

**Chadwick Elementary School
Baltimore, Maryland
Baltimore Public Schools**



Welcoming New Readers

Chadwick Student: I've been here for almost two years, and before I came, I didn't know any English at all. I came from Sudan.

Natalie Bragg, Kindergarten Teacher: Many children come in for the very first time, walking into a classroom, knowing—limited words. It could be three to five words. It's usually the most important: bathroom, water, lunch, and usually, Mom and Dad, because that's what they want, you know, it's a scary situation. You walk in, and you don't know any English.

Bonnie Hess, Principal: We have many children who who are assessed and who do not speak fluent English, the basic population of our school is African American, and we are labeled a Title I school because close to 80% of our children population are on free and reduced lunches.

Denise Valancius-Ditman, ESOL Specialist: We integrate our students as soon as they come in. A lot of our students speak Urdu, and there's growing number of Nepali students, Arabic speakers. We're also getting a lot of Spanish speakers, mostly from Central America, El Salvador, Honduras. So when they come in, if there's a need for—say, phonetics, letter recognition, sounds—they'll come to a room like this, where the reading specialists work with them, and other students, so it's not just the ESOL group. Depending on what the data says is their need, then they're given the extra help, whether it's phonics, depending on the grade level, Kindergarten, first, second.

Natalie Bragg: Everything, starting from preK-up, is so vocabulary based, and so language-based, that it's almost impossible for them not to eventually pick it up, **IF**

you are speaking constantly to them, using the visuals they need—lot of role-playing. We play a lot of charades every day, because sometimes they need that visual to understand what a word means sometimes. but there's no doubt that these kids can leave Kindergarten reading English, and speaking full sentences and answering in complete sentences if you're making your room just enriched with reading, and vocabulary, and lots of opportunities to use their English here

Conversational English is only the beginning.

Bonnie Hess: I put the phonics program into the school, and we developed a sequential program for the teachers to follow. That was followed by vocabulary—understanding the words that they were reading by figuring out the structure—in third, fourth, and fifth, and then we added another component, and that was reading the words in context. So for children who are coming from other countries, and children who were born in America—all children need some kind of structured vocabulary. Children read for enjoyment, but they've got to get the inner meaning. And then the logical transition was the close reading—reading closely to infer meaning. We purchased comprehension toolkits for every teacher in the school to ways that children can interact with the text. The comprehension toolkit takes all the comprehension strategies and re-teaches teachers how to teach comprehension, how to get deeper in the text. Then I bought the texts to support—high interest texts, to go along with the comprehension skills—so that they could model the language and how to get deeper into the text. Having the children post their answers on a board and talking about it, putting ideas together then to see, what does this mean when we talk about this particular text? The comprehension is the hard part, but if we drill it down, if all of us approach us approach this as non-English learners and really study language, then it's something that we can go into for the entire school.