



OKLAHOMA
Education

OKLAHOMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of English Language Proficiency

SUPPORTING OKLAHOMA'S NEWCOMER STUDENTS

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Who Are Newcomers?

There are a variety of English Learners (ELs) in Oklahoma schools. “Newcomer” refers to any foreign-born student and their family who have recently arrived in the United States (United States Department of Education, 2016). Please note that “newcomer” is an umbrella term as not all immigrants are ELs. Some newcomers are proficient in English while others have little to no experience in English. For the purposes of this document, the term “newcomers” will encompass students who meet all of the following criteria:

1. have recently arrived in the U.S.
2. have attended up to 12 months in a U.S. educational setting (or up to 24 months at LEA discretion)
3. have been identified as English Learners (a student whose Home Language Survey indicated a language other than English on any or all of the three language questions and who did not show proficiency when subsequently assessed using a WIDA or state screening tool).

A newcomer is also considered a Recently Arrived English Learner (RAEL) or a student from a foreign country enrolling in a U.S. school for the first time for Accountability purposes.

Newcomers are not homogenous; they have diverse characteristics, including reasons for immigration, cultures, home languages, ages of entry, family structures, educational backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses. Additionally, newcomers may be documented, undocumented, unaccompanied minors (children who were separated from or arrived without a parent or legal guardian), refugees (people who have fled their country of origin due to persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group), or asylees (people who have traveled to the U.S. on their own and were subsequently granted asylum). These particular student populations mentioned above are vulnerable as they may have experienced past trauma and/or have limited, interrupted, or no formal education. Furthermore, all newcomers are faced with the unique challenges of living in a new country: isolation, resettlement, and acculturation.

Newcomers will not only need assistance with the acquisition of English, but they (and their families) will also require help understanding the structure, operation, and expectations of U.S. schools in addition to becoming familiar with American cultural nuances. Depending upon a newcomer’s educational background, some may also need foundational instruction pertaining to literacy and numeracy. Other key points to keep in mind are that newcomers’ native languages may not use an alphabetic system which means they will need to learn the alphabetic principle (the idea that letters and letter patterns represent the sounds of spoken language) and phonics (Texas Education Agency, 2002). Moreover, newcomers are doing double the work as native speakers,

and research indicates that ELs require 4-7 years to achieve the average academic performance of native English speakers (Short & Boyson, 2012).

Despite the hurdles that newcomers face, immigrants have contributed to the development of the United States and Oklahoma in numerous ways throughout history and will continue to do so. Oklahoma's newcomers are resilient and bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, and perspective, and educators should capitalize on these assets.

Elementary Newcomers

Fortunately, elementary newcomers arrive in U.S. schools during the development of literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, they are entering schools during “the critical period” when an additional language is learned at a faster rate due to the brain's elasticity, rapid neural formation, and a myriad of other factors (Hartshorne, Tenenbaum, & Pinker, 2018). Moreover, students who start learning an additional language before the age of 10 are likely to achieve proficiency similar to that of a native English speaker (Trafton, 2018).

Secondary Newcomers

On the other hand, secondary newcomers arrive in U.S. schools with fewer years to master English proficiency than students who enter in elementary, and research shows that it takes 5-7 years to become proficient. However, some secondary newcomers may be fluent and literate in their native language which will benefit English language acquisition because language skills developed in one's first language, in particular literacy skills, transfer to a second or other language (Cummins, 2010). Secondary newcomers with uninterrupted education may also be competent in subject areas of mathematics, science, and social studies (excluding U.S. History and Government and Oklahoma History).

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)

Not only do newcomer SLIFE need to learn English, but they also need content area knowledge and graduation credit recovery if they are secondary students. Compounding this is the fact that students might not be completely literate in their native languages, and if SLIFE enter in secondary grades, the language demands are far greater than those for the lower grades. Therefore, intensive foundational English language development, literacy, and numeracy instruction is crucial. In addition, SLIFE will likely need to develop study skills and learn to utilize technology. Educators will also need to build a much more significant amount of background knowledge when introducing new topics.

Title III-Immigrant Funding

Many newcomers will also be identified as Immigrant Students for the purposes of the Federal Title III-Immigrant Grant and may, therefore, generate Title III funding for the LEA. This formula grant is awarded to LEAs that have experienced an increase in the number of Immigrant Students of at least two percent over the previous two years' average. Students meeting the following three criteria are to be identified as Immigrant Students:

- between the ages of 3 and 21,
- not born in any of the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico,
- have not been enrolled in a U.S. school for more than a total of three years.

Legal Obligations for Serving Newcomer English Learners

In 1974, a unanimous Supreme Court decision in the case of [Lau v. Nichols](#) laid the groundwork in defining federal expectations for serving English Learners in public schools. The Court ruled that a lack of supplemental language instruction for students with limited English proficiency violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and mandated that students with language barriers be provided “appropriate relief” that would allow access to a meaningful education.

Later in 1974, passage of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) clearly prohibited discrimination against faculty, staff, and students and required LEAs to take action in overcoming barriers to equal participation in public education.

In 1981, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals case [Castañeda v. Pickard](#) defined the actions a public LEA must take to ensure that language programs designed for English Learners are sufficient in assisting students to overcome linguistic barriers that limit access to a meaningful education. In Castañeda, the Fifth Circuit established a three part “test” for determining how local EL language education programs would be held responsible for meeting the requirements of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA):

- The program must be based on sound educational theory
- The program must be implemented effectively with resources for personnel, instructional materials, and space
- After a trial period, the program must be proven effective in overcoming language barriers

The Castañeda decision determined that an EL student’s access to content instruction and the language supports necessary to meaningfully participate in a public education is a civil right. As such, the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights provide oversight of SEA and LEA level activities and will take an enforcement role if deemed necessary. To be clear, an LEA

not providing the EL-specific services and supports necessary to ensure the academic success of an EL student would be violating the civil rights protections guaranteed under the EEOA and the fourteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

In 1982, the Supreme Court of the United States rendered a decision in the case of [Plyler v. Doe](#) that struck down a Texas state statute denying funding for education to undocumented immigrant children. The court ruled that immigrant children could not be barred from enrollment in public schools based on their immigration status. The USDE Office of Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division provided additional guidance regarding this decision in a [joint letter](#) released on May 8, 2014.

Finally, on January 7, 2015, the USDE Office of Civil Rights and U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division released a [lengthy joint letter](#) clearly outlining all legal obligations to which states and LEAs must abide when serving English Learners in public schools. This letter is a valuable resource for LEAs seeking to learn more about their legal obligations in serving ELs.

Please note that providing an EL student with supplemental services and supports is not dependent upon an LEA receiving federal Title III funding. Regardless of a LEA's Title III status, all services, supports, and assessment requirements detailed in this guidance document are legally required to be present unless otherwise indicated. These services must be supported with both state and local funds and found to meet all applicable compliance standards.

Newcomer Programming Options

Because each school and each newcomer are unique, there are a variety of programs that may meet the needs of newcomers. Choosing the appropriate program depends largely on the number of newcomers, their educational backgrounds, literacy in their native languages, and availability of qualified staff. The United States Department of Education (2012) reports that the most effective programs include English language development as well as content instruction. Below are five programs grounded in evidence-based outcomes.

Newcomer Specific Programs

Students new to U.S. schools are placed in classes that primarily emphasize English language acquisition. Instruction may be in English or can utilize a student's native language. The goal of the program is to move an EL student toward English language proficiency as quickly as possible. (WIDA correlate: EL- specific Transitional Instruction / ETI or EL-specific, English-only instruction/EEO)

Newcomer specific programs often target foundational literacy and numeracy skills for SLIFE and can better address these needs than classrooms that contain literate students without academic gaps and nonliterate students with academic gaps (Short &

Boyson, 2004). These programs typically last for a year, after which, students transition into the school's regular Language Instruction Education Plan (LIEP) for English Learners.

Transitional Bilingual Programs

Students are taught core content and language fluency in their native language for varying periods of the day with the remainder of time focused on English language acquisition. The goal of the program is to transition students to native English instruction within two to five years with no loss of content instruction. Classes may be self-contained or combined. (WIDA correlate: Mixed Bilingual / MBL)

According to the United States Department of Education (2012), transitional bilingual programs produce more positive outcomes for ELs than the ESL or ELD programs mentioned below.

English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD) Programs

Students are provided supplemental individual or small-group instruction outside the general education classroom (e.g., "pullout" or ESL classes) with no native language support in either setting. Supplemental instruction can target both English language fluency and core content instruction. The goal of the program is to increase EL student success in mainstream, non-ESL supported general education classes. (WIDA correlate: EL-specific English-only Instruction / EEO)

ESL or ELD programs may be the best option for schools that have a heterogeneous EL population (diverse languages, ages, and grades) or do not have the number of ELs needed for a transitional bilingual program.

Dual Language or Two-Way Immersion Programs

Students are taught both content and language fluency in two languages with the goal of becoming fluent in both languages. Programs can last the duration of a student's enrollment. (WIDA correlate: Either EL Bilingual / EBL or Mixed Bilingual / MBL depending on local program design)

Content Classes with Integrated ESL Support

Students are provided core content instruction with no native language support in mainstream classes utilizing integrated ESL strategies (e.g., teachers trained in EL methods and best practices, use of EL paraprofessionals, etc.). The goal of the program is to provide EL supports in the general education classroom at the level necessary to ensure EL student success. (WIDA correlate: Mixed Classes with English-Only Support)

/ MEO or Mixed classes with Native Language Support / MNL depending on local program design)

Important Considerations for Placing Newcomers in Content Classes with Integrated ESL Support

For content area teachers to provide integrated ESL support, often referred to as sheltered instruction, they must be adequately trained to scaffold, modify, and adapt instruction for English Learners. Not providing students with teachers trained in English language development replicates the sink or swim method of the 1920s-1960s in which students either adapted to English immersion and succeeded in passing the grade level on their own, or they were totally lost and would fail the grade level until they were able to pass, often resulting in older EL students being in class with much younger students (Stein, 1986). This is obviously problematic and exacerbated for SLIFE and newcomers who may not be literate in their native language. To better understand what it is like to be a newcomer, please view Media that Matter's video [Immersion](#).

Equally important, is a commitment of shared responsibility and accountability for newcomers and ELs in general. In other words, there needs to be a mindset that every teacher, whether the four content areas, gym, art, or EL teacher, etc., is responsible for ELs.

However, even with committed subject area educators trained in English language acquisition, it will be difficult to provide the basic, survival English newcomers require (or essential literacy or numeracy skills) while teaching content. If this remains the sole option for newcomers, schools should strongly consider purchasing English language learning software or applications and/or offering push in or pull-out instruction, summer programs, extended day, or Saturday school to meet the most immediate, foundational needs of newcomers.

Newcomer Program Evaluation

Regardless of the newcomer program chosen, it should be systemically evaluated every 1-2 years to verify that it is effective and meeting the needs of the learners and/or to improve the program (Short & Boyson, 2012). In order to evaluate the newcomer program, the following data should be examined*:

- WIDA ACCESS scores, including whether or not students met target growth expectations or exited EL services on time
- OSTP scores
- Student portfolios or work samples
- Student and teacher questionnaires or surveys
- Course completion (especially for core classes required for graduation)
- Grades and grade point average
- Grade retention
- Attendance

- Disciplinary actions
- Special education status
- Graduation status, including the number of years in high school before graduation
- Dropout rate
- Additional learning time that students took advantage of, such as summer school or Saturday school
- If a bilingual program, data from language proficiency tests and achievement tests taken in the language (e.g., Spanish)
- College acceptance rates
- Postsecondary information (e.g., whether the students enrolled in a 2-year or 4-year college or a technical school or directly entered the workforce)
- Teacher certification or endorsements in ESL/bilingual areas and content areas
- Administrators' observations of teachers
- Extracurricular involvement

*Please note that some of these data analysis suggestions come from Short and Boyson (2012), and some are Oklahoma specific.

The Language Instruction Educational Plan chosen should be the least segregative manner consistent with achieving the program's stated educational goals (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, & U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, n.d).

Understanding Newcomers

Getting to Know Newcomers

Because newcomers are so diverse, it is essential to know each one of them in order to place them in a proper program that meets their needs. This knowledge should consist of:

- Age
- Home language(s)
- Educational background, including any prior English language instruction
- Literacy in the native language
- Personality type
- Learning style
- Hobbies
- Cultural background
- Family structure/circumstance
- Reason for immigration, including stories of his or her journey
- Life experiences

Educators can conduct student inventories when newcomers arrive. These inventories can be easily translated into students' native languages, and similarly, student

responses can be translated into English using a variety of platforms. Teachers may also want to follow up with an “All about Me” project as well by helping students share their information in English. “Inviting the sharing of this information, while respecting boundaries of privacy, may help increase the student’s confidence, build trust, and enable the school to develop strategies to capitalize on the students’ strengths” (NCELA, n.d.). Furthermore, through this information sharing, teachers can begin to form personal connections with their newcomers which is of utmost importance as newcomers need at least one educator they feel comfortable with. This trusted educator becomes a “beacon of light” to the newcomer, and the newcomer will actively seek out this individual in times of need. Newcomer success has been connected to the quality of relationships they develop in their school (O’Loughlin & Custodio, 2020).

In order to determine foundational skills, a reading assessment in the newcomer’s native language can be given to assess literacy. The following are some diagnostic assessments available in a variety of languages; however, the Oklahoma State Department of Education cannot recommend or endorse one over the other:

- [Avant Assessment](#) (possibility of the students’ meeting partial requirements for the [Oklahoma Seal of Biliteracy](#) if assessed in 9th-12th grades)
- [Language Testing International](#) (LTI) (possibility of the students’ meeting partial requirements for the [Oklahoma Seal of Biliteracy](#) if assessed in 9th-12th grades)
- [Alta Language Services](#)
- [Las Links](#)
- [Dialang](#)

For more information about diagnostic assessments in native languages, please contact the Office of Curriculum and Instruction (405) 521-3035.

Also, bilingual educators fluent in the student’s native language can ask the student to read a book or article in his or her native language, conduct a running record, and prompt the student to retell. After the reading assessment, the student can complete a writing sample in the student’s native language (DeCapua, Marshall, & Tang, 2020).

Numeracy skills can be assessed by conducting a diagnostic math assessment.

Transcript Evaluation

In order to award course credit based on an out-of-country transcript, an LEA should develop a local policy to ensure transcripts are interpreted consistently and in a manner that best ensures the student is awarded all appropriate credit while also maintaining the academic integrity of the LEA. Staff responsible for the translation, interpretation and potential awarding of credit must recognize that this process can, and likely will, have a significant impact on whether or not the student is able to earn a high school diploma within a reasonable period of time.

In instances in which students arrive without transcripts or student records, it may require the students’ academic history be re-created by gathering structured interviews

with the student and family members to ascertain additional information on course names, hours of instructional time, length of course, description, and grades obtained in addition to the steps included in the general guidelines.

The locally developed policy should incorporate the following steps:

- **Translating the transcript and any additional relevant documentation into English.** Translation may be completed by the LEA if local staff possess the appropriate mastery of the transcript language or may be completed by a translation service. LEAs are encouraged to use local staff or a contracted service to address any translation requirements and should not rely on the student's immediate family for translation assistance. It is important to note that translating course names is usually not sufficient to evaluate international transcripts as courses with identical names completed in another country may vary in key characteristics such as clock hours towards credit, length of courses, grading practices. It is important to gather relevant information about the corresponding country's education system. It may be beneficial to consider a professional evaluation of international transcripts.
- **Conducting a family/student interview.** After the transcript and relevant documentation have been translated and reviewed, a family/student interview can be helpful in answering any questions that may have arisen (e.g., How were clock hours accounted for a given class? What content was taught in a certain class? Was the credit awarded for a certain class based on a full school year or a shorter term of enrollment? etc.)
- **Reaching out to the embassy of the student's home country (if necessary).** There may be instances where an LEA is unable to accurately interpret or evaluate the provided documentation. In these cases, contacting the embassy or consulate of the student's home country may be of additional assistance.
- **Evaluating the transcript to determine the maximum amount of credit that may be awarded.** An LEA should make every effort to ensure that credit is awarded for core content classes (Math, English, Science, and Social Studies) in alignment with the clock hours for equivalent classes documented on the out-of-country transcript. As an example, a student with two complete years of math credit documented on an out-of-country transcript should be awarded the equivalent amount of local credit if it can be reasonably determined that the student was exposed to similar content and can be successfully placed in an age-appropriate class.
- **Building a local transcript and determining if any additional credit may be earned through alternate assessment.** Using the information gathered in the previous steps, an LEA should create a transcript based on the local template and determine if the student is eligible to gain additional credits through alternate assessment. Note that it may be difficult to determine an appropriate letter grade to assign for previously earned credits. In these cases, LEAs are encouraged to use the Credit or No Credit option if available in the local student information system.

- **Recognizing a student's ability to achieve the Oklahoma Seal of Biliteracy.** Established in September 2020 (70 O.S. § 11-103.2; 201:10-1-16), the Oklahoma Seal of Biliteracy is a credential bestowed by the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) to recognize and honor high school students who have attained a high level of proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English. The Oklahoma Seal of Biliteracy is available to any student who is able to demonstrate biliteracy in English and another language at the Intermediate-Mid or Advanced-Low level. The recognition for attaining biliteracy becomes part of the high school transcript and recognizes the student's readiness for career, college and engagement as a global citizen which increases opportunities for employment and advancement in higher education by sometimes allowing the opportunity to earn college credits in a foreign language. More information on the Oklahoma Seal of Biliteracy can be found [here](#).

Culture Shock

Newcomers who immigrate to the U.S. usually encounter culture shock due to new environmental, social, cultural, linguistic, and educational differences. This is a turbulent, emotional time with several stages. When newcomers first arrive, they experience the honeymoon stage in which they feel enthusiasm and excitement about their new life and surroundings. Then they enter the rejection stage in which culture shock sets in. In this stage, newcomers become more aware of the environmental, social, cultural, and linguistic differences both in and outside of school, and the struggle to adapt becomes overwhelming. They may become resentful, melancholic, and frustrated, and sometimes these emotions are expressed through undesirable behaviors. The third stage is integration in which newcomers begin to accept these differences and form their own conclusions about the new country and culture. They also begin to negotiate their identities both in and outside of school, so it is imperative that educators emphasize the importance of newcomers maintaining their native culture. The final stage of culture shock is eventual adaptation of biculturalism in which students begin to feel at ease in their new home and school (Brown, 2020).

Newcomers move through these stages at different rates. It is essential educators and counselors are aware of these stages, so they can be empathetic to what students are experiencing, attempt to mitigate the effects of culture shock, and ease newcomers' transition.

The Silent Period

When newcomers are beginning to learn English, they typically go through a silent period or the preproduction stage of language acquisition in which, through exposure, they notice and understand more than they can produce because comprehension precedes production. In other words, they are internalizing vocabulary, grammar, and structure, and once they feel they have a foundation, they will begin to produce. The silent period can last up to 6 months, perhaps longer (Krashen, 1982). Educators must

respect the silent period and work to lower newcomers' affective filters (See Affective Filter).

Educators should provide alternative ways for students to express learning and understanding that are not linguistically demanding, such as drawing pictures, matching, labeling, cloze sentences (statements with missing words), graphic organizers, etc. Educators can also provide sentence stems and frames regarding common classroom routines and content topics to assist newcomers with production when they are ready. Developing structured conversational dialogues and practicing them regularly will also build newcomers' confidence.

Newcomers Who Have Experienced Trauma

Some newcomers and their families fled their home countries in order to escape a variety of traumatic situations ranging from war, persecution, displacement, poverty, and violence, etc. They may have had to abandon not only their homes but jobs, possessions, friends, and other family members to face an uncertain future. Newcomers and their families may be refugees, asylees, or undocumented, including unaccompanied minors. Undocumented students endure additional trauma: the constant threat of deportation and detention of family members. Unaccompanied minors often reside with distant relatives, friends of family, or in networks of other unaccompanied minors, particularly high school students. It is important to be mindful of this when attempting to schedule parent-teacher conferences and communications. Unaccompanied minors may face financial difficulties, including shelter and food insecurity. It is critical to connect the District Homeless Liaison with these students as there is legislation authorizing, regulating, and funding programs for homeless students and unaccompanied minors through McKinney-Vento. For more information, please contact, State Homeless Liaison, Office of Federal Programs, 405-521-2846.

Compounding the stress of the actual trauma, these families face the stress of resettlement which can include legal, financial, housing, employment, and/or transportation difficulties. Adding to that is acculturation stress such as cultural misunderstandings, language barriers, making friends, and forging a bicultural identity. These stressors can also lead to a feeling of isolation.

Exacerbating this social and emotional turmoil is that families may not seek help because some cultures hold strong stigmas against mental health services (O'Loughlin & Custodio, 2020)]. Yet, unaddressed, these traumatic experiences put students "at significant risk for a host of social, emotional, academic, and cognitive impairments, and these impairments may create barriers to learning that lead to difficulties in school, risk-taking behaviors and long-term social, occupational, and health issues" (O'Loughlin & Custodio, 2020). Therefore, schools play a critical role in trauma recovery. Educators of students who have experienced trauma need to understand and take into consideration that some behaviors may be grounded in past experiences and view these students through a trauma-sensitive lens. They must also create trauma-informed classrooms. The [Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators](#) published by the National Child Traumatic

Stress Network Schools Committee (October 2008) contains more information about childhood trauma, trauma-informed strategies for educators, behaviors to be observant of in different age groups, and a guide for parents. For more interventions, visit the Association of Supervision and Curriculum's [Trauma-Informed Teaching Strategies](#).

Welcoming Newcomers

A student does not need to understand English to know if they are welcome in a classroom.

Lower the Affective Filter

Krashen (1982) states that an affective filter is like an imaginary mental wall that rises when students are uncomfortable, anxious, nervous, or scared, and this wall prevents learning from occurring. In contrast, when students feel safe, comfortable, and respected, the affective filter or imaginary mental wall is lowered, and learning is optimal. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis claims that "Low motivation, low self-esteem, anxiety, introversion and inhibition can raise the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is 'up' it impedes language acquisition" (Krashen, 1982). Lowering the affective filter is particularly important for newcomers who are immersed in a new country, culture, and language and who may very well be experiencing the emotions that can raise this filter.

Krashen (1982) attributes motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety as the variables that affect language acquisition. In order to minimize these variables and lower the affective filter in newcomers, the following strategies are suggested:

Strategies for Lowering the Affective Filter in Newcomers	
Motivation	• Provide engaging instructional material and age-appropriate topics • Vary delivery of instruction: video, audio, field trips, virtual field trips, online scavenger hunts, guest speakers, etc. • Vary types of assignments and projects • Offer student choice and involve students in decision-making. • Offer brain breaks • Institute various forms of cooperative learning. • Explain relevance of lessons and both long- and short-term goals

Self-Confidence	• Acknowledge students' resilience, wealth of knowledge, experience, perspective, and proficiency in native language if applicable • Provide tasks that students can be successful at; they need to feel this in order to keep going; acknowledge success • Praise students and display their work in the classroom • Employ reciprocal teaching – have students teach each other • Create options for assessment in which extensive language production is not required; allow students to demonstrate understanding through various modes: matching, labeling, graphic organizers, cloze sentences, etc. • Provide sentence stems and frames, especially for common classroom routines • Break big projects into smaller chunks • Ensure that walls and books are representative of the student population
Anxiety	• Know your students; form relationships • Create a safe space where risk-taking is encouraged, and mistakes are seen as learning opportunities • Incorporate ice breakers • Model language learning by compelling your students and yourself to learn a few words in students' native languages • Educate yourself and your students to avoid judgments, biases, misconceptions and myths about newcomers and their cultures • Learn to pronounce students' names correctly • Respect the silent period and do not force students to produce • If a student makes errors, do not correct; instead, rephrase what the student said in the correct way • Do not prevent students from using their native language • Acknowledge the benefits of linguistic and cultural diversity • Use visual aids: pictures, diagrams, charts, graphs, graphic organizers, etc. • Develop classroom routines and procedures including schedules and calendars with due dates • Rephrase complex language using familiar vocabulary and simplified syntax • Smile; sit with students rather than stand above them. • Send a message that discrimination, bullying, and embarrassment will not be tolerated

Promote Additive Bilingualism, Biliteracy, and Biculturalism

Additive bilingualism occurs when the first language (L1) is developed, and the first culture is valued while the second language (L2) is added opposed to subtractive bilingualism in which the L2 is added at the expense of the L1 and culture, which diminish as a consequence (Cummins, 2010). Schools should promote additive bilingualism because language skills developed in one's L1, in particular literacy skills, transfer to an L2. This is known as Common Underlying Proficiency (Cummins, 2010). Likewise, it is important for EL students to develop and maintain their primary language and culture as these are very much a part of their identities, and educators should honor them. To summarize, ELs do not learn better if they are prohibited from using their native language in school. In fact, Cummins (2010) claims that forced isolation of languages, which he refers to as "the two solitudes," actually hinders not only the development of academic content but also language acquisition.

Students' native languages are linguistic resources that can be utilized to facilitate learning. With this in mind, newcomers should be encouraged to use their native languages because it will help them to access content. Regardless of whether a teacher can understand the newcomer, allowing L1 content engagement is a beneficial practice since students often have knowledge of the content that they can express in their first language (Ebe, Soto, Freeman, & Freeman, 2021). In fact, this will eventually lead to another stage of language acquisition and an attribute of bilingualism, translanguaging, in which the newcomer will begin integrating both English and their native language. To learn how to strategically use translanguaging, please read TESOL's [Translanguaging in Bilingual and ESL Classrooms](#).

These very same principles apply to biliteracy. School libraries and classrooms should contain reading materials in students' first languages, and educators should encourage families and students to participate in literacy activities in their native languages at home. Sometimes families might feel that only English can make their child successful in the U.S., so it is important to raise awareness and help them recognize that their native language use can contribute to the acquisition of English.

Similarly, bicultural acculturation is "a process that allows new immigrants to adjust to their new culture while still maintaining pride in and substantive connections to their heritage and their country of origin" (Paterson, 2017). Schools can raise awareness to how newcomers and their families can connect with their culture both inside and outside of the school setting (e.g., sharing information about restaurants, festivals, religious intuitions, organizations, etc. and providing opportunities for newcomers and their families to share their cultures at school). Educators can encourage newcomers to get involved in the school culture by participating in extracurricular activities such as sports or school clubs and actively recruit newcomers. This will not only immerse students in the culture and the language, but it will also help newcomers build relationships with other students and staff and engage families. To foster community culture, schools can invite local guest speakers, schedule cultural field trips and school events, and/or organize service-learning projects. Having a collection of multicultural literature that both

“mirrors” (reflects students’ identities) or “windows” (provides a look at the lives of others) is another way to aid in bicultural acculturation.

Maintain an Ongoing Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

“Our classroom walls, the expectations we set for our students, our body language, how we connect with families, what resources are available, what we choose to say or not say, all give students a clear message about how we feel about them.”

Ruchi Agarwal-Rangnath, Ed.D.

Despite limited English proficiency, newcomers are highly capable of feeling a sense of belonging (i.e., inclusion). Students feel included when schools commit to the ongoing and deliberate work that honoring diversity entails: attention to respecting and valuing our differences and circumstances whether they be in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity and orientation, religion, age, life experience, nationality, language, socioeconomic status, ability, family structure, and educational background. Schools and teachers can assist newcomers with developing a sense of belonging or inclusion by welcoming and embracing student diversity and identity and conveying this core value to all staff and students. In addition, schools can offer training to cultivate cultural competence, the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from different cultures. For more on how teachers and schools can engage with diversity, visit [Edutopia's Preparing for Cultural Diversity: Resources for Teachers](#). Equity, on the other hand, is providing students access to what they need to be successful based on these differences and/or circumstances. This document was developed to detail equitable practices for serving and supporting newcomers.

Offer Newcomer Mentor and/or Advisory Programs

It is not easy to navigate a new country, language, and school all by oneself. A suggestion to ease newcomers’ transition and acclimation is to institute a mentor and/or advisory program.

One type of mentor program, known as same-language buddies, involves pairing newcomers with students who speak their native language. For instance, schools may implement a mentorship requirement or volunteer opportunity for AP Spanish or Spanish Honor Society students (or another world language). This type of program benefits each student as the world language student builds leadership skills and practices the other language while the newcomer has a confidant to show them “the ropes”. Meanwhile, both students are gaining cultural competence. English development teachers can collaborate with world language teachers to create and establish guidelines and agendas for mentor/mentoree meetings. In the case where a same-language buddy is not available, perhaps another school club can fulfill this

community service need as an empathetic, kind, English speaking peer may also serve as a mentor as well.

A mentor program is more student centered; whereas, an advisory program can be facilitated by an educator or counselor, preferably one who speaks the native language of the newcomers. Advisory programs can be held daily or weekly. They can take place in homeroom, in an office, or an English development class. An advisory program can set agendas or function as a student check in time. An advisory program with a dedicated counselor or school psychologist is strongly recommended for newcomers who have experienced trauma.

Instruction for Newcomers

Asset-Based Approach

An asset-based approach to teaching is focusing on what English Learners can do (assets) rather than what they cannot do (deficits). It is a growth mindset recognizing that newcomers arrive with valuable knowledge, skills, and language (See section Promote Additive Bilingualism, Biliteracy, and Biculturalism) that can be utilized to leverage student learning by using their strengths to address areas of need. Embracing an asset-based approach ensures that newcomers are provided the opportunity to demonstrate academic success every day. This success is critical to building confidence and eventual autonomy. Therefore, teachers must offer immediate feedback, acknowledging, celebrating, and praising those successes. To learn what newcomers on different proficiency levels can do, visit WIDA's [Can Do Descriptors](#) and Proficiency Level Descriptors located in the [WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework](#).

Teaching Language in Context

In order for language acquisition to occur, teachers must provide a context or a situation in which newcomers can learn and use language rather than teaching skills in isolation. Contextualizing language through standards, units, themes, and essential questions helps learners to both form and activate their schemas, and they will be more likely to remember and apply the new language in the future.

Incorporating Cultural Competency

[Cultural competency](#) plays a fundamental role in learning and achievement. It not only shapes how students communicate, but it also influences their thinking processes as well. Therefore, it is critical for teachers with EL students, in particular newcomers, to implement [cultural competence in the classroom](#). Integrating culturally competent practices can foster accessible and equitable instruction for students of all cultural groups.

Culturally Competent Practices and Key Actions for Teachers of English Learners	
Culturally Competent Practices	Key Actions
Cultivate Relationships	• Provide families letters/emails/texts translated into students' native languages, if possible. • Understand students' backgrounds (country, education, language and if immigrant, reason for immigration, hobbies, etc.) by conducting student inventories. • Share your life, language, culture and interests with students. • Learn to pronounce students' names correctly.
Celebrate Culture	• Celebrate students' traditions in the classroom (music, food, holidays, etc.). • Know and value students' languages, cultures, histories, and interests. • Incorporate multicultural literature and materials and world news and events into lessons. • Use cultural context to help make content relevant.
	• Display student-created flags of their native countries in the classroom.
Create a Positive Environment	• Create a welcoming environment and a safe space where risk-taking is encouraged, and mistakes are seen as learning opportunities. • Compel your students and yourself to learn a few words in students' native languages. • Focus on what students can do (asset-based approach) versus what they cannot do (deficient -based approach). • Get to know students' families. • Be an advocate for English learners. • Educate yourself to avoid judgments, biases, misconceptions, and myths. • Display linguistically and culturally diverse classroom decor that promotes equality and social justice. • Hold high expectations.

Implement Cultural Academic Supports	• Use language and content objectives. • Employ cognates (e.g., Asociación/Association, Glossario/Glossary, etc.) to support academic vocabulary. • Incorporate multicultural literature and materials and world news and events into lessons. • Maintain a classroom library and curriculum that is representative of students and diverse cultures and languages and that addresses biases. • Make class notes available to English learners (post online and ask for volunteer note-takers). • Rephrase complex language using familiar vocabulary and simplified syntax.
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Communication Strategies

Communication with newcomers might seem difficult at first, but the following strategies will assist teachers:

- Try Total Physical Response (TPR)- a method of teaching language and/or vocabulary by using physical movements that correspond to verbal input. Teachers give verbal requests to students in English with accompanying kinesthetic body movements, gestures, facial expressions, or mime, and students respond with correlating physical actions. TPR serves two purposes: it allows learners to quickly recognize meaning, and learners passively learn the structure of the language itself.
- Use technology to provide translation and visual scaffolds.
- Speak slowly, enunciate clearly, and use simplified syntax.
- Paraphrase and repeat: summarize and review by saying things in different ways several times.
- Allow the use of language journals or display word walls: access to vocabulary and language structures newcomers need to communicate.
- Bridge past learning with present learning.
- Utilize sensory contextualization: images, photos, illustrations, videos, labels, realia, manipulatives, foldables, etc.
- Chunk overwhelming information into smaller, digestible pieces.
- Interact with students initially using simple yes or no questions.
- Provide and post formulaic classroom questions and responses; translate these into students' native languages if possible.
- Offer bilingual dictionaries and picture dictionaries.
- Use words or phrases in students' native languages.
- Do not correct students; instead, repeat what they said correctly.

Vocabulary Instruction

Understanding Tiered Vocabulary		
Tier 1 Words	Tier 2 Words	Tiered 3
Basic words; survival vocabulary; high frequency in spoken language Ex. give, drink, write, meal	High frequency in print, not as frequent in spoken language Ex. submit, apply, beverage, develop	Specific vocabulary related to content areas Ex. liquid, isotope, aorta, thesis

Social and Academic Language

English Learners must learn social language or Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) which consists of tier 1 and tier 2 everyday survival and high frequency vocabulary. It takes six months to two years to develop BICS. While ELs are acquiring BICS, they are simultaneously developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) which is academic language consisting of tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary. It takes five to seven years to develop CALP (Cummins, 1984).

The most immediate need for newcomers is developing their BICS. When teaching newcomers BICS, educators should consider Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (below) that looks at a child's development within the context of the system of relationships and dynamic interactions that form their environment. Teachers can use these environments to scope and sequence meaningful vocabulary units for newcomers. English Learners can acquire CALP while they are learning BICS.



Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

An additional way to assist newcomers with acquiring BICS is to label everything in the classroom so that it can be referenced if needed. Similarly, newcomers can benefit from having access to picture dictionaries as well as bilingual dictionaries.

Teachers must focus on vocabulary students will need to master Oklahoma Academic Standards, and vocabulary instruction should be explicit. Explicitly teaching vocabulary

refers to introducing words, providing student friendly definitions, examples, sentences, parts of speech, Greek or Latin roots, synonyms, antonyms, collocations, and cognates if applicable. Students should be encouraged to keep a language journal and take notes during vocabulary instruction. Vocabulary should then be reinforced through reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities for acquisition to take place. Below are several strategies teachers can employ to reinforce vocabulary:

- Word walls ([Interactive Word Walls](#))/Word clouds
- Language journals
- Personalized vocabulary sentences
- Require the use of words/language structures in context through speaking and writing activities or assignments
- Praise students who use words/language structures voluntarily
- Provide text, audio, or video with target words and language structures and use these yourself
- Word sorts and cloze sentences
- Chants and songs
- [Vocabulary Mini Games](#)

Language Functions for School

Teachers of newcomers will also need to provide instruction on general language functions for school such as:

- Fire Drills, Evacuation, and Lockdown Procedures
- Asking for help
- Asking questions
- Seeking clarification
- Common classroom requests
- Giving an opinion
- Collaborating with peers
- Checking out books from the library
- Reading a textbook

Language regarding these routine functions should be posted throughout the classroom.

In addition to school language functions, teachers will need to provide instruction on cultural nuances such as personal space, hygiene, adherence to time, etc.

Building Background

Building background knowledge is the frontloading of prerequisite language and

concepts a student must understand in order to participate in learning. This is particularly important for SLIFE newcomers due to potential educational gaps. The following strategies can assist students in building background:

- Connect content to students' experiences, cultures, and native countries
- Create anticipatory questions or guides
- Employ KWL or See, Think, Wonder Charts
- Bridge prior learning with present learning
- Conduct chapter previews or book-walk discussions and have students make predictions
- Build formal schema around text genres, purposes, features, and organizational structures
- Using images and videos to introduce content

Providing Comprehensible Input

Comprehensible input is language that is understood by students. Through the following strategies, English Learners can understand meaning of aural and written language without necessarily comprehending every word:

- Speak slowly, enunciate clearly, and use simplified syntax while supporting speech with concrete examples
- Summarize and review meaning in multiple ways through paraphrasing and repetition
- Use images, photos, videos, labels, realia, manipulatives, and body language
- Chunk longer texts into shorter passages
- Provide step-by-step directions
- Institute partner or group work
- Provide graphic organizers, study guides, or outlines with key words provided
- Engage students with hands-on activities
- Support close reading, audio, and video with sequenced text-dependent questions
- Display word walls; access to language journals
- Implement annotation of texts; [Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review](#) (SQ3R)
- Model expectations, processes, activities, and assignments and provide exemplary work samples

Incorporating All Domains of Language

Newcomers need to practice and use all domains of language: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Language acquisition begins with learners receiving input from reading or listening activities. Students begin to notice patterns and rules associated with the language, and they compare it to their native languages. Once students do this, the new language enters their short-term memories. In order for language acquisition to

actually occur, students must then integrate and use the new language in output: speaking or writing activities. Once they do this, the new language enters their long-term memories, and they have acquired the new language.

Reading and Writing Strategies

Newcomers, in particular SLIFE, may need basic literacy instruction including phonological and phonemic awareness, word families, decoding, fluency, spelling, and sight words. They will also require instruction on text organization, features, structures, and genres. Teachers should select age appropriate, high interest, multiculturally responsive and sustaining texts particularly those that portray experiences and cultures similar to the students including authentic materials such as environmental print (e.g., cereal box), newspapers, menus, magazines, leveled readers, graphic novels, wordless pictures books, poems, and bilingual texts. Initially, educators should choose content that will be familiar to newcomers. Newcomers need direct, explicit instruction to support their comprehension of challenging texts. Teachers may need to utilize the chunking technique in which text is broken up by adding headings and focus questions, putting important words in bold, and adding a space for notes in the margin. They may have to take out sections, adjust vocabulary, include simple sentences, and make use of cognates (English words that are similar to students' native languages in sound and/or spelling).

In addition, newcomers, in particular SLIFE, may need to build skills in letter formation and handwriting in print and cursive as well as keyboarding skills. Newcomers will need to be introduced to sentence and paragraph construction as well as the stages of the writing process including editing. Grammar should be taught but not in isolation. Writing should be incorporated across the curriculum and must be modeled and structured. Teachers should hold short writing conferences with newcomers to address individual needs.

Literacy Activities for Newcomers
Reading a fluency passage at the beginning of each class
Participating in reader's theater
Read aloud/think aloud
All about me book
Sentence starters to help newcomers interact with text: this text is about, I liked the part where, I think this means, I don't understand the part, the character reminds me of, this section is mostly about, the main idea is, the topic sentence is, some details are, one argument might be, etc.
Margin questions, annotation of texts; SQ3R
Shared, guided, buddy, and independent reading
Book or chapter walks
Book talks, reviews, and discussions

Graphic organizers, graphs, tables, charts, labeling, matching, skimming, scanning, multiple choice, short answer, sorting, true or false, fill-in-the-blank, sequencing, and cloze sentences
Drawing pictures to match vocabulary to demonstrate understanding of events in a text along with simple sentences or sentences in their native language
Sentence stems and frames
Responding in native language; translating
Journal, interactive, reflective, and shared writing
Personal stories, dialogues, e-mails, blogs, recipes, writing prompts, and journals
Writer's workshop
Story boards
Project based learning
Peer editing and evaluation
Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM)

Oral Language (Speaking and Listening) Activities
Narrating wordless picture books
Using images as conversation starters
Implementing Freire's Learning Sequence
Utilizing songs, chants, and raps
Survey Projects
Structuring speaking games that are repetitive
Creating and delivering dialogues with partners
Creating and delivering dialogues with partners
Developing scripts and performing dramas and role-plays
Organizing group discussions in which students analyze reading and writing tasks
Language Experience Approach (LEA)
Information Gap Activities
Assigning group projects
Dictation
Listening to audio books or podcasts and following along with a transcript
Presenting orally
Forming debates
Numbered Heads Together
Interacting with videos and "text" dependent questions using Edpuzzle
Responding to speaking prompts via technology; listening to peers' recordings and commenting on the thread

Mathematics

Teachers of newcomers should be aware that there are national and regional variations in mathematical algorithms and notations. In mathematics instruction, newcomers benefit from instruction that incorporates reading, writing, listening, and speaking as well as visuals, manipulatives, and hands on activities.

Assessment

Formative Assessment

Formative assessments are frequent checkpoints, either formal or informal, used to ensure all students are acquiring mastery of the content standard(s). These assessment practices allow teachers to monitor students' learning so that they may adjust instruction accordingly, provide students with timely and useful feedback, and encourage students to reflect on their own thinking and learning. Formative assessment is particularly important for newcomers because teachers need to make sure students understood the lesson and/or materials before continuing. Some types of formative assessments may include graphic organizers, retell/summarizing, noticing nonverbal cues, observations from group or partner work, [Bounce Cards](#), exit tickets, [Misconception Checks](#), [3 Sentence Wrap-up](#) (p. 20), [3-2-1](#), running records, and comprehension questions.

Modifying Interim Assessments

When designing or modifying interim assessments for newcomers, general best practices include:

- “Include items that use context that will be familiar to students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and experiences (names, settings, scenarios)

- Use simple, clear vocabulary in test items (directions, stems, answer choices) and associated stimulus materials (e.g., passages, tables, graphs)

- Avoid using trade-specific jargon and culture-specific idioms and colloquialisms as both can be misleading to students who rely on literal interpretation

- Remove superficial details and complex phrases or sentence structures, so students can dedicate their cognitive resources to selecting or generating the correct response rather than translating text

- Include items that provide clear, culture-neutral visual support (e.g., illustrations) as a reference, so students can verify their interpretation of text.” (Abedi & Sato)

Please note that modifying assessments should not include changing grade level content.

Differentiating Interim Assessments

It is important for teachers of newcomers to provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate learning that are not linguistically demanding such as:

Exhibits or Projects: have students do presentations on concepts and procedures

Visual Displays: have students complete a graphic organizer on vocabulary or

concepts

Organized Lists: have students create lists of concepts or vocabulary and explain how these things are organized or sequenced

Tables or Graphs: have students create graphs or tables to show how data can be organized and have them interpret that data

Short Answer: have students answer questions that focus on concepts

Labeling: have students label a diagram or image

Grading and Retention

When assessing the work of newcomers, it is imperative that educators consider the proficiency levels of the students and what they can do at those levels. The WIDA [Can Do Descriptors](#) and [Proficiency Level Descriptors \(PLDs\)](#) (p. 329) will highlight what newcomers can do at various stages of language development. In addition, an EL student with less than two years of instruction in an English Learner program is automatically eligible for a Good Cause Exemption and should not be retained if they do not successfully meet the Reading Sufficiently Act requirements.

Brain Breaks

Learning English and subject area content puts a tremendous cognitive load on a student that will eventually overwhelm them. This is why it is important to provide appropriate allowances such as frequent brain breaks, additional time to complete assignments, and activating a different domain of language as a “palate cleanser”.

An Instructional Model for SLIFE: The Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP)

DeCapua & Marshall’s (2011) evidence based Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm (MALP) is an instructional model that seeks to bridge the U.S. educational system’s assumptions about teaching and learning with that of SLIFE in order to minimize cultural dissonance, conflicts between home and school cultures. This framework is mutually adaptive because it recognizes the critical priorities of each so that teachers can meet the urgencies of SLIFE while transitioning them to eventually meet the conditions of the U.S. educational system. The following chart presents the three components of this model and the priorities of both the U.S. educational system and SLIFE:

Learning Paradigms	
U.S. Educational System	SLIFE
Conditions for Learning	
Future relevance	Immediate relevance
Independence	Interconnectedness
Processes for Learning	
Individual accountability	Shared responsibility
Written word	Oral transmission
Activities for Learning	
Academic tasks	Pragmatic tasks

(DeCapua & Marshall, 2011)

This model considers the cultural dimensions of orientation to time. Future oriented cultures focus on setting long term goals (Hofstede, 2011). In U.S. schools, much of the content that students actually learn is not necessarily retained but serves to develop their intellectual tools and acts as a “foundation for future experiences” (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). On the other hand, short-term oriented societies tend to focus on the present and short-term goals (Hofstede, 2011). Understandably, SLIFE are inclined to prioritize immediate relevance over future relevance because it is not only the most applicable to their cultures but also to their situations and mere survival. “SLIFE are accustomed to learning what they need to know at the time they incorporate it into their daily life” (DeCapua & Marshall, 2011). This also explains why SLIFE are concerned with pragmatic tasks that parallel life opposed to U.S. schools’ focus on academic tasks. Hence, teachers should develop SLIFE’s immediate pragmatic skills yet bridge academic tasks by explaining relevance.

In addition, MALP reflects the cultural dimensions of individualist vs. collectivist societies. The U.S. educational system is based on individualism which values independence, autonomy, and personal goals and achievements (Hofstede, 2011). Whereas many SLIFE are coming from cultures that practice collectivism which value social harmony and relationships, and social or group obligations and responsibilities take precedent over individual wants and needs (Hofstede, 2011). This is why interconnectedness and shared responsibility are considered priorities of SLIFE which verify the importance of cultural bridging, community building, student interaction, collaborative work, and the teacher-student relationship.

Finally, the category SLIFE implies gaps in literacy and formal education. Therefore, it is practical that SLIFE rely on oral transmission over the written word. Consequently, it is important that educators utilize oral transmission to access the written word by building background, contextualizing, and discussing extensively.

The [Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm \(MALP\) Teacher Planning Checklist](#) can assist educators in preparing lessons that meet the needs of SLIFE.

College and Career Readiness

Secondary newcomers should be prepared for life after they complete high school. Districts should forge connections in the community for career exploration, work experience, and internships for high school newcomers. They should also present postsecondary options for high school newcomers by connecting with community colleges and vocational or technical schools and exploring scholarship options. Furthermore, college and career education should be included in the curriculum (e.g., completing college and financial aid applications, providing preparation for English language proficiency tests in higher education settings, developing a resume or filling out job applications, participating in interviews, and highlighting bilingual skills).

Special Education

Due to newcomers' limited English proficiency, they can often be both over and under identified for special education services.

Please note the following regarding EL / SPED dual-identification-

- A student may be formally identified both as an English learner and as having special needs.
- There is no minimum time a student must be served as an EL before being referred for special education assessment and evaluation (although absent a direct parent request for special needs evaluation, the [Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\)](#) interventions should be followed prior to any referral for special needs assessment).
- Special education accommodations should be developed in conjunction with, but are not a substitute for, accommodations detailed in an EL student's English Language Academic Plan (ELAP) appropriate to that student's English learner status and demonstrated level of English language proficiency.

Assuming appropriate implementation of the [MTSS](#) framework, English learners may ultimately be referred for SPED assessment due to:

- Academic or behavioral difficulties that are evident in learning situations whether the language of instruction is English or in the student's native language
- Multiple instructional staff in agreement that the student demonstrates significant differences in performance when compared to similar peers
- Little to no progress being seen after participation in effective Tier I and supplemental Tier II and/or Tier III intervention
- Similar learning and/or behavioral difficulties observed in both the home and school environments

While acknowledging the points above, it is incumbent on the district to ensure the observed student behavior and performance that underlie a referral for special needs assessment are in fact a result of an identifiable special need, not a result of limited English language proficiency, instruction, and/or interventions that may be out of

alignment with the learning needs of the student. This is best accomplished through consistent and cohesive application of an [MTSS](#)-aligned intervention framework at the site level.

Adopting a comprehensive, site-wide [MTSS](#) model encourages Tier I instruction that is standards-aligned, effectively implemented through differentiated instruction, and is accessible to all students through the general education core curriculum. As Tier I instruction becomes more effective, referrals to Tier II and Tier III are more appropriate and can better target student learning needs. This in turn can serve to limit inappropriate special education referrals and subsequent identifications.

Barring a parental request for special needs assessment, the expectation is that district staff will attempt to address student learning need(s) through an appropriate progression of Tier II and Tier III interventions and supports prior to referring a student for special needs assessment.

Referring an English Learner for SPED Assessment

While best practice dictates that the parents of an EL be continuously notified of their student's status as they move within the [MTSS](#) intervention framework, when a district makes the choice to assess for a specific disability they are required under federal law to notify the parent, in a language the parent can understand, and obtain consent before moving forward with assessment. Please see the [Serving and Supporting Oklahoma's Dually Identified English Learners](#) guidance document for a common framework to accurately identify and serve English learners (ELs) who qualify for special education and related services.

Identifying the Appropriate Language of Assessment

Per the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), the student's native language, when used with respect to an individual who is limited English proficient, is defined as follows:

- The language normally used by that individual, or, in the case of a child, the language normally used by the parents of the child.
- In all direct contact with a child (including evaluation of the child), the language normally used by the child in the home or learning environment.
- For an individual with deafness or blindness, or for an individual with no written language, the mode of communication is that normally used by the individual (such as sign language, Braille, or oral communication).

Use of Interpreters during Assessment

There may arise certain cases where assessment in a student's native language is deemed necessary, but no assessment exists in the native language of the student. In situations such as these, the use of an interpreter is allowable to assist in assessment administration. Districts opting to assess an English learner with the assistance of an interpreter should ensure that the interpreter:

- Be familiar with the design, purpose, and all administrative procedures related to the assessment(s) they will assist the student in completing
- Speak the same language as the student

- Have the opportunity to review the test administration process and have any questions addressed
- Complete any required author-created training specific to the interpretation of the assessment
- Possess the level of English and language-other-than-English mastery necessary to reliably translate assessment content to the native language of the student

For more information, please contact the Office of Special Education Services, 405-521-3351.

Newcomer Family Engagement

The chances of academic success for newcomers are enhanced when connections with families are established (Short & Boyson, 2004). Families have varying levels of involvement. Educational partnerships are not necessarily common in some cultures. In such cultures, educators may be seen as the final authority in regard to education, and it may be considered disrespectful to intervene or collaborate. It may be necessary to raise parents' awareness that participation in their child's education is encouraged and expected in the US. However, it is important to remember that not all students arrive with their families; some arrive alone, some stay with relatives, and others may be in foster homes or with a sponsor.

Not to be taken for granted, newcomer families need to know nearly everything about U.S. schools including policies and procedures: attendance, discipline, immunization policy, rules, dress code, physical education uniforms, winter clothing, hygiene, cafeteria options, lunch applications, transportation, pick up drop off procedures, progress reports, report cards, parent-teacher conferences, testing, graduation requirements, after-school clubs and sports, after care, special education services, summer school, role of guidance counselors and other staff, co-ed classes, collaborative group projects, translation services, how to contact teachers, parent/community liaison, and social worker, and how they can participate in their child's education (P.T.A., homework, reading).

In addition to the knowledge above, families may have nonacademic needs. They include but are not limited to immigration, employment, health, mental health, social services, support or parent groups, adult education, and adult ESL. Districts should make families aware of the available resources within their communities and how to contact them.

Recommendations for Engaging Families:

- Provide orientations with school tours in the families' native languages if possible
- Offer convenient hours to accommodate working families
- Smile; express regret you don't speak their language
- Conduct student led conferences in which students share their work and their learning with their families as well as their future learning goals
- Create a list of simple talking points for conferences, so parents can translate later. If appropriate, use an application for translation ([Language Link](#), [Language](#)

[Line](#), [Remind](#), [Talking Points](#), [Say Hi](#), [Google Translate](#)*) to create the list in the families' native language

- Communicate the positive as well as the negative
- Utilize bilingual staff for conferences or phone calls. Inform parents that they may bring their own interpreters as well
- Translate school communication ([Language Link](#), [Language Line](#), [Remind](#), [Talking Points](#), [Say Hi](#), [Google Translate](#)*)
- Incorporate the cultural strengths of families and the community into the school curriculum and activities
- Learn some words or phrases in the families' native language. They really appreciate this.
- Celebrate school wide cultural traditions
- Invite parents to volunteer
- Organize bilingual parent groups

* The Oklahoma State Department of Education does not recommend or endorse one particular application for translation over another. Translation services are a district responsibility and expense. The Oklahoma State Department of Education does not make any promises, assurances, or guarantees as to the accuracy of the translations provided.

Professional Development

Professional development topics for supporting newcomers include:

- **Understanding English Language Proficiency Levels and How to Use ELAPs:** It is essential for teachers of newcomers to understand students' English language proficiency (ELP) levels and what ELs can do at those various levels in order to serve and support them effectively. Educators of newcomers should understand how to use students' [English Language Academic Plans \(ELAPs\)](#). An ELAP details an EL's proficiency level as determined by a WIDA screener or WIDA ACCESS summative assessment. Once teachers note ELP levels, they can utilize WIDA's [Can Do Descriptors](#) or the [Proficiency Level Descriptors](#) to determine what students can do at their current ELP levels and what they will need to be able to do to reach the next ELP level. The ELAP also presents English language development goals and instructional accommodations to be used in the classroom. For Alternate ACCESS, please see [Alternate Can Do Descriptors](#) and [Alternate Proficiency Level Descriptors](#).
- **Integrating Content and English Language Development and Implementing WIDA's English Language Development Standards:** The [WIDA ELD Standards](#) can help educators who have ELs to effectively adapt instruction and concurrently teach content and English language development (ELD). Each standard includes *Key Language Uses* (Narrate, Argue, Inform, and/or Explain) and *Language Expectations* (goals for content-driven language instruction) with *Language Functions* and *Features* that aid teachers in understanding specific

language English Learners will need to know and use to accomplish objectives. Mainstream teachers who receive English Learners after they exit temporary newcomer programs should be provided professional learning on deliberate and appropriate language scaffolds and supports and instructional strategies that can help students access concepts also known as sheltered instruction.

- **Newcomers Specific Strategies Including SLIFE** (mentioned in this document)
- **Cultural Competency:** [Cultural competency](#) plays a fundamental role in learning and achievement. It not only shapes how students communicate, but it also influences their thinking processes as well. Therefore, it is critical for teachers of newcomers to implement [cultural competence in the classroom](#). Integrating culturally competent practices can foster accessible and equitable instruction for students of all cultural groups.
- **Differentiating Instruction:** [Differentiated instruction](#) involves representing students' individual learning styles in the creation of lesson plans and the delivery of instruction. "Research on the effectiveness of differentiation shows this method benefits a wide range of students, from those with learning disabilities to those who are considered high ability" (Weselby, 2021).
- **Trauma and Social and Emotional Learning:** Newcomers benefit greatly if their educators receive professional development on understanding the impact of trauma on the developing child, symptoms of childhood trauma, and key trauma informed SEL practices.
- **Effectively Using Student Assessment Data:** Teachers, professional learning communities, and administrators should receive training on the utilization of WIDA ACCESS score results. Please see the [English Learner Data Toolkit](#) to learn how to access and understand the data in the English Learners tab in Accountability Reporting, analyze the data, and export and strategically use the data to better serve and support English Learners and provide necessary interventions.

ELs make the fastest gains when appropriate strategies and supports are embedded in daily instructional practice, reinforced with targeted professional development, and supported by site administration. Effective professional development (PD) empowers teachers to design instruction that provides ELs access to standards-based core content while continually fostering English language development. Ongoing collaboration after the fact works to increase the adoption and consistent implementation of new teaching practices. This time allows teachers to discuss the successes and challenges that arise when implementing new strategies. Lastly, when administrators take an active role in choosing PD initiatives that are aligned with the identified needs of the district LIEP, work to ensure adoption through observation, and provide teachers with opportunities for ongoing collaboration, new practices are most likely to become routine features of instruction.

Promising Practices: Examples of Serving and Supporting Newcomers

Smaller, Rural Districts

Hennessey Public Schools

Hennessey serves 10 Newcomers in their elementary and middle school. Their Newcomers are not only screened for English language proficiency, but they are also given the diagnostic Star Spanish literacy and math assessment, or a bilingual educator will assess to address any gaps in Newcomers' native language literacy and numeracy. Elementary school Newcomers are placed in cohorts according to grade level where they receive approximately one hour of weekly pull out ELD instruction from an EL or reading intervention teacher. In the general classroom, bilingual paraprofessionals assist teachers with modifying and scaffolding content, instruction, and assignments for English Learners.

In the middle school, Hennessey hired another bilingual paraprofessional through ESSER funds to collaborate with general classroom teachers to assist with ELD and adapting instruction and materials for ELs, and they supplement this with pullout instruction, ELL BrainPop, or Rosetta Stone.

Hennessey has received various grants and partnerships in which they are able to provide before school, after school, and summer programs for English Learners, engage the community in literacy activities, purchase Newcomer curriculum, and provide professional development on ELD best practices and social and emotional learning. These grants and partnerships also provide funds for tutoring and mentors. Hennessey embraces the diversity of their community through an annual Heritage Festival, and they seek inclusion by providing bilingual texts and materials that parallel the curriculum in classrooms and the library.

They also have an Early Birds program for children 0-5 which focuses on building Spanish literacy and school readiness, and Pre-Ks who score less than 7 on the PKST are given instruction on vocabulary in English twice a week. In addition, Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers have created a bilingual practice book with required basics. If a student plateaus or is suspected of having a learning disability, Hennessey can administer a cognitive bilingual verbal abilities assessment along with the Spanish star diagnostic and analyze the students' data including WIDA ACCESS scores generated from ELlevation's database with the team consisting of teachers, an ELL director, a Special Ed director, and parents.

Larger, Urban Districts

Tulsa Public Schools

Tulsa Public Schools serves approximately 1,300 Newcomers, of which almost 500 are in Pre-K. Elementary Newcomers are served in their neighborhood schools with designated and integrated English language development instruction. A quarter of Tulsa Public Schools' elementary schools offer dual language programs which serve large numbers of elementary Newcomer students in both English and Spanish. Tulsa also has Newcomer Academies in two high schools and one middle school based on the enrollment of larger populations of newcomer students. In the high schools, Newcomers who enroll without previous school transcripts start as freshman in order to obtain credited courses for graduation requirements. They remain in cohorts for the first year and attend Newcomer Academy content area classes. These classes are taught by designated teachers who receive training to support newcomer student instruction and cultural transitions. English language development teachers also provide integrated services, or co-teaching support, in some Newcomer Academy classes. Students in the Newcomer Academies also attend designated English language development (ELD) classes with an ELD teacher. After that year, Tulsa continues to provide support through designated ELD classes and integrated ELD co-teaching supports in some content area classes.

ELD partners on the Language and Cultural Services team provide coaching and training to teachers in the Newcomer Academy. In addition, Tulsa contracts with ELD professional learning organizations to provide training to educators in sheltered instruction, social emotional learning (SEL), cultural transitions, best practices for maintaining rigor while adapting instruction based on students' English language proficiency levels as well as trauma informed teaching due to their influx of refugees as well as the impacts of the pandemic. Both teacher-leader trainings as well as general sessions are offered, and teachers can receive a stipend for attending. Tulsa also leverages district resources such as social workers, behavioral interventionists, and bilingual City Year AmeriCorps near-peer mentors and tutors.

They promote bilingualism through their Seal of Biliteracy and by offering resources in other languages as well as bilingual texts in classrooms and libraries. In addition, Tulsa is in the process of implementing the Welcome Project in which their immigrant student specialist and refugee navigator conduct intake interviews, forge community connections, and engage families.

Oklahoma City Public Schools

Oklahoma City Public Schools serves around 2,000 Newcomers which does not include Kindergarten and Pre-K students. Newcomers are grouped in cohorts depending on staffing, and Newcomer programs and academies are located in high incidence areas;

however, transportation is provided for Newcomers who reside outside those areas.

In the elementary school newcomer programs, students receive 90 minutes of daily ELD instruction with an ELD teacher or bilingual paraprofessional that primarily concentrates on Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), phonemic awareness, and phonics. Bilingual paraprofessionals assist teachers in general education classrooms, and ELD teachers help them to modify lessons and grade assignments through an ELD lens.

In middle school, Newcomers have 3-4 ELD classes a day and receive sheltered instruction in their content classes and in specials with bilingual paraprofessional support. Occasionally math classes are offered in Spanish.

In high school, the Newcomer academies have 2 Newcomer graduation specialists, hired through ESSER funds, that assist Newcomers by developing individual graduation plans after an evaluation of transcripts, a possible district-developed Spanish literacy diagnostic assessment, and discussions with ELD and content teachers. The graduation specialists also conduct family and community outreach, train staff, and set up professional development and tutoring. Newcomers receive simultaneous English Language Arts and ELD instruction and sheltered instruction in math, science, and social studies. Credit recovery courses (sometimes offered in Spanish) and tutoring are available to students. The homeless liaison works with unaccompanied minors to ensure their immediate needs are met.

There are also EL instructional facilitators throughout OKCPS who assist teachers with English Learners and professional development. Additionally, there is an instructional leadership director who assists with training administration on OKCPS's ELD Handbook. OKCPS and/or community partners offer staff training in sheltered instruction, second language acquisition, cultural competency, and Spanish for school staff.

OKCPS has developed their own Newcomer standards to amplify specific ELD skills and progression of those skills which are used in conjunction with Oklahoma Academic Standards. It is important to note that OKCPS tracks Newcomers from year to year to evaluate and recommend appropriate placement the following year using EL facilitators and ELD and content teachers' recommendations, WIDA results, and attendance records. This requires consistent communication between elementary, middle, and high schools. The ELD structure consists of scaffolding, gradual release, and eventual mainstreaming but is ultimately determined during the yearly evaluations. Newcomer summer programs are offered as well.

OKCPS provides community tutoring, adult ESL, and Spanish literacy classes. The early childhood department maintains a parents-as-teachers literacy training and provides books and materials for families, and facilitators make home visits. Bilingual titles are offered in school libraries. Also, OKCPS works with the Spero Project, Catholic Charities, and other community partners to provide necessary interpreters, and they

utilize Language Line. They hold a well-attended annual community potluck dinner. Furthermore, through partnerships, OKCPS has developed a diversity pipeline program in which cohorts of future educators of diverse backgrounds receive funding for tuition and books to study educational degrees in exchange for a 3-year commitment to serve OKCPS. Finally, OKCPS produces and publishes Project Voice, an anthology of life experiences written by middle and high school Newcomer and EL students.

Thank you for serving and supporting Oklahoma's Newcomers!

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Glossary

Asylee- people who have traveled to the U.S. on their own and were subsequently granted asylum

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)- Consists of tier 1 and tier 2 everyday survival and high frequency vocabulary. It takes six months to two years to develop BICS.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)- academic language consisting of tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary. It takes five to seven years to develop CALP

English as a Second Language (ESL)/ English Language Development (ELD)- Students are provided supplemental individual or small-group instruction outside the general education classroom (e.g., “pullout” or ESL classes) with no native language support in either setting. Supplemental instruction can target both English language fluency and core content instruction. The goal of the program is to increase EL student success in mainstream, non-ESL supported general education classes.

English Language Academic Plan (ELAP)- the state-mandated document required for all identified English Learners that includes a student's placement test information and/or proficiency test information, accommodations, and language learning goals.

English Learner-a student whose Home Language Survey indicated a language other than English on any or all of the three language questions and who did not show proficiency when subsequently assessed using a WIDA or state screening tool

Immigrant- students meeting the following three criteria:

- between the ages of 3 and 21,
- not born in any of the 50 United States, the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico,
- have not been enrolled in a U.S. school for more than a total of three years.

Language Experience Approach (LEA)- a whole language approach that promotes reading and writing through the use of personal experiences and oral language. Beginning literacy learners relate their experiences to a teacher or aide, who transcribes them. These transcriptions are then used as the basis for other reading and writing activities.

Mutually Adaptive (MALP)- an instructional model that seeks to bridge the U.S. educational system's assumptions about teaching and learning with that of SLIFE in order to minimize cultural dissonance, conflicts between home and school cultures.

Newcomers- students who meet all of the following criteria:

1. have recently arrived in the U.S.
2. have attended up to 12 months in a U.S. educational setting (or up to 24 months at LEA discretion)
3. have been identified as English Learners (a student whose Home Language Survey indicated a language other than English on any or all of the three language questions and who did not show proficiency when subsequently assessed using a WIDA or state screening tool).

Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM)- an enlarged photo with white space around it (ideally laminated so it can be used again) is first placed in the classroom; students and the teacher together label objects in the picture; students categorize and add words to their categories; students use the words in sentences that are provided as clozes (fill-in-the-blank exercises), which are then categorized and combined into paragraphs; and, finally, a title is chosen.

Recently Arrived English Learner (RAEL)- a student from a foreign country enrolling in a U.S. school for the first time for Accountability purposes

Refugee- people who have fled their country of origin due to persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)- providing integrated ESL support in content area classes, often referred to as sheltered instruction, and includes

scaffolding, modifying, and adapting instruction for English Learners.

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)- students that require intensive foundational English language development, literacy, and numeracy instruction.

Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review (SQ3R)- a comprehension strategy that helps students think about the text they are reading while they're reading.

Total Physical Response (TPR)- a method of teaching language or vocabulary concepts by using physical movement to react to verbal input

Translanguaging- a stage in language acquisition when newcomers begin integrating both English and their native language

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