everyday lives we barely consider them and we can’t imagine living without them.

We’ve watched kids change. Kids today are technologically wired, savvy, and linked to each other in multiple ways. The environment outside of school throbs with information. They know more than we did, and they know how to find out what they want to know. So many students are plugged in so deeply we can’t get them to unplug, and they can’t leave their phones alone for a second! They exercise various ways to access each other, wider audiences, and information. However, they are not so good at the practical issues like finding authoritative sources, locating the right online materials, or discerning the hidden agendas behind what they do find online. They know how to use social networking and can inform (or bully) each other well on it. This group is both lucky and cursed. They are more distracted than any other age group we have ever seen. But if they can focus on the good things available to them, they have the world at their fingertips.

In *The Trophy Kids Grow Up* (2008), Ron Alsup notes that kids “possess significant strengths in teamwork, technology skills, social networking and multitasking.” They want attention and guidance, as well as constant positive reinforcement. They also want structure and to have step-by-step instruction, with explicitly spelled out guidelines. Within those guidelines, they want flexibility.

Alsup is, of course, talking about middle- and upper-class kids. Although even inner city kids have cell phones, their access to the kind of technology the rest of us take for granted is often limited to time in the library or the computer lab at school. This is having the effect of widening the gulf between the two groups, making our jobs even crazier, and the stakes higher.

We’ve watched demographics change. “In 1990,” writes Goldenberg (2008), “one in 20 public school students in grades K–12 was an English language learner (ELL), that is, a student who speaks English either not at all or with enough limitations that he or she cannot fully participate in mainstream English instruction. Today the figure is 1 in 9. Demographers estimate that in 20 years it might be 1 in 4.”

Most of the immigrants and non-English-speaking students are concentrated in high poverty areas, with few resources and overtaxed teachers. Contrary

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to the popular image of the disappearing rural life, it is rural areas that are experiencing the most growth. In states such as South Carolina and Kentucky, the growth has been 250 percent (Johnson and Strange 2007). Many of the areas' newcomers are beset by poverty. Schools are small and remote, and they often have few resources, not to mention teachers with experience and expertise in delivering adequate services and coping with the challenges of working with ELLs. Or, students are bused long distances to schools consolidated by bureaucratic decisions that had little to do with the quality of learning and much to do with administrative efficiency. Worse yet, "the states where the educational outcomes in rural schools require the most urgent attention are the states with the most impoverished, minority, and ELL rural students [but] they are also the states where schools receive the fewest resources (Johnson and Strange). In addition, teachers are often far from universities where they could get adequate training and support. So, while we've been making gains in terms of solid programs in urban areas, problems in the biggest areas of concern have become more acute.

We've witnessed growth in the number of ELL students in our classes who are native born citizens. Three-quarters of children of immigrants are born in the United States and are therefore U.S. citizens (Capps 2001). Theoretically, these students should come to school with enough English to function well in the regular classroom, but this isn't necessarily the case. They may have grown up in homes where none of their family members speak English and have little exposure to English beyond what they see on television or hear when they go to the store. They may have limited interaction with English speakers.

We've watched the field of ELL change. From the days when Barb first started teaching ELL—when there was next to nothing in the literature about elementary language learners, when she had just inherited nine schools, eight grades, and a box full of books 20 years out of print, and when she literally had to make it up, flying by the seat of her pants—we have arrived at a point today where there is a mind-boggling number of websites, books, and journals devoted to the practice. Somehow, this doesn't seem to make the life for the average teacher any easier. How to choose? What to read? What's a priority? When can I find time? How do I translate what I've read into what I do in my classroom? We have tried to do this for you. We've waded into the flood, fished out what makes sense, and tried to do some of the translating so that you can make your own decisions based on who's sitting in those seats expecting and needing your best.

We've watched how our understanding of learning has grown—in particular, the realization of the importance of academic English. We will discuss this issue throughout the chapters, because it is important to focus on the impact and the necessity of academic language for success in school.

Gee (2007) puts it this way: Three things are involved in active learning: "experiencing the world in new ways, forming new affiliations, and preparation for future learning." When we enter a new domain, such as science, or

history, or even cooking, we learn new ways of seeing and operating. When we take a cooking class, we learn to distinguish between oregano and basil, what happens when we combine certain ingredients. We also join a group of people who function in specific ways. For instance, people who enter the domain of chemistry learn the vocabulary of chemistry, the methods of conducting experiments, and the discipline it takes to successfully complete an experiment without burning down the lab. In music, they learn the vocabulary of flats and sharps, major and minor, as well as how to read music and how to put their fingers in the right place in the correct sequence so that the sounds they make are pleasant and don't scorch the ears of the listener. The last thing that happens, according to Gee, is they gain resources that "prepare [them] for future learning and problem solving in the domain."

By placing the necessary importance on academic learning and vocabulary, we open the doors for our students to enter their chosen domains—doors that would otherwise be closed to them. The seriousness of this matter cannot be overstated.

We've watched the field of education change. We've watched all that technology enter the classroom. We've witnessed the world shrink dramatically under globalization. We've observed how George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind policy brought ELL out of the broom closet and into the spotlight under the banner of "high expectations for all," "accountability," and "higher standards," but also how the policy led to untold grief for schools and teachers alike in the punitive, combative struggle for compliance. We've also watched what Paul Houston, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, called the "era of amateur school reform, where we have non-professionals making the decisions about the directions we should go." (Sturgeon 2006). We're not just thinking of Bill Gates and his forays into building the "schools of the future." We're thinking of the legislative entities that have bought into the notions that higher standards, basing teachers' salaries on student performance, and a gigantic influx of technology into classrooms will "fix" what ails our schools.

They won't. What makes a difference is you. You, working long nights, weekends, thinking, planning, agonizing over what will interest, fascinate, draw out kids, and invite them into the learning community. Howard Gardner, in *Five Minds for the Future*, (2007) writes, "Education is inherently and inevitably an issue of human goals and human values...Science can never tell you what to do in class or at work. Why? What you do as a teacher or manager has to be determined by your own value system—and neither science nor technology has a built-in value system." But you do. And as a teacher, you know your kids. You know what they need, where they are on the continuum of learning, and what is the best way to get them where they need to go. So, while we talk about the trappings and accoutrements of technology, everything still comes down to you and those faces on the other side of the desk.

In a 1998 position paper, CATESOL (California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) defined important factors we need

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to consider in educating English language learners. We address the following factors in this book:

- **Differences.** Students are not all alike. Our students come with differing levels of literacy and language proficiency, from different schooling systems and different experiences in school, from vastly divergent languages. We need to be prepared to teach them all.
- **Standards.** All students deserve to be held to the same standards as their English-speaking peers.
- **Language of instruction.** While research shows that learning to read in the home language is the ideal (August and Shanahan 2006), it is not always feasible or possible. What is possible, however, is providing students with “language-rich, developmentally appropriate programs of English language development which include exposure to print.” (CATESOL)
- **Initial and ongoing assessment.** We need to be prepared to determine levels of proficiency and literacy when students arrive on the doorstep. We also need to be equipped with appropriate measures to assess their learning in school.
- **Methodology.** We need to be prepared to address the variety of educational, social and linguistic needs of students in the most grounded, meaningful ways available.
- **Materials.** In an ideal world, English language learners would have access to the same rich resources available to English speakers. This does not always happen for a variety of reasons (such as numbers, funding, size of school and program, variety of languages), which have nothing to do with the good will or intentions of the district, the school, or the teacher. Knowing how to make the best of limited resources is better than being caught relying on funding and technology that may disappear.

We’ve also watched the serious nature of fun and gaming take hold among researchers and gain ground swiftly. Computer and video games are the biggest industry in entertainment today—\$11.7 billion is spent annually on computer and video game software in the U.S., and this figure is getting higher (Entertainment Software Association). This is important for educators, because good video games can offer insight into learning. Good games involve what gamers call “pleasant frustration,” where the player operates at the outer edge of his capabilities, and is motivated to achieve higher and higher levels of competence as he adapts to changing conditions and challenges. Good games are never boring. Good games “encourage and facilitate active and critical learning and thinking” (Gee, 2007) and, “failing to engage learners is not an option.” Kids will play well-designed games for days on end, throwing down their books as they come in the door to get to the console. They try and fail and try again, spending hundreds of hours learning. The games push kids beyond their boundaries and force them to think and adapt. But if the game is too hard, or too easy, or there’s nothing more to learn, they’ll abandon it.

We, as teachers, need to pay attention to this phenomenon. We're not advocating putting a game console in the corner of the classroom, but we need to analyze what it is in video games that keep kids engaged and coming back, and work to implement that in our classrooms, and replicate the feeling of "flow" (Csíkszentmihályi 1996), or total engagement, that is so prevalent in the excitement of playing and winning.

Another change to education that we have witnessed is the newer focus on critical thinking. Critical thinking goes beyond the usual abilities to reason; it involves thinking about thinking, in other words, analyzing the thoughts and beliefs that guide your behavior. It requires monitoring, in a systematic way, what your assumptions are, what inferences you make based on those assumptions, and the implications of those inferences in your thinking and your teaching (The Critical Thinking Community). It means thinking critically about your own teaching questions, what you do in the classroom, the choices you make, and the value system that is the foundation of those choices and actions.

To this end, we have included case studies of challenging situations and students, as well as questions that encourage you to reflect on the contents of each chapter, activities to extend and personalize the content, and ideas for looking ahead to what you may need to do or have on hand in the future. Just as we did in the previous two editions, we give lots of examples. What matters is how you take those ideas and examples and incorporate them into your own teaching styles, value systems, and situation.

What Today's Young People Need

One of the primary questions we need to ask is, what do young people need in order to "live, learn, and work successfully in an increasingly complex and information-rich society, [and to become] informed, responsible, and contributing citizens?" (International Society for Technology in Education 2000).

We believe young people need to:

- **Be multi-literate.** These days, literacy doesn't simply mean being able to read and write on two-dimensional planes. It also means competency in audiovisual and spatial realms.
- **Be able to work collaboratively with others.** Businesses and education are moving away, sometimes reluctantly, from the old, centrally planned, top-down management framework to one that operates on a level playing field, where people work on collaborative teams.
- **Master problem-solving skills.** They need to be able to identify problems that crop up, analyze them, and produce feasible solutions.
- **Possess communication skills.** These skills need to extend beyond their future workplace. Young people must be flexible enough to communicate with people from other cultures, using different conversational styles, and applying different rules of behavior depending on the part of the world they are in. Today's technological possibilities mean we must be

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able to operate across limitless horizons, unbounded by political borders and ethnic lines.

- **Be able to access data, and decide how to use it.** This includes knowing how to navigate in the modern library to locate books or online resources. For wealthier schools, technology becomes every educator's dream. When limited to the books on hand, particularly in the poorer schools, the access to data is seriously limited, and the digital divide grows wider.
- **Be able to sort the junk from the important data.** Anyone can post on the web these days. Much of it is sheer hogwash and, more dangerously, driven by agendas that students have neither the experience nor the skills to interpret and see through. They need to be able to judge whether posted data has an ulterior, and possibly sinister, motive, or whether it is legitimate, well-reasoned, and accurate. Contemporary books are generally subjected to intensive review processes, and as teachers, you are the gatekeepers to what comes into the classroom and your students' hands. But given the easy access that many students have to all facets of the outside world, this control has slipped from our fingers. It's doubly important now that we use whatever means we have available to teach them the skills of judgment and thoughtful selection of what to read and believe.

As the world continues to change, we in the field of second-language acquisition are struggling to change with it. The questions change. And sometimes, even when the questions remain the same, the answers seem to be different. But one fact remains: students are arriving in schools with little or no proficiency in English. And whether we teach them in their first language, put them in special programs, or mainstream them immediately, they will, like students everywhere, march through our school systems and either graduate or drop out. Thus, the clarion call for us remains the same: try to better their lives and their chances for success by always looking for ways to improve our teaching. Our goal is to approach the task with an open mind—to do more than just “survive” the experience. We hope this book can help you to do that.

Case Studies: How to Best Use the Real-Life Narratives Included in this Edition

We decided to include case studies at the end of each chapter of this edition of *The More Than Just Surviving Handbook* to confront you with real-life kids, situations, challenges, and dilemmas and to help you think critically about what you might do should you be confronted with similar issues. The stories are of real kids, wrestling with real challenges, and they bring to life the issues we as teachers of English language learners grapple with daily. By using narrative to illuminate abstract theories of language learning, we are attempting to translate complex issues, goals, and ideas into vibrant reality.

These case studies, and the questions that follow each one, are meant to move you from the theoretical information we provide in the chapters to your own personal insight, and ultimately, to informed decisions that you can put into action. There are no right answers—you will not find quick yes-or-no

solutions to the questions we raise or answers in the back of the book. These sections are meant to help you think through the education of your students and search for better ways to serve them.

Using case studies effectively takes practice and experience. Learning how to analyze them and formulate thoughtful and intelligent solutions doesn't happen automatically. Allow yourself time to get past the uncertainty and the fumbling. These case studies are deliberately thought provoking, controversial, and designed with the notion that disagreement is good. They can be used to open discussion with colleagues and for other professional development initiatives. You can also discuss these issues with a larger community of ELL educators on the publisher's blog (go to <www.pandmpress.com/blog>, and click on *The More-Than-Just-Surviving* button). They present urgent and serious dilemmas that need to be solved. Most importantly, they are generalizable: if you can think through the ideas you have to consider to reach your conclusions, then you can use those same thought processes when considering your own students.

There are clear steps that you can take to work through what's important and what you should do when you are confronted with a challenging situation or student. It's easy to get bogged down and overwhelmed, but working through the problem step-by-step makes it easier and clearer. The following framework¹ will help you to work through any of the case studies we present in *The More Than Just Surviving Handbook* and, ultimately, any real-life challenges that you face with your English language learners.

1. **Review the case, and identify the relevant facts.** When you are trying to find a solution to a situation or to answer a question, the first step is to identify the key facts so that you can figure out what is going on before deciding what to do. Read the case carefully. Identify what facts are relevant. Push yourself to find as many facts as you can. Try for 10.
2. **Determine the root problem.** Decide what in the case is contributing to the problem and/or is symptomatic of the issue. Ranking each fact or item of evidence will help you to decide how important it is and the order in which it should be addressed.
3. **Generate questions about the case.** Questions require you to express an opinion, make a decision about a future course of action, or propose a solution. Questions also call for you to explain your reasons. Ask yourself questions such as the following:
 - How could I approach this issue?
 - What would happen if...?
 - Would it help if...?
 - What else could I do?

¹ Adapted from: Armstrong, Sally. *Using the 8 Step American Management Association (AMA) Problem Solving and Case Analysis Process*. Grand Rapids, MI: Davenport University, 2005.

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4. **Generate alternatives.** If the case requires a solution, a decision, or an opinion then you need to consider *all* the options. Brainstorming will help you to generate a list of possible alternatives. In this step, you do not need to be judgmental. Virtually any idea goes; if you do not list it, you cannot then choose it as the best option.
5. **Evaluate alternatives.** Once you have listed all your alternatives, the next step is to narrow them down to those that seem most attractive. After you've screened your list, take the relevant facts that you gathered in step 1, and apply them to each of the remaining alternatives. This provides you with the necessary supporting evidence to reject most of the remaining alternatives and decide on the best one.
6. **Choose an alternative.** After evaluating all your options, choosing the best alternative is usually a straightforward next step, but it is also one that is often skipped. State your preferred solution simply and clearly. Then, justify your solution. Why is it more appropriate than the others? What reasons do you have for ruling out the other courses of action?
7. **Plan to take action.** This may not work for all cases, but in many you need to define how you will turn your solution or decision into action, how, when, and what you will monitor to ensure things are working out as planned, and what you will do if they are not.
8. **Implement your plan.** If the case requires a solution or a course of action, it is important to describe how you will execute or implement it. The following chart will help you to do that:

Action Required	Action By	Time or Date Required/Deadline

9. **Have a back-up plan.** It can be a good idea to have a contingency plan in case things do not go as expected. Kids, parents, other faculty may not react the way you hope. What then? Will you make modifications to your existing plan? Will you start the process over? Will you choose some other alternative that you've already identified? What would that be?

For All the Yodits ...

The first edition of *The More-Than-Just-Surviving Handbook* was meant to be modest, forthright, and easy to access, crammed with as many funny, wonderful examples of student work as we could find. That has become our hallmark over the years. We have strived to maintain that accessibility in this third edition, which has been adapted and updated to help you better serve your students, to give you ideas, strategies, and examples with what Gardner calls a “generous dollop of creativity” thrown in (2007).

We want to state emphatically up front—lest it be suggested that we think ELL is nothing but problems, and that students are prone to flounder and fail—that the majority of our students are optimistic, remarkably resilient in spite of many hardships, hard-working, and, of course, a true joy to work with. Yodit, from Ethiopia, is a classic example. She sat with a grin on her face every class period, enjoying the constant bickering between Kee, from Myanmar, and Lucia, from the Dominican Republic, and keeping Kee and his equally naughty friend Duong, from Vietnam, on task during group work. She threw herself into every activity and went the extra mile to complete each task, determined to be proficient in English so she could fulfill her dream of becoming a nurse.

Here is Yodit's own writing about her future and her friends. Her words reflect not just her own personality, but also that of many of our students;

My future

My long term goal are to become a success full women. I would like to be a good nurse. And I would like to have a great marriage and great family. And I have plan to invite my parents and I have plan to bake home to visit my all family. I wish to help people with God.

My friends

When I in Ethiopia I had one girl best friend and I had a lot school friends. I had good time with them. And hear I have two best friends. I mat my boy friend. I am so happy to mitting hem. He give me strength and hope full.

This book is for all the Yodits in our lives and the happiness they bring us.

Chapter 1

First Days—Using Chapsticks to Have a Snake

This chapter deals with the arrival of the new ELL student and provides strategies to help the teacher cope. We focus on

- Preparing for the arrival of the new student
- Familiarizing the new student with school and classroom routines
- Utilizing school and community resources for support in working with the new student
- Teaching strategies for the first days
- Planning for the year—setting up short- and long-range goals

It's the 24th of January. The school year is almost half over. "Thank goodness," thinks Mrs. Ramsay. As she walks by the front desk on her way to pick up her mail, Mary Lou, the school secretary, says, "We've got another one for you. His name is Bounkham. Doesn't speak a word of English. He starts this morning."

The Main Characters—Our Hypothetical Classroom

We have created a hypothetical classroom made up of real students we have known over the years as well as our own (perfect!?) children. These students represent a range of personalities, abilities, reading levels, and spoken and written English proficiency (please refer to Chapter 2 for explanation of levels of proficiency). We have chosen to do this because we feel that it makes the issues we are presenting more real and allows us to highlight and illustrate certain points within the book. We do not use all the students equally or all the time—you might find them in an elementary classroom or in a grade 10 science class. Don't look for them in every chapter. (Please note as well that, for expository purposes, we may sometimes present a student who is not part of the following list in order to demonstrate a specific issue.)

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It is unlikely, but not impossible, that you will have a class that displays this range. Unless you teach in a college town, as Barb did at the beginning of her career, you probably won't have the diversity of cultures in your classroom. The decisions you make, however, will be very similar to the decisions made by the teachers we present during the course of the book.

Good luck!

The English Language Learners

Bao: Hmong. Preilliterate, no English skills. Arrived in the United States, and went to school for a few months in Fresno with the expectation of going on to where the rest of her family is located. Bao is quiet but can be very naughty when she feels like it (Level 1).

Fernando: A recent immigrant from a small town in Mexico. Nonliterate in either English or Spanish. He cannot write his own name. He tries his heart out (Level 1).

Salvador: Mexico. Semilliterate. Came from a small village where he did not go to school. He has been in a bilingual program and does not have skills to function in a school where there's absolutely no bilingual support. Nice kid, who struggles, barely keeping his head above water (Level 2).

Beverly: Taiwan. Attained a very high level of literacy in her first language. Very feminine. Wears a carefully combed ponytail and glasses. Does everything neatly and with care. Says very little in class. Speaks in her native tongue to her best friend, Angel (Level 2).

Angel: Taiwan. Tiny, shy, does not attempt to speak English at all. Uses her friend, Beverly, as the buffer between her and the rest of the world. She does good work, but it's hard to tell what is her own doing and what was done in conjunction with Beverly (Level 3).

Franco: China. Father owns a restaurant in town. Very sociable. Very good in math. His test scores classified him as non-English speaking, but his understanding of English is much higher. He pretends to know less than he really does. He's squirrely and hard to keep on task. Was not held accountable for any of his work during his first year in this country (Level 3).

Yoshi: Japan. Has professional parents. Resentful of being here. Sullen and unresponsive. Refuses to participate in class. Sits by himself with his chin resting on his fists. Will do work alone, but no amount of coercion or persuasion will get him to be a participant in class or in a group (Level unknown).

Newton: Vietnam. Was born in this country. Should be much more proficient, but has not seemed to learn English very well. He is the class geek. The other kids won't sit next to him and fight for other seats. He is very artistic and draws careful pictures that are remarkably accurate. He is a loner and an outsider, but it's difficult to tell if that's his choice (Level 2).

Abir: Egypt. Very shy, never talks above a whisper. Absent much of the time. Does not turn in any homework. Conferences with her father reveal that she is needed at home to baby-sit younger siblings. Her parents believe that the year they are spending in this country is a year lost academically for Abir, and they put more emphasis on her studying her subjects in Arabic. If the truant officer were breathing down their necks, they probably wouldn't send Abir to school at all (Level 2).

Andre: Eastern Europe. A refugee. His schooling was disrupted for several years in his home country. He spent time in a western state in an ELL program taught largely by teachers of his own language group, who, for whatever reason, did not teach much at all. His progress in his native language plateaued long ago, but he has not made progress in English either. He knows neither how to read nor write in English (Level 3).

Florien: Italy. Only needs fine-tuning on the writing. Because he learned British English, his spoken English is so correct he comes out sounding like a native-English speaker. He's so charming and charismatic, the girls, as well as the teachers, just love him. He gets away with murder (Level 5).

Boris: Russian. Son of professional parents. Speaks Russian exclusively at home, and has a large chip on his shoulder. Talks out of turn constantly. Fights with others in the class. Used to the imposed discipline of his native school system, he cannot cope with what to him appears to be total lack of structure in the classroom (Level 5).

The Native-English Speakers

Kate: Bright and perceptive, not excellent academically, but well-organized, persistent, and dedicated. Her strength is her wisdom that is far beyond her years. Extremely kind, willing to try anything, a born leader.

Ellie: Exceptionally articulate for her age. If acting as a buddy for another student, she can explain the subject in a variety of ways. Very sensitive, interested in other cultures, and will go out of her way to make friends with newcomers. Has no organizational skills.

Austin: Very smart; has a huge vocabulary and prefaces every sentence with "although." If he doesn't see the point of what you're doing, he'll argue. Good-natured, but everything has to be on his terms. Does not like to be touched or even have people close. Does not work well in groups.

David: Musical and very bright, but don't ask him to draw anything. Ambidextrous, but not comfortable using either hand in writing or drawing. Good at reading and math, not interested in sports. Easygoing, good-natured, and very steady. He can be an anchor.

Rory: A handful, the class clown who wants to fool around. Hard to keep on task. Knows more about computers than the computer teacher and can hack his way into programs.

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Ashley: Demonstrates that she can be smart, but is disorganized. Homework is often late and often not done correctly. Distractible, volatile, can be sweet, but very explosive. Can divide the group; very smart at knowing how to create dissension and hurt people's feelings. Will try to talk her way out of any trouble she gets herself into.

Jeremy: An average student, but really motivated; game for anything, the goofier the better. Any teacher is lucky to have him, because if she can't think of someone to start something, he'll start it. Gets overwhelmed if an assignment has too many steps. Needs specific instructions broken into parts. Succeeds if he has a check-off list of steps to follow.

Nick: Physically very coordinated and athletic, with exceptional large-motor skills. Small-motor skills are limited, as is his patience for activities that require their use. Will not attempt anything if he can't see the point, or if he knows up front he won't succeed. Does poorly on standardized tests, even when he knows the material. Very much like Jeremy in his inability to follow through on assignments that require several steps.

Robbie: A quiet, nice kid who is average in most things, but above average in math. Hard to engage sometimes. Tends to be overlooked in class, because he's not high profile—he's not naughty, articulate, or sparkling, but he's good at approaching problem solving from a variety of different angles. Tends to bail out on standardized tests because they're boring, and he knows he can do it, so his real talent isn't recognized.

Molly: Comes from an unstable home. Comes to school unprepared, with many things undone. She's Kate's best friend. Acts silly a great deal of the time and doesn't stay on task, often leading the other girls astray. Can bring out the worst in good kids. Very creative and funny, should be in a gifted and talented program, but struggles academically and socially. Refuses to relate to adults.

Destiny: Very verbal and charming. Has lots of street smarts and is able to use the skills she has and the environment surrounding her to cope with challenging tasks in the classroom. Quick to catch on when given individual attention or paired with a strong student.

Spencer: One of seven brothers. Did not know, upon being asked, how many boys there actually were in his family, or how to spell his last name. His mother has moved to this town to get away from the gangs of the big cities. Very low reading skills, but a bright, funny, affectionate kid who's very willing to try, eager to learn. Looks out for his younger brothers.

Preparing for the Student

Unless you've been in Mrs. Ramsay's situation before, the first day an ELL student arrives can be distressing for the new student, for you, the teacher, and for the rest of the class. For the student, the day can be as traumatic as the one described in figure 1.1. At best, he might feel awkward and apprehensive;

at worst, terrified and helpless. As teachers, we're used to having some degree of control, but nothing erodes that confidence faster than an inability to communicate with someone. Mrs. Ramsay was not an old hand at this, but in her second year in a low-income, inner-city school, she was getting used to it.

Feelings of apprehension and nervousness are natural. Even if you've been at it for years, it can be a truly intimidating prospect to be faced with the responsibility of teaching a student—or a group of students—with whom you are unable to communicate. It's only human to feel a wave of panic when that non-English-speaking student is first brought to your classroom. However, when you realize that this apprehension is only a fraction of what the new student is experiencing, it becomes a little easier to get past that first gut-level reaction of "Oh no, why my class?" You can begin to come up with strategies to turn the situation into a positive one—for you, the new student, and the rest of your class.

"My first class in the School"
 My first day in class, I take the bus, I feeling scared, I don't have any friends only the teachers, in one class I don't have work, I feel stupid in the others classes I have work, in the classes I am stupid because I don't understand something, in the second day in ~~the class~~ class I crying because she say in the library you take one book and I don't no what book in the others month's I feel right

Figure 1.1 A student's reflection of her first day at school.

What to Do First—Establishing a Relationship

In an ideal situation, students will come to school with their parents to register and then return the following day, or after they have taken care of such necessities as immunizations and validation of immigration papers. This gives you some preparation time. In reality, students like Bounkham frequently arrive one morning with no notice (and often after the school year has begun), leaving the two of you to make the best of things. With or without lead time, some very important first steps must be taken to establish a relationship with the student.

- **Be prepared.** We cannot overstate the magnitude of preparation, one of the most important aspects of welcoming strangers. A study of refugee resettlement in England noted that "creating efficient infrastructure is critical for welcoming a young refugee to the school. This includes an excellent induction program, streamlined and easy-to-read materials to give to parents, accessible information for teachers about the child, and delegation of welcoming and monitoring tasks to appropriate staff members" (Kaye 2006).
- **Have both materials and ideas on hand, "just in case."** This does wonders for morale (both yours and the new student's). Being prepared means being mentally ready for the task of helping the new student become part of the class, as well as having the classroom and the individuals in it primed for the potential arrival of a newcomer.

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- **Have a welcoming classroom.** Mrs. Ramsay comments, “The physical appearance of the classroom needs to be inviting. It should say, ‘Come in, sit down, you’ll like it here!’” Decorations should reflect not only the activities of the students, but their tastes as well. ELL students have special needs to find a home in the classroom, and efforts should be made to represent all cultures.
- **Sensitize the class.** If you’ve been alerted beforehand, try to learn as much about Bounkham as you can before he comes to class so that you can share this information with the other students. This will help them accept Bounkham and make him part of the class. Mrs. Ramsay didn’t have any lead time for Bounkham’s arrival, but she knew that it was likely, given the nature of the school. To prepare for that day, she had the class brainstorm and discuss how it might feel to be immersed in a new country or, in the case of Native Americans, a new environment, where they don’t speak, read, write, or understand the language. She read the books *Crow Boy* by Taro Yashima and *I Hate English!* by Ellen Levine to get them thinking along those lines.
- **Make the student feel welcome.** Even if you don’t know a single word of Bounkham’s language, you can show encouragement, sincerity, and empathy through gestures and body language. Smiling is universal.
- **Make sure you know how to pronounce and spell the student’s name.** If you can’t figure out the pronunciation of Bounkham’s name from the intake form, ask him. Don’t try to anglicize his name unless his parents have expressed this wish or he has changed it himself. Calling Bounkham “Bob” could make him feel even more alienated, as if his given name was not good enough. Identity is intricately tied to one’s name, and to change it, either in the mistaken belief that the change will make him feel more part of the group or because his name is difficult to pronounce, can damage his integrity and feelings of self-worth. If he changes it, as Angel, Beverly, and Franco did, accept that too.
- **Introduce the student to the class.** Use a map to show the class where Bounkham is from. He may be able to point out his country and tell the class a little about it.
- **If possible, learn a few words and phrases in the student’s native language,** such basics as “Hello,” “How are you?” and, “Do you understand?” Even a simple thing such as “Hello” (in his language) will make him prick up his ears and brighten up, as well as convey that you are sincere and caring.
- **Be a model of respect for the other students in the class.** People of all ages can be cruel, especially when they don’t understand another person’s culture or dress. Showing respect for one’s right to wear a turban, braids, or clothes we consider garish sets the parameters for appropriate behavior toward the new student no matter how different he may be.