Supporting Multilingual Learners during the 2020-2021 School Year

September 2020

As the 2020-2021 school year begins, schools across the country are facing the same challenge they faced last spring: educating students amid the uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. As schools begin to implement their in-person, virtual, or hybrid re-opening plans, they must contend with the very real possibility that those plans will have to change, depending on how the pandemic unfolds.

Whatever happens, maintaining a focus on high-quality instruction that works across in-person and distance learning settings will be critical, especially for multilingual learners. In its comprehensive guide, Supporting English Learners in the COVID-10 Crisis¹, the Council of the Great City Schools, found that many of the language-learning programs used in the first months of the pandemic—when schools were operating in crisis mode—fell short of meeting students’ basic academic needs (6).

We've assembled the following advice and related resources to help teachers effectively support their multilingual learners and create meaningful opportunities to learn and grow—however that learning happens. Our advice is grounded in the guidance from the Council of Chief State School Officers² and organized around the three high-priority practices for language learning recommended by the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association:³

1. Connect with Learners
   Authentically engage learners in genuine ways to help them thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

2. Connect with Language
   Focus on language learning and practice that builds English language proficiency through targeted goals, support, and meaningful engagement.

3. Connect with Learning
   Connect language practice to the content students are learning across the subject areas.

Our hope is that, no matter the instructional model, general educators, English Language Development (ELD) teachers, and others will continue to meaningfully engage multilingual learners and provide high-quality support that attends to both their wellbeing and academic success.

¹ The Council of the Great City Schools, Supporting English Learners in the COVID-10 Crisis
² TNTP, COVID 19 School Response Toolkit, Restart and Recovery Considerations for Teaching and Learning.
³ California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, Curriculum and Instruction Steering Committee, Considerations for Inclusivity and Support with Designated ELD in Remote Learning.
**Connect with Learners (and Families)**  
Authentically engage learners in genuine ways to help them thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

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<tr>
<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Considerations for Inclusivity and Support for Multilingual Learners</th>
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| Be tenacious about connecting with every student regularly.  
Reach out to students to foster relationships and connect on a human level. Seek to understand students’ perspectives within the context of distance learning. | Resources  
- Empathy and Connection Rubric (adapted from Contra Costa COE)  
- Daily or Weekly Check-in Google Form Sample, which is appropriate for beginning-level language learners (Jennifer Findley)  
- Sample Call Log Tracker: Track your contact with students through a log or spreadsheet, which will help you monitor how effective different contact methods are and which students you are unable to reach. Try to make sure each of your multilingual learners can connect with a trusted, school-based adult on a weekly basis.  
- Considerations for an asset-oriented and needs-responsive school for emergent bilinguals (Teach Plus California Policy Fellows)  
- Supporting MLLs’ social-emotional learning in a virtual classroom (TESOL International Association)  
- Ways to get to know your students (Lawndale Elementary School District) |
| Solicit input from caregivers and community members.  
Partner with family members and community members to extend support to students at home. Adjust curriculum and instructional approaches based on feedback from students and families. | By connecting with families and learning about how they are engaging at home, we can identify practical ways for families to support their students’ learning.  
An abundance of resources has been created to support Spanish-speaking communities, but resources for other language groups are less visible. Partnering with community organizations can help ensure families of all cultural and linguistic backgrounds get the support they need. |
| Establish and review routines based on the learning model (distance or hybrid). To lower the affective filter, rather than formally assessing and diagnosing, focus on the content and language of the learning model that students will need in order to be successful this year. | Use social-emotional learning and community-building activities to establish and review how to use platforms for learning, recording videos, submitting assignments, accessing missed lessons, etc.  
Establish a structured learning environment with predictable routines using presentation slides as your guide (i.e. morning meeting, vocabulary preview, close reading, comment on a discussion board, connect with a partner, write or record exit ticket).  
Consider the new vocabulary related to digital literacy that language learners will need to be successful and make plans for explicit instruction of necessary terms to teach at the beginning of the year. |
| Resources |  
- Distance Learning for English Learners: Needs Assessment (see Family Engagement) (Colorín Colorado)  
- Offline Learning at Home: Examples of high engagement activities in the four language domains (Colorín Colorado)  
- Tapping into Learning at Home (Stanford Graduate School of Education)  
- Learning menus with technology free activities to support development of English and affirm the home language (Tulare COE)  
- Supporting Families of Immigrant and Refugees During Remote Learning (Immigrant Connections and Seidlitz Education)  
- Communicating with families and accessing family funds of knowledge (English Learner Success Forum)  
- Topics to consider when establishing routines and norms. (Edutopia) |
## Connect with Language
Focus on language learning and practice that builds English language proficiency through targeted goals, support, and meaningful engagement.

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<tr>
<th>Essential Practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asynchronous and Synchronous Engagement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Students must have ample opportunities to engage in authentic and meaningful academic discourse</strong> across the disciplines to accelerate content learning and language development.</td>
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<td>• Create video recordings of direct instruction to complete during times for asynchronous learning. Provide ways for students to engage in asynchronous discourse through discussion boards, Flip Grid, or speaking with family members.</td>
<td><strong>Assessments should provide opportunities for multilingual learners to demonstrate their learning in all four language domains,</strong> and in-home language in accordance with students’ ELD performance levels.</td>
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<td>• Synchronous learning should focus on oral language development through collaborative and constructive conversations where students make meaning of new concepts and build on classmates’ responses.</td>
<td>• Students must have ample opportunities to practice new English language skills in both low-stakes and performance-based writing tasks and use home language in the writing process.</td>
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<td>• Live small-group instruction is an opportunity to review synchronous instruction and/or preview upcoming lessons.</td>
<td>• Plan for when and how to use home language in formative assessments, based on students’ needs. Plan for integrating home language assessments into the curriculum when gathering information about a student’s full linguistic repertoire (for example, at the beginning or at the end of a unit).</td>
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<td>• Interaction strategies often fall short of encouraging authentic engagement. Consider how the interactions you plan go beyond simply sharing answers to conversations and instead allow for students to use their knowledge and language to ask questions, co-construct ideas, and deepen understandings. Pay close attention to not only if students are speaking, but primarily to what they are saying and how they are using language to communicate ideas.</td>
<td>• Use performance-based assessments rather than traditional forms of assessment to gather evidence of student learning for language, conceptual understanding, and metacognition.</td>
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<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td><strong>Formative assessments should focus on collecting information on student progress and needs relative to priority lessons and goals. These assessments should measure the development of language and content simultaneously.</strong></td>
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<td>• Collaborative conversations- video model (McGraw-Hill)</td>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
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<td>• Video examples of interaction strategies (Palmdale SD)</td>
<td>• Comprehensive guide on assessing in culturally responsive ways, providing strategic scaffolding and linguistic accommodations during distance learning, (Council of the Great City Schools)</td>
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<td>• Alignment of CA ELD standards to examples of language resources (Tulare County Office of Education)</td>
<td>• Descriptions of what MLLs “Can Do” in speaking, reading, listening, and writing at each proficiency level (WIDA)</td>
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<td>• Facilitating secondary oral language development while distance learning, (West ED collaboration)</td>
<td>• Engaging the four language domains as part of distance learning (Tulare County Office of Education)</td>
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<td>• Formative assessments in remote learning for diverse learners (Understanding Language, Stanford)</td>
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<td>• Strategies for scaffolding instruction based on research-based principle of language learning (Center for Applied Linguistics)</td>
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## Prioritize teaching of language skills that are inherently embedded in content standards to accelerate the development of language and content simultaneously.

Content teachers and language development specialists collaborate to organize and plan curriculum and instruction for multilingual learners.

### Priorities

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<td>- The exemplar distance learning lessons and sample resources below provide models for how teachers can use high-quality curricula to design lessons for both designated and integrated ELD while distance learning.</td>
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<td>- All students identified as multilingual learners can and must be provided access to grade-level learning with their peers in integrated classrooms, where they develop language skills, conceptual understanding, and analytical practices simultaneously.</td>
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<td>- Review the entire scope and sequence of your curriculum to make sure specific speaking, listening, reading, and writing tasks are embedded regularly, as well as explicit language instruction and language development goals.</td>
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### Sample Lessons

- **Student and teacher-facing slide decks** for designated ELD using Benchmark Advance, (Izela Jacobo, San Diego COE)
  - Recorded “How To” webinar for creating designated ELD lessons using Benchmark Advance. [Teacher template](#) and [student facing deck](#) (Izela Jacobo, San Diego COE)
  - Sample Week 1 Designated ELD Benchmark Advance
- **Differentiated sentence stems for designated ELD Lessons** using Benchmark Advance (Lawndale Elementary School District)
- **Sample ELA and designated ELD lessons using Wonders** (Santa Clara COE)
- **Sample newcomer student facing deck** (Riverside COE)

### Resources

- [Digital Content Delivery and instructional design considerations for language learners](#) (San Diego DOE)
- [Guide to language functions, graphic organizers for discourse and designated ELD](#) (Sobrato Early Academic Language)
- Do’s and Don’ts for remote learning for English learners in [ELA](#) and [Math](#) (EL Success Forum)
- [Aligning structural and instructional practices to promote EL Success in 2020-2021](#) (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition)

### Be intentional with how you leverage technology to create engaging instruction, promote discourse, and allow for student agency.

Structure activities so all students can engage, contribute, participate in the learning and share at their proficiency levels.

Instead of having a wide repertoire of tech tools, prioritize a few tools that meet or allow for these **four key components**: (Tan Huyn)

- **Curate**: Tools that centralize assignments and resources for students and teachers
- **Content**: Tools that help students learn the concepts, content-specific vocabulary words, and arrive at the essential understandings of the unit.
- **Create**: Tools that help students engage with the content and demonstrate their understanding through text and/or visuals.
- **Collaborate**: Tools that foster live interactions where students are using their speaking and listening skills to clarify concepts, build on ideas, and deepen knowledge.

### Resources

- [Adapting direct instruction to distance learning for MLLs](#)
- [Student and parent tutorials](#) for Google Suite and other apps
- [Teacher tutorials](#) for Google Suite and other apps