

BONUS CONTENT: Boosting Language and Learning with Anchor Charts

Practical Strategies for Supporting English Learners Across K–12 Classrooms

Anchor charts are more than classroom decorations—they are powerful, student-centered tools that support memory, build language, and promote independence. For English Learners (ELs), anchor charts offer **visual, linguistic, and cognitive scaffolds** that make content more accessible and help bridge the gap between what they know and what they’re learning.

When designed intentionally, anchor charts support vocabulary acquisition, academic language use, and active engagement in classroom learning.

BOOSTED Strategies for Using Anchor Charts with English Learners

✅ Co-Create with Students

Involve students in building the anchor chart together. When they help generate the content, they’re more likely to understand it, use it, and remember it.



Try this: Ask guiding questions and chart student responses during a shared reading, science experiment, or math problem-solving session.

✅ Make It Visual

Include diagrams, symbols, icons, and real-life photos to support meaning. Use color-coding to highlight patterns, steps, or word families.



Visuals are especially important for ELs developing oral language and academic vocabulary.

✅ Use Student-Friendly Language

Keep it clear and concise. Avoid jargon or overly complex sentences. Break down big ideas into digestible parts.



Bonus: Add translations or cognates in students’ home languages when possible.

✓ **Strategic Display**

Place anchor charts where students can easily access and refer to them during lessons and independent work.

📌 Try a dedicated “Learning Wall” organized by subject or unit.

✓ **Model and Reference Regularly**

Don’t let charts become wallpaper! Explicitly teach how to use them during instruction and remind students to refer to them often.

🗨️ Say: “Let’s check our anchor chart to remember the steps,” or “Which sentence starter can help you explain your thinking?”

✓ **Highlight Key Vocabulary**

Feature essential words with definitions, visuals, or examples. Help ELs understand not just the meanings but also how the words are used in context.

🖍️ Use bold text, color, or sticky notes to spotlight important terms.

✓ **Include Sentence Frames and Starters**

Support oral and written language by including structured prompts students can use to express their ideas.

🗨️ Example: “I observed that ____.” / “The character feels ____ because ____.”

✓ **Encourage Student Examples**

Invite students to contribute examples, drawings, or ideas to the anchor chart. This validates their knowledge and deepens their learning.

✏️ Even emerging bilinguals can add ideas with drawings or labeled words in home languages.

✓ **Adapt for Differentiation**

Modify anchor charts to meet the needs of specific learners. Use bilingual terms, tactile materials, or individualized mini-charts for students who need additional support.

 **Tip:** Snap a photo of the chart and print small copies for student notebooks or folders.

Review and Revise Often

Anchor charts should evolve alongside student learning. Revisit and update them based on new insights, questions, or vocabulary.

 Use sticky notes to add new ideas without recreating the entire chart.

Grade-Level Examples

K–2 Example: “How to Read a Book” Chart

Purpose: Support young readers with a visual guide to early literacy behaviors.

- Include images of students pointing to words, turning pages, and asking questions.
- Use simple language like “Look at the pictures,” “Point to the words,” “Ask: What will happen next?”
- Add a sentence starter: “I think ____ will happen because ____.”

 **BOOST Tip:** Add visuals for common classroom phrases like “I need help” or “Can I go to the bathroom?” to support daily routines.

Grades 3–5 Example: “Author’s Purpose” Chart

Purpose: Help students identify why authors write different texts.

- Use the acronym PIE: Persuade, Inform, Entertain.
- Include visuals for each purpose (e.g., an ad for persuade, a nonfiction article for inform).
- Provide sentence frames: “The author’s purpose is to ____ because ____.”
- Highlight key signal words that match each purpose.

 **BOOST Tip:** Add bilingual vocabulary labels (e.g., “persuadir” for “persuade”) to support cross-linguistic connections.

Grades 6–8 Example: “Claim, Evidence, Reasoning” (CER) in Science

Purpose: Support structured academic writing in scientific explanations.

- Define each part with examples and color coding.
- Include sentence frames:
 - **Claim:** “I think ____.”
 - **Evidence:** “According to the data...”
 - **Reasoning:** “This shows ____ because ____.”
- Add a visual of a hamburger to show the “layers” of a strong response.

 **BOOST Tip:** Have students co-create a CER example together and add it to the chart in real time.

Grades 9–12 Example: “Analyzing Tone and Mood” in ELA

Purpose: Help students analyze literary texts and write about them with precision.

- Define “tone” and “mood” with side-by-side examples.
- Include emotion word banks and sample analytical phrases like:
 - “The tone is ____, shown through the author’s use of ____.”
 - “The mood of the passage makes the reader feel ____.”
- Add short text excerpts for practice with identifying tone and mood.

 **BOOST Tip:** Invite students to translate a tone word (e.g., “nostalgic”) into their home language and describe a personal connection.

The BOOST Bottom Line

When you make anchor charts *with* your students—not just *for* them—you create tools that **build language, support independence, and increase access** to grade-level learning. With intentional design, anchor charts can help ELs thrive not just in English—but in every subject, every day.