

# Helpful Hints for Working with Second Language Learners

When using word sorts with second language learners, you may want to use the teaching tips below.

- Words used for sorting should be words that students are familiar with and have been discussing in their ESL or language arts block. You may also use vocabulary they have been introduced to in content area subjects.
- Pair a more advanced English speaker with a student at the emergent stage so that the more advanced student can read the words to his or her partner. The partner then decides how the words should be sorted.
- Students should have an understanding of the meanings of the words used in word sorts and other activities. The meanings of words may be presented in the context of a sentence, story, poem, rhyme, song, etc. You may have students illustrate the meanings of the words on the back of each word card or have them write a context sentence that uses the word.  
NOTE: Use the context sentences on the first page of each unit.
- Be aware that for Spanish-speaking students, short vowel sounds are especially difficult because the vowels in Spanish have only long vowel sounds. Since the students need many opportunities to see, verbalize, and think about words containing short vowels, word sorts and games should begin with simple one-vowel words and gradually move to words containing more than one vowel.
- As words are introduced for word sorts, have second language learners repeat each word after the teacher.