

Supporting English Language Learners in Mainstream Classrooms

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Our Present National Need

Based upon Census 2000 results, about one in five students throughout the nation comes from a home in which a language other than English is spoken. Approximately 30 million people in the United States are foreign born (Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Statistics for large urban schools, such as New York City, reveal 48% of students representing more than 100 languages from immigrant-headed households. In Boston Public Schools (BPS), the percentage of English Language Learners (ELLs) in Boston College (BC) partner schools ranged from 11% to 69% and represented over 40 languages, during the 2000-2001 school year.

Urban, Suburban, and Rural Classrooms

This increasing wave of linguistic diversity is "not only an urban or southwestern phenomenon. Schools across the country are encountering growing numbers of children from immigrant families. Even in places like Dodge City, Kansas, more than 30 percent of the children enrolled in public schools are the children of immigrants" (Suarez-Orozco, 2001, pp. 2-3). In suburban Newton, Massachusetts, a community adjacent to Boston College, almost 2,000 students speak 67 different languages.

Preparing Teachers

Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of teachers do not have licensure or any relevant training in working with language minority students (Beykont, 2002). Title III Project ALL supports the Lynch School of Education (LSOE) in preparing teachers to teach ELLs, as part of the LSOE's call to promote social justice.

Not Just ESL and Bilingual Teachers

Teaching ELLs is every educator's responsibility. Whether or not ELLs are receiving support from an ESL or bilingual certified teacher, all teachers are responsible for each of their students' learning. This includes mainstream teachers supporting ELLs in acquiring content knowledge while developing language proficiency.

"There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education."

Lau v. Nichols (1974) Supreme Court Ruling

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For more comprehensive answers to these questions, download a Title III handbook on teaching elementary or secondary bilingual students at the Title III website: www.bc.edu/title3all

❏ **What is an ELL?**

An *English Language Learner* (ELL) is anyone who is learning English as a second or other language. Regardless of English proficiency level, all ELLs are considered diverse bilinguals: from very educated to limited schooling, from children of professional families to children of migrant workers, from recent arrivals to those born in the U.S. ELLs represent over 200 different language groups although over half are of Spanish-speaking backgrounds. In addition to functioning in two languages, ELLs also navigate two cultures.

The following list summarizes some ELLs you might have in your mainstream classroom. These ELLs might be referred to as *English as a Second Language* (ESL) students, *Limited English Proficient* (LEP), *Second Language Learners* (SLL), or *bilinguals*. Each term carries a slightly different connotation. *ELL* is the term currently used by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA), while previous federal legislation referred to *LEPs*.

❏ **Who am I looking for in my class?**

First-generation immigrants

Students born in another country and speaking another language when arriving in the U.S. during or after adolescence (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Second-generation immigrant children

Children born in the U.S. to immigrant parents OR arriving in the U.S. before adolescence (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). They may appear “American,” but speak a language other than English at home.

Hyphenated Americans

Students who recognize dual identities, such as Vietnamese-Americans, acknowledging their parent’s national origins and typically speaking heritage languages while also identifying as English-speaking Americans (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Refugees

Children whose families fled areas of violence and war, but who likely would have stayed in their home country if not for these conditions. These students may have interrupted schooling because school was not an option. They typically have unique psychological needs associated with trauma.

Political asylum seekers

Immigrants whose parents left their country for political reasons while often leaving prestige, friends, and family. These families might have preferred to stay in their homeland and may never be able to return.

Children of migrant workers

Students who speak another language and regularly relocate as their parents follow work, typically associated with agricultural workers but can also include families regularly relocating for other seasonal work in non-rural areas.

Sojourners

Students temporarily living in the U.S. while their parents, who typically are bilingual, are working professionals, in such fields as international business, science, or engineering.

Limited formal schooling students

LFS students have been in the U.S. for less than five years and experienced limited or interrupted schooling in their native country, have developed limited native language literacy, and are typically below grade level in math (Freeman et al, 2002).

Long-term English learners

ELLs in the U.S. for at least seven years, who are below grade level in reading and writing, typically have different perceptions of academic achievement and inconsistent placement in ESL or bilingual programs (Freeman et al, 2002).

Indigenous peoples

Descendants of populations, such as Navajo or Inuit peoples, who inhabited a country at the time of conquest, colonization, or establishment of present state boundaries and who “retain some of their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions” (May & Aikman, 2003, p.140).

Deaf students

Students whose first language is American Sign Language (ASL) or a version of sign language learned outside the U.S. Note: While the vocabulary of ASL is similar to that of spoken English, ASL syntax varies, requiring deaf students to learn a second syntactical structure.

Simultaneous bilinguals

Students who spoke two languages before age three (Bialystok, 2001).

❖ ***What can I do my first days in the classroom? How do I identify ELLs?***

Identify the ELLs in your classroom.

Become aware of the types of ELLs, as described on page 2 and then consider the following.

- ❖ ***Ask the school's ESL teacher*** which ELLs have been identified by the school or district, based upon the district's home language questionnaire (HLQ). Districts are required by federal regulations to identify ELLs who require language and academic support services. This is usually achieved through an HLQ that identifies those who have a primary or home language other than English. Be aware that these lists are not always accurate. For example, some parents might not want to identify their child as speaking a language other than English at home, for fear of discrimination.
- ❖ ***Ask the classroom teacher*** to identify ELLs in your room. Some teachers may have insight into their students' home language that is not reflected in district paperwork; however, be aware that others may operate on a more limited definition of ELLs.
- ❖ ***Check students' cumulative records.*** Look for such information as where students were born and the locations of schools and types of language programs they attended.
- ❖ ***Ask students*** in one-on-one conversations or during a whole class activity. An activity in which students share about themselves can build community while providing valuable information. You might have students conduct surveys or create math glyphs which reveal such information as:
 - Countries of birth and places they have lived
 - Family or cultural traditions, including music, art, and celebrations
 - Language spoken in their home and in weekend language schools
 - Involvement in activities or community programs outside school

Determine their levels of English language development (L2).

Language development includes listening, speaking, reading and writing. After observing your ELLs during classroom interactions, use the chart on p. 4 to informally determine each one's overall language proficiency level.

You can determine their comfort with social language by asking questions about their interests and family. During content area instruction, ask them clarification questions one-on-one to ascertain their familiarity with content vocabulary or academic language. Ask them to write a story or describe their life before coming to this school. Observe their behavior when directions are being given in class. Do they look confused? Do they observe others and copy their actions? Do they ask another student for clarification? Do they immediately begin the task with apparent success?

Learn about ELLs' literacy development in their first language (L1).

Ask ELLs to read or write in their native language even if it's one you don't understand. Ask them if they can bring a book or magazine from home to read aloud. Listen to them read a section while recognizing their heritage language. Ask if they attend an evening or weekend school in another language. Suggest they write a letter to a grandmother or friend describing their new home, and then observe their writing behaviors in their first language. Do they struggle with ideas or words? Do they write in a different direction than English? Through this process, you can informally assess ELLs' first language literacy while providing crucial positive respect for their heritage language.

Check the cumulative records of ELLs.

Were they enrolled in bilingual programs? Is there evidence of their language of instruction or ESL services? If they have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, is there record of a language used for communication with parents? Is there evidence of high mobility or interrupted schooling? If so, you should informally assess these students before new content is introduced to determine gaps in knowledge that you might assume of their age- or grade-equivalent peers.

❏ *How can I support ELLs' language development?*

Within any mainstream classroom, you may have ELLs at various stages of English language development. Look and listen for the differences in your students. Following are some simple suggestions to begin supporting these differences in language. Just because students may not yet have developed the language to express higher-level thinking does not mean they lack the ability to think at a higher-level. Without talking down to ELLs, you can create meaningful, non-threatening opportunities to develop language.

Stage	<i>What do I observe the ELL doing?</i>	<i>What support can I provide?</i>
Pre-production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❏ Communicates with actions and verbal formulas ❏ Responds non-verbally, with gestures and drawings ❏ Builds receptive vocabulary ❏ Imitates simple learned language ❏ Benefits from listening activities ❏ Relies on L1 and may be silent in English ❏ Becomes familiar with sounds, rhythms, patterns of English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❏ Interact one-on-one but don't force ELLs to speak ❏ Pair ELLs with more advanced speakers ❏ Use visuals and demonstrate directions ❏ Encourage drawing and non-verbal communication ❏ Encourage active listening, using props and visuals ❏ Provide print-rich environment
Early Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❏ Labels and categorizes with words ❏ L1 syntax and vocabulary influences L2 speaking and writing ❏ Gives one and two word responses ❏ Identifies people, places, and objects when asked ❏ Uses routine expressions independently ❏ Repeats memorable language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❏ Conduct choral reading and shared reading ❏ Preview lesson content and vocabulary (one to three key terms) ❏ Provide audiotapes of books and lectures ❏ Provide guided support with graphic organizers ❏ Ask closed-ended questions (yes/no, either/or) ❏ Ask open-ended questions that require one or two word responses ❏ Use dialogue journals ❏ Read aloud illustrated, patterned, predictable texts ❏ Utilize realia, manipulatives, and visual supports
Speech Emergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❏ Demonstrates increased comprehension ❏ Produces longer phrases or sentences though incorrect ❏ Attempts to use high incidence vocabulary ❏ Speaks more socially and academically ❏ Creates literature responses which retell, describe, and compare ❏ Engages in independent reading ❏ Writes for various purposes ❏ Focuses on concepts or "big ideas" instead of details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❏ Provide content area material in various formats (text books, trade books, magazines) ❏ Allow many opportunities for oral discussion (partners, small groups) ❏ Ask open-ended questions ❏ Encourage description in speech and in writing ❏ Continue read alouds and shared readings ❏ Conference with students about writing ❏ Use role-playing and story telling ❏ Provide written and spoken directions
Intermediate Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❏ Produces more creative, connected narrative ❏ Answers higher-level questions (why? how?) ❏ Writes with increasing grammatical accuracy ❏ Uses higher order-language (persuades, evaluates, analyzes) ❏ Reads wider range of genres ❏ Explores concepts in greater depth and detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❏ Structure small group discussions ❏ Support use of reference materials for research ❏ Discuss more advanced literature in guided reading groups ❏ Allow students to create oral and written narratives ❏ Provide variety of purposes and genres in writing ❏ Model rich content vocabulary

Adapted from Ernst-Slavit, G. & Moore, M. (2002); Tinajero, J.V. & Schifini, A. (1997).

❏ *How does language affect the content areas?*

Language is the primary means by which content knowledge is shared and developed. Numerous studies have affirmed the critical importance of vocabulary for all students and especially for ELLs. While developing knowledge of vocabulary is important, it is not the only aspect of language which impacts learning in the content areas. Highlighted below are a few examples of how aspects of language can affect content area instruction.

Math

- ❏ Teach directionality and rules for labeling and reading graphs and charts. If students have studied graphs or charts in their native language, allow them to show how the data is represented in their L1. Then provide a model of the same data following English conventions.
- ❏ Many math texts now ask students to write their own math problems, so model how questions are structured in English. This includes knowing appropriate question words and punctuation.
- ❏ In many word problems, the real question is implied and worded as a command instead of an interrogative. Teach students to recognize these implied questions. Compare various ways of stating or questioning a problem.

Science

- ❏ Science books are not usually solid text, read top to bottom, left to right. Teach students directionality when there are columns, boxed inserts, and text laid out in a non-linear format around illustrations. This includes teaching how to read science diagrams, the conventions of subtitles, and why some words are bold or italicized.
- ❏ Hypothesizing and conjecturing occur in science. Yet the conditional tense is not one of the first tenses mastered by ELLs. Teach students how to write conditional statements, such as “If...then...”
- ❏ Observation and data collection are among the skills needed in science. When introducing a new science topic, such as geology, brainstorm words that describe rocks. Model where you include these descriptive words or phrases in basic sentences.

Social Studies

- ❏ Make students aware of how different meanings are created by articles. For example, consider: *a country*, *the country* of Venezuela, *the country* where there are farms. Students may be accustomed to using gender-based articles as in Spanish or to not using articles as in Japanese.
- ❏ Create word maps of relevant semantic word families, such as *immigrant*, *migrant*, *migratory*, *migrate*. Discuss the different meanings and identify root words, so students can analyze words from context.
- ❏ Not all languages follow the same rules for capitalizing proper nouns. For example, *English* is *ingles* in Spanish. Teach students when places, nationalities, languages, and other proper nouns are capitalized in English.

❏ *How can I teach content, so ELLs develop concepts?*

- Create challenging, theme-based units that draw on students’ background knowledge and cultures (Freeman et al, 2002).
- Introduce two to three key terms in a lesson, using methods that explore the meaning of terms (Nagy, 1988).
- Organize language “buddies,” partner work, and small group collaborative activities.
- Provide visual supports, such as photographs, charts, overhead presentations, manipulatives, and real objects.
- Demonstrate a process or activity, model an assignment, supplement oral explanations with written directions and orally explain written handouts.
- Provide and discuss exemplars of written products, as appropriate for that content area.
- Provide an additional oral explanation of activities or assignments, and/or allow students who speak the same language to clarify assignments for each other.
- Talk with ELLs about their ideas before they write in order to help build oral understandings and vocabulary for concepts; write down a few key words used in your conversations to leave with the student.
- Provide books with thematic, grade-level content at various reading levels, with books on tape, and if possible with resources in pertinent languages for supplemental reading and home extension activities.

✚ What does effective teaching for ELLs look like?

Scaffolding instruction

There are various ways you can *scaffold* lessons to *support* ELLs' understanding while they develop their spoken and written English.

Mediated scaffolds

You, a paraprofessional, a volunteer, or an English-proficient student can provide ELLs with additional one-on-one or small group support. You might be introducing an algebraic concept, which assumes previous instruction concerning square roots. Through informal assessments, you might realize an ELL has not been exposed to that concept. Or perhaps, an ELL has a quite advanced understanding but lacks the necessary academic vocabulary to read a math task in English. You can introduce either the concept or the vocabulary in a small group mini-lesson. You can also arrange reading buddies, so that a more English-proficient peer provides on-going support for reading comprehension of math tasks.

Task and materials scaffolds

Instead of just telling students about a science experiment, you might create a handout with visual images of the steps. You might also provide ELLs with an outline you create of a social studies text. This reading guide can support ELL comprehension by focusing them on key points.

Culturally responsive teaching

When planning lessons, keep in mind the following guidelines:

- Select materials that acknowledge students' backgrounds and experiences.
- Develop lessons which build on students' prior knowledge, needs, and interests.
- Use materials that are as free of cultural bias as possible.
- Openly discuss the cultural bias of materials when necessary.

You should also adjust your teaching methods to be sensitive to the cultural differences you observe. Look for your students' comfort level and cultural expectations relative to (Cloud, 2002):

- receiving guidance from teachers or peers,
- responding individually or in groups,
- making eye contact with adults,
- guessing a possible outcome, and
- volunteering in class.

The SIOP Model

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) focuses on six areas for effective teaching of ELLs. When you prepare or reflect on lessons, consider the following. For a thorough explanation, refer to [Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model](#) (Echevarria et al, 2004).

Preparation

- Clearly defined content objectives
- Clearly defined language objectives
- Appropriate content concepts
- Supplementary materials well used
- Content adapted to student proficiency levels
- Meaningful activities integrated lesson concepts with language practice

Building Background

- Explicitly linked concepts to background experiences
- Explicitly linked past learning and new concepts
- Key vocabulary was emphasized
- Speech appropriate for student proficiency level
- Clear explanation of academic tasks
- Various techniques clarified content concepts

Strategies

- Ample opportunities to use strategies
- Consistent use of scaffolding techniques
- Variety of question types, including higher-order
- Frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion
- Grouping configurations supported objectives
- Wait time for responses consistently provided
- Opportunities to clarify key concepts in L1

Practice/Application

- Hands-on materials applied content knowledge
- Students applied new knowledge in class
- Activities integrated all four language skills

Effectiveness of lesson delivery

- Content objectives matched lesson delivery
- Students engaged 90% to 100% of time
- Pacing appropriate for students

Lesson review/evaluation

- Comprehensive review of key vocabulary
- Comprehensive review of key content concepts
- Regular feedback provided
- Student comprehension assessed

“Not Quite So” Myths

❖ “Not Quite So” Myth #1: Just use special education methods for ELLs.

Like students with special needs, ELLs can be unjustly limited by low expectations. However, not having learned a second language is different than having difficulty with language processing. Many of the language-based supports offered students with learning disabilities may indeed serve as scaffolds for ELLs. However, ELLs may have advanced literacy skills in their first language (L1), which provide a rich foundation for learning a second language (L2).

❖ “Not Quite So” Myth #2: They have to learn English before puberty begins.

Bialystok (2001) examined evidence supporting the idea of a sensitive period for second language acquisition (SLA). Her conclusion: You can’t assume adolescents will struggle with learning a second language.

Nonetheless, the intersection of language acquisition, cultural diversity, and adolescence is a complex phenomenon. Freeman et al (2002) argue that many programs for older ELLs are designed on false assumptions about the similarity of these students. They differentiate three types of older learners.

	<i>Newly arrived with adequate schooling</i>	<i>Newly arrived with limited formal schooling</i>	<i>Long-term English learner</i>
Characteristics	Less than five years in U.S.; may score low on standardized tests taken in English; usually “catches up” academically	Less than five years in U.S.; limited L1 literacy; usually below grade level in math; demonstrates poor academic achievement	Seven or more years in U.S.; below grade level in English literacy; false perception of academic achievement; adequate grades; low test scores; inconsistent placement in ESL or bilingual instruction
Social language (BICS*)	L1 BICS: yes L2 BICS: some	L1 BICS: yes L2 BICS: no	L1 BICS: yes L2 BICS: some
Academic language (CALP*)	L1 CALP: yes L2 CALP: no	L1 CALP: no L2 CALP: no	L1 CALP: no L2 CALP: no

*Note: BICS refers to Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills. CALP refers to Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency. For more information on this distinction, refer to Cummins’ chapter in Garcia, G. (2003) or Solomon, J., & Rhodes, N. C. (1995).

❖ “Not Quite So” Myth #3: This student should be in another grade.

Sometimes ELLs are not the same age or don’t have the same academic experience as other students. This does not necessarily mean they belong in another grade or that they should be retained. In the following scenarios, serious consideration should be given not only to the academic and linguistic level but also the developmental and psychological needs of students. For example, an adolescent may write like a primary or intermediate student; however, treating him as such or retaining her in fifth-grade may be more harmful to adolescent development than if teachers provided appropriate academic supports while the student remains with age- or grade-equivalent peers.

Differences in age

- Students may come from countries in which they begin school at a different age. For example, in Mexico five-year-old children enter first grade while seven-year-old Koreans begin first-grade.
- Other students may come from a culture in which children are considered one year old when they are born.

Differences in academic knowledge

- Some students may have Limited Formal Schooling (LFS) due to war, political unrest, or lack of available schooling because of living in remote communities.
- Other students may have a history of high mobility, which results in gaps in their knowledge base as they move among states, cities, or school districts. For example, because fractions may be taught at different times in the year, a mobile student who moves mid-year can incidentally miss receiving instruction in that topic.

❏ **What about special needs ELLs?**

You will teach ELLs who have been identified as having special needs. You will also interact with ELLs who you think should be receiving such services. As an informed educator, you should consider the following.

Overrepresentation

Various studies document the overrepresentation of ELLs in special education programs across the nation. Artiles & Ortiz (2002) summarize the following trends noted in research:

- Overrepresentation of ELLs occurs more frequently in areas with larger populations of ELLs.
- Secondary ELLs and those with limited first or second language proficiency are overrepresented in programs for mental retardation, learning disabilities, and language or speech impairments.
- ELLs are more likely than native English speakers to be in high incidence disability categories.
- ELLs receiving the least language support through regular education are almost three times as likely to be placed in special education resource rooms.

Legal Precedents

In addition to policy, law, and judicial decisions which guarantee the rights of all students with special needs, there have been specific cases which address the rights of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students with special needs. *Diane v. State Board of Education* (1970) and *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979) established precedents for evaluating minority children with assessments that are not culturally biased and that have been validated for use with that population. Other legal precedents resulting from court cases have stipulated the following practices (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002):

- using bilingual materials to identify ELLs for special education services,
- providing parental rights information in a family's native language, and
- utilizing community members to facilitate parental involvement in the assessment and development of their child's individualized education plan (IEP).

Evaluations

Before pursuing a full evaluation, you should seek the advice of your school's Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) and consider suggestions offered for adapting teaching methods or classroom environment. When ELLs are diagnostically assessed, Cummins (2001) suggests that there are four common perspectives:

- consider the ELLs' backgrounds when interpreting the results of English diagnostic evaluations,
- wait and see if the students develop language if given more time,
- evaluate ELLs immediately but only with nonverbal assessments, or
- utilize first language diagnostic tools if available.

Seeing none of these as completely viable options, Cummins and other colleagues developed the Bilingual Verbal Abilities Tests (BVAT), which is now available in more than 15 languages. Based on the Woodcock Johnson-Revised battery, the BVAT combines verbal-cognitive results from both first and second languages with the resulting score providing what is considered a more complete picture of students' verbal abilities.

For more information on special needs ELLs:

- Artiles, A.J. & Ortiz, A.A. (Eds.) (2002). *English language learners with special education needs: Identification, assessment, and instruction*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.
- Baca, L.M. Cervantes, H., & Cervantes H.T. (2003.) *The bilingual special education interface*. (Third ed.). Boston, MA: Prentice Hall.
- Cummins, J. (2001). Assessment and intervention with culturally and linguistically diverse learners. In *Literacy assessment of second language learners*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Munoz-Sandoval, A., Cummins, J., Alvarado, C.G., & Ruef, M. (1998). *Bilingual Verbal Abilities Tests (BVAT)*. Itasca, IL: Riverside.

❏ **What about assessing ELLs?**

Federal Regulations

Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) requires districts to annually assess the English academic language proficiency of all K-12 ELLs. Title III is administered by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) provides information on the responsibilities of districts concerning ELL identification, assessment, and instruction.

For more information from these federal agencies, refer to their websites listed below.

- OCR: <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ell/assessment.html>
- OELA: <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/>

Assessing Language Development

Nationwide, districts are required to identify all K-12 ELLs and determine their English language development. How this is done varies across the nation. Two commonly used assessment tools are the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) and the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM).

Massachusetts has created its own assessments, which are based upon the LAS and SOLOM, and which additionally correspond to the state's *English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for English Language Learners*. The Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA) includes two components: (1) the Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral (MELA-O) and (2) the MEPA-Reading and Writing (MEPA-R/W).

The MELA-O, which assesses speaking and listening for K-12 students, is a rubric based upon observation. The rubric is designed for use by the classroom teacher, who has seen and heard the ELL function in various academic contexts over time.

The MEPA-R/W monitors written language development for the following grade ranges: 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, and 9-12. The reading and writing tests each consist of three test sessions although only two of each are required. Guidelines for selecting the appropriate sessions are available at the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) website.

It is each district's responsibility to annually administer the MEPA to all ELLs, regardless of the number of years enrolled in that district and with few exceptions. Additionally, districts must ensure that the MEPA is scored by a trained and state-approved tester. Districts must either provide MEPA training to classroom teachers through a state-approved MEPA trainer or locate a state-approved tester.

For more information, refer to the Massachusetts DOE website:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/>

Assessing ELL Content Knowledge

For ELLs, content area assessment is primarily an assessment of language (Abedi et al, 2004). To accurately interpret any assessment, you should consider the language development of each ELL. To help you, the Council of Chief State School Officers has developed scoring guides sensitive to language acquisition for open-ended science and mathematics assessments (Kopriva & Sexton, 1999).

You might use alternative assessments, such as portfolios or anecdotal records. Carrasquillo and Rodriguez (1996) recommend multidimensional assessment procedures, which include assessing language skills and academic levels while considering information from parents and other teachers.

To find out more:

- Abedi, J., Hofstetter, C. H., & Lord, C. (2004). Assessment accommodations for English language learners: Implications for policy-based empirical research. *Review of Educational Research, 74*, 1-28.
- Carrasquillo, A.L. & Rodriguez, V. (1996). *Language minority students in the mainstream classroom*. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- Hurley, S. R., & Tinajero, J. V. (Eds.). (2001). *Literacy assessment of second language learners*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Kopriva, R. & Sexton, U.M. (1999). *Guide to scoring LEP student responses to open-ended math items*. Washington, D.C.: Council of Chief State School Officers.
- Kopriva, R. & Sexton, U.M. (1999). *Guide to scoring LEP student responses to open-ended science items*. Washington, D.C.: Council of Chief State School Officers.
- O'Malley, J.M. & Pierce, L.V. (1996). *Authentic assessment for English language learners: Practical approaches for teachers*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

❏ **What about English-Only?**

In Massachusetts, Question 2 modified Massachusetts Law 71, by eliminating the use of students' native languages for instruction. This effectively replaced bilingual education with Sheltered Instruction programs in which ELLs are instructed only in English. This legislation promotes—but does not require—that ELLs stay in sheltered programs only one year and then be mainstreamed. A legislative amendment to Question 2 exempted two-way programs from these restrictions. In two-way programs, both native and non-native English speakers receive instruction for all content areas in the two languages utilized in that program.

Whether or not your school qualifies as an exception, all ELLs have the right to receive meaningful instruction. According to the Supreme Court (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974), merely placing students in the same classroom and providing them with identical books and instruction in English does not provide linguistic minorities with equal access to education. All teachers should assume professional responsibility for ELLs learning content taught within their classrooms.

❏ **What if I don't speak parents' or students' first language?**

You don't need to speak other languages in order to support ELL learning. In fact, given the linguistic diversity of our nation, you couldn't possibly speak every language you might encounter.

However, you can:

- encourage parents to continue speaking and developing their children's heritage languages at home or through community programs,
- be aware of translated resources which you can share with parents and students (*see adjacent box*),
- locate cultural advocacy groups, which support non-English speaking parents,
- allow other speakers of that language, such as classmates, cross-age tutors, or parent volunteers, to provide clarification in the native language, and
- respect and acknowledge the heritage language of ELL students.

Top Languages/Language Groups

Arabic	Armenian	Chinese
Haitian	Hindi	Hmong
Japanese	Khmer (Cambodian)	Korean
Lao	Pashto and Dari	Polish
Portuguese	Russian	Spanish
Tagalong	Vietnamese	

Resources for working with parents:

Visit the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) website for educational and language resources representing these major language groups:

http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/resabout/culture/7_languages/index.html

For tips on using an interpreter with parents, refer to this University of Michigan website:

<http://www.med.umich.edu/pteducation/intrepret.htm>

❏ **What should I do when students speak to each other in another language?**

Let them talk. Students are probably clarifying content and assignments. You can usually discern on-task behavior through non-verbal actions. You can also support ELLs' language development in the following ways.

- You can intentionally group students, so they work with someone who speaks their same first language and who has a more developed grasp of English.
- At other times, you can pair students with native English speakers, so they may hear a more advanced vocabulary as well as the cadence of English.
- During cooperative learning, you can plan groups to include a range of fluency levels, so that some student peers may assist with comprehension by providing first language support while others model spoken and written English.
- You can assign a new ELL to a "language buddy," who clarifies routines and assignments throughout the day without seeking special teacher permission.

❏ **How can I find out more about...?**

...teaching resources in general?

- Brisk, M. E. (2000). *Literacy and bilingualism: A handbook for ALL teachers*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Cary, S. (2000). *Working with second language learners: Answers to teachers' top ten questions*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Chamot, A.U. & O'Malley, J.M. (1994). *CALLA handbook: Implementing the cognitive academic language learning*. Boston: Addison-Wesley.
- Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & J. Short, D. (2004). *Making content comprehensible for English language learners: The SIOP model* (Second Ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Garcia, G.G. (Ed.) (2003). *English learners: Reaching the highest level of English literacy*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Nagy, W. E. (1988). *Teaching vocabulary to improve reading comprehension*. Urban, IL: National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association.
- Peregoy, S. F., & Boyle, O. F. (2005). *Reading, writing, and learning in ESL: A resource book for K-12 teachers* (Fourth ed.). New York: Addison-Wesley Longman.
- Tinajero, J.V. & Schifini, A. (1997). *Into English! Level B Teachers Guide*, Carmel, CA: Hampton-Brown.

...teaching ELLs in early childhood and adolescence?

- Ernst-Slavit, G., & Moore, M. (2002). Changing lives: Teaching English and literature to ESL students. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 46(2), 116-128.
- Faltis, C.J. & Wolfe, P.M. (Eds.). (1998). *So much to say: Adolescents, bilingualism, and ESL in the secondary school*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Freeman, Y.S., Freeman, D.E., & Mercuri, S. (2002). *Closing the achievement gap: Schooling and long term English learners*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Garcia, E., McLaughlin, B. Saraclio, O., & Spodeck, B. (1995). *Meeting the challenges of linguistic and cultural diversity in early childhood education*. New York: Teachers College.
- Hudelson, S. (2003). Teaching bilingual and ESL children and adolescents. In J. Flood, D. Lapp, J.R. Squire & J.M. Jensen (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts* (Second ed., pp. 421-434). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

... sociocultural issues?

- Beykont, A. (2002). *The power of culture: Teaching across language difference*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Publishing.
- Igoa, C. (1995). *The inner world of the immigrant child*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- May, S. & Aikman, S. (2003). Indigenous education: Addressing current issues and developments. *Comparative Education*, 39(2), 139-145.
- Perez, B. (Ed.). (1998). *Sociocultural contexts of language and literacy*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Suarez-Orozco, C., & Suarez-Orozco, M. (2001). *Children of Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

... language acquisition and development?

- Bialystok, E. (2001). *Bilingualism in development: Language, literacy, and cognition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Lightbrown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2003). *How languages are learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Solomon, J., & Rhodes, N. C. (1995). *Conceptualizing academic language*. Washington D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

❏ **What are these acronyms?**

Acronym	Phrase
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
BVAT	Bilingual Verbal Abilities Test
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CLD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
ELD	English Language Development
ELL	English Language Learner
ESL	English as a Second Language
HLQ	Home Language Questionnaire
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LAS	Language Assessment Scales
LEP	Limited English Proficient
MELA-O	Massachusetts English Language Assessment-Oral
OCR	Office of Civil Rights
OELA	Office of English Language Acquisition
SIOP	Sheltered English Instruction Protocol
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SLL	Second Language Learner
TBE	Transitional Bilingual Education

❏ **What are some professional websites about ELLs?**

- Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) <http://cal.org/>
- Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) <http://crede.ucsc.edu>
- National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) <http://nabe.org/>
- National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA) <http://www.ncelea.gwu.edu>
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) <http://tesol.org/>

❏ **Are there ELL standards?**

- Massachusetts Department of Education. (2003). *English Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes for English Language Learners*. Retrieved August 7, 2003, from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/>
- Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (1997) *ESL standards for pre-k--12 students*. Retrieved August 8, 2003, from <http://www.tesol.org/assoc/k12standards/index.html>

Title III Project ALL: All Language Learners

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In addition to providing resources such as this to both undergraduate and graduate students, Title III supports teacher preparation by providing scholarships and/or paid internships for graduate students taking courses in BC's Teachers of English Language Learners (TELL) concentration. Visit the Title III website (www.bc.edu/title3all) for information on other programs for pre-service and in-service teachers.

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