

Review of Nancy Montgomery's TeachingPoint ESL Curriculum

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"I'm teaching English language learners. What do I teach them? Where do I start?"

TeachingPoint's Elementary, Middle School, and High School ESL curriculums by Nancy Montgomery, part of the Expert Systems for Teachers™ Series, is a great answer to those questions. This self-contained program is aligned to the national TESOL standards and thoroughly covers many of the basic strategies that help English language learners not only succeed, but flourish in their classrooms. Used by itself or in conjunction with other materials the teacher may already have available, it helps students master the basics and conquer the classroom.

ESL and ELL students are not a one-size-fits-all population. My own ELL classes are comprised of both immigrant students, for whom English is a second language, and American Indian students who have a heritage language in their background. Their levels of English proficiency also vary from beginners to those almost ready to transition out of the ELL program. In addition, I serve grades 7-9. I found that using elements from both the middle school and high school programs worked well for my classes. Because the two programs are closely coordinated and cover similar concepts in approximately the same order, I could choose activities from the middle school program to meet the needs of my lower proficiency students, and elements from the high school program for those who are approaching proficiency on the level of their non-ELL peers, thus individualizing my program for a diverse group of learners.

The programs all start with basic strategies that will help ELL students in all their classes: for instance, understanding the make-up of a textbook. Using the PowerPoint and the class notes provided with the curriculum, my students (perhaps for the first time in their educational career), dove into the actual textbooks they use in their core classes and found out how to use the table of contents, the index, the glossary, and the chapter review. Teachers take for granted that students already know how to do these things, but TeachingPoint's ESL curriculum does not.

Another skill that teachers often assume students already know how to do: outlining. With the help of the TeachingPoint curriculum, my students pre-learned how to construct a traditional outline, a contemporary outline, and a bubble outline. Now when they hit the research paper production unit in their English classes, they will already have mastered this essential skill.

TeachingPoint's emphasis on knowing how to skim and scan material is also very helpful. By reading the daily lesson plans, author Nancy Montgomery taught *me* how to teach this procedure to my students. They were thrilled to find that they could answer questions about a chapter in their textbooks without having to read all the material! It was a new and exciting concept for them. Now when I ask them to read, they ask me, "Would you like us to skim it?"

TeachingPoint's ESL curriculum provides teachers with the basic strategies their ESL/ELL students are going to need to survive the world of school. I highly recommend it to anyone who wonders, as I did, "Where do I start?"

Right here!