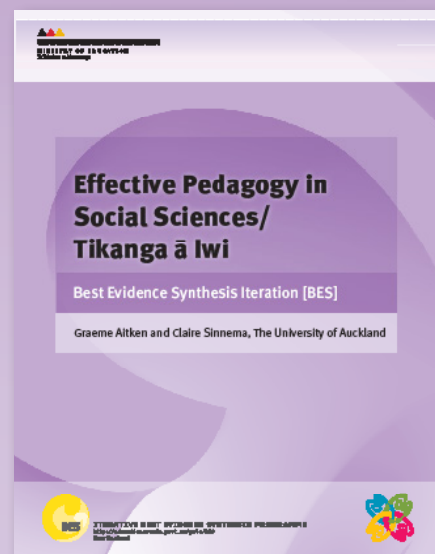


# Facilitate the inclusion and achievement of new learners of English

This is one of a series of cases that illustrate the findings of the best evidence syntheses (BESs). Each is designed to support the professional learning of educators, leaders and policy makers.



## BES cases: Insight into what works

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The best evidence syntheses (BESs) bring together research evidence about ‘what works’ for diverse (all) learners in education. Recent BESs each include a number of cases that describe actual examples of professional practice and then analyse the findings. These cases support educators to grasp the big ideas behind effective practice at the same time as they provide vivid insight into their application.

Building as they do on the work of researchers and educators, the cases are trustworthy resources for professional learning.

### Using the BES cases

The BES cases overview provides a brief introduction to each of the cases. It is designed to help you quickly decide which case or cases could be helpful in terms of your particular improvement priorities.

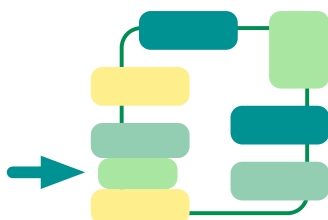
Use the cases with colleagues as catalysts for reflecting on your own professional practice and as starting points for delving into other sources of information, including related sections of the BESs. To request copies of the source studies, use the Research Behind the BES link on the BES website.

The conditions for effective professional learning are described in the Teacher Professional Learning and development BES and condensed into the ten principles found in the associated International Academy of Education summary (Timperley, 2008).

Note that, for the purpose of this series, the cases have been re-titled to more accurately signal their potential usefulness.

### Responsiveness to diverse (all) learners

Use the BES cases and the appropriate curriculum documents to design a response that will improve student outcomes



The different BESs consistently find that any educational improvement initiative needs to be responsive to the diverse learners in the specific context. Use the inquiry and knowledge-building cycle tool to design a collaborative approach to improvement that is genuinely responsive to your learners

### Facilitate the inclusion and achievement of new learners of English

English language learners (ELLs) can find themselves excluded from curriculum learning and classroom interaction unless teachers use effective strategies to include them. This case highlights the strategies a teacher uses to support a 5-year-old new-immigrant Sāmoan as a member of the class, an English language learner, and a social studies learner. Through these strategies, the child gains access to both the language and the content of the curriculum.

This junior school case has wide relevance for the teaching of ELLs across the curriculum.

## Source

Vine, E. W. (2003). "My partner": A five year-old Samoan boy learns how to participate in class through interactions with his English-speaking peers. *Linguistics and Education*, 14(1), pp. 99–121.

## Introduction

This case focuses on the experience of one student, five-year-old Fa'afetai, during a social studies unit. Fa'afetai was new to the classroom, having recently arrived in New Zealand from Sāmoa, and was a new learner of English. At the beginning of the sequence of social studies lessons, it was clear that Fa'afetai did not understand the partnering process.

Given multiple opportunities to practise partnering with another learner, Fa'afetai was able not only to participate but also to negotiate partnering and, ultimately, to use it for his own purposes. Instead of being limited to follower roles in social studies activities, he became an active participant.

## Targeted learning outcome/s

This unit of work focused on different perspectives on and experiences of Christmas, particularly those of people with disabilities and of people who have to spend Christmas in hospital. It was an objective of the unit that all students would be able to participate in the learning.

## Learner/s and learning context

Arriving recently from Sāmoa, Fa'afetai had spent just six weeks in Ms Nikora's class in this decile 3 school of 125 students on the outskirts of a metropolitan area near Wellington. He came from an extended family in which three languages – Sāmoan, Niue, and English – were spoken. There were 8 girls and 10 boys in the year 0–1 class. Ms Nikora was Māori and spoke Māori but not Sāmoan. Half of the students in her class were Māori. The one other Sāmoan spoke only English. The other students in the class were all European New Zealanders. The learning described in this case took place during a three-day intensive social studies unit, Christmas in Hospital (Smythe, 1996).

## Pedagogy

Ms Nikora used partnering 16 times in the course of the unit, at least once each session. The partnering activities consisted of:

- choosing a partner (Fa'afetai's peers modelled what to say and do);
- talking with a teacher-allocated partner:
  - following a story;
  - about a picture;
  - in response to a visiting speaker;
  - to share ideas;
  - after listening to a recorded phone interview;
  - to reflect on the morning's activities;
- working in a small group to discuss a video:

*What I want you children to do is this: I'm going to give you a picture, and I want you to have a look at the pictures, and you're going to do this with partners [she picks up the pictures from the floor], and you're going to talk about what you can see in the picture.*

## Outcomes

As Fa'afetai found himself engaged in the many activities that required partnering, he began to respond in different ways:

Session 1. He did not understand the 'partner' process. When the teacher handed a puzzle to his partner, William, Fa'afetai said, "Ohh" – sounding unhappy. This suggests that he did not understand that he and William were to work together on the puzzle.

Session 2. He used the word 'partner' when sitting facing another student.

Session 3. He chose a partner by touching their shoulder, saying their name, and joining hands. (He moved away from a person he did not want to partner with.)

Session 4. He refused to share a puzzle with a partner.

Session 5. He used partnering as an opportunity for physical play.

Session 7. He reached out for a partner and said, "My partner." He engaged with his peers in explaining "No your partner." He showed understanding that partnering related particularly to classroom learning tasks as distinct from the free play that went on at playtime each morning.

Session 9. He used his understanding of the partnering process to negotiate relationships with his peers outside of the teacher-designed partner activities. For example, when Timothy attempted to sit next to William, Fa'afetai's partner in previous activities, Fa'afetai said, "No your partner" and put Timothy's book under the table, thus making it clear that William was *his* partner, not Timothy's.

Fa'afetai became increasingly involved as a partner in the learning activities, simultaneously learning classroom procedures, English language, and curriculum content. He also learned to negotiate practices that facilitated his involvement in a partnership and used that partnership for his own purposes.

The researcher observed:

He has been learning languaculture, not just language. He has been learning the word 'partner', but also the practices that relate to it in everyday life, the culture of this classroom (p. 119).

## How the learning occurred

### Alignment

*Align experiences to important outcomes*

Fa'afetai gained an understanding not only of the word 'partner' but also how to choose a partner when asked to, engage with a partner, and initiate partnership with a peer. He was able to do this because the teacher provided him with repeated opportunities to practice partnering as he engaged with the different activities in the unit.

### Community

*Build and sustain a learning community*

Fa'afetai's engagement was promoted by the opportunities he was given to observe others partnering and was reinforced by the expectation of his teacher and peers that he, too, would be a partner. His teacher was struck by how much Fa'afetai learned from his fellow students:

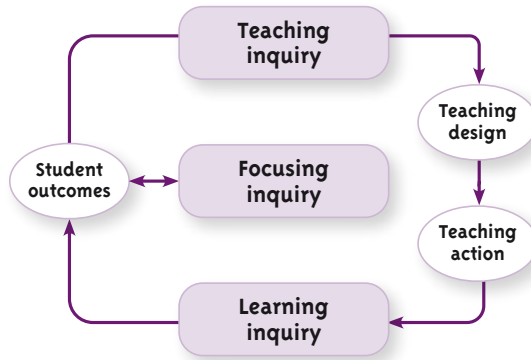
"He just learned so much from his peers. And I think that's a really valuable lesson that it's taught me. I know that they learned in spite of the teacher, but I just didn't realise how quickly the growth would occur and how much of a change it would actually make over such a short period of time" (Fa'afetai's teacher, six months later).

## Implications for pedagogy

1. Teachers need to be aware of the complexity of the challenge facing ESOL students, who must simultaneously learn in three domains: classroom practice, English language, and curriculum content.
2. It is important to provide opportunities for students to engage with all three domains in activities that involve them in interaction with their peers, because such opportunities allow them to manage their own learning.

**Inquiry**

The evidence presented in this case can be used to inform teachers' inquiries into their own practice.



**Focusing inquiry**

What is most important and therefore worth spending time on?

**Teaching inquiry**

What might work best? What could I try?

**Learning inquiry**

What happened? Why did it happen?

Suggested questions:

- Has your approach with ESOL students emphasised classroom practice, English language, or curriculum content? Have you promoted participation in ways that allow them to learn simultaneously in all three domains?
- Can you think of learners whose participation could be supported by partnering activities?

**Other references**

Smythe, K. (1996). *Christmas in hospital: A social studies unit for junior and middle levels*. Hamilton: Developmental Publications.

Vine, E. W. (2003). A five-year old Sāmoan boy interacts with his teacher in a New Zealand classroom. In R. Barnard & T. Glynn (Eds.), *Bilingual children's language and literacy development* (pp. 108–135). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Vine, E. W. (2006). "Hospital": A five-year-old Sāmoan boy's access to learning curriculum content in his New Zealand classroom. *Language and Education*, 20(3), pp. 232–254.

Vine, E. W., Alton-Lee, A., & Klenner, L. (2000). Supporting curriculum learning and language learning with an ESOL learner in a mainstream class. *SET: Research Information for Teachers*, 3, pp. 4–8.