



Turning a Vision for EL Success into Reality

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Connect existing district planning systems to create coherence

A Vision for EL success should already be in any District plan with explicit goals to improve EL outcomes.

With a backward design districts can create their school improvement plans based on these EL student outcomes.

Some details to consider:

- evaluation and supports for all educators,
- the district budget,
- technology, and
- grant and resource allocation



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High Interest, Low Readability Books for Bilingual Learners
The Turn-and-Talk Template: An Effective Way to Engage ELs in Academic Conversation

ON THE COVER

MATSOL members can view presentations from MATSOL's online conference by going to <https://www.matsol.org/2020-conference>. The title slide on the cover is from "Massachusetts Interactive Blueprint for EL Success," by Sibel Hughes, of the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.



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President's Message

July 2020

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I hope this note finds you and your family healthy and safe.



The COVID-19 pandemic and the anti-racism protests that arose from the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery have brought great changes to our work and our daily routines. We face unknown challenges in the weeks and school year ahead but in spite of the uncertainties I feel very confident of three things: the commitment of MATSOL members to their students, MATSOL's commitment to social justice pedagogies and anti-racist activism, and our strength as a community of educators. I have watched with pride as our teachers at all grade levels have skillfully adapted to remote pedagogy, and I am confident that out of these unprecedented and frightening changes we will find new ways of teaching, learning, and building community.


During this difficult time, MATSOL has continued to provide opportunities for us to support one another and our students. In the immediate days after schools closed, we held thirteen online Open Houses, with up to sixty participants at each meeting, to give our teachers a space to meet and share ideas. When forced to cancel our in-person conference in May, our dedicated and very resourceful staff set to work to plan a remote conference that included a pre-conference program with ten sessions focused on remote teaching technologies followed by a two-week conference proper with 21 synchronous sessions. I extend our sincere gratitude to all the presenters for their adaptability, as well as to the presenters who were not included in the abbreviated online program but who enthusiastically answered our request to present in a remote format. In all, 28 sessions were recorded and made available to you as resources on the [MATSOL conference website](#). Instead of a single award to a Teacher of the Year, this May we launched an Educator of the Year celebration (#MATSOLeducators) to recognize the effort and dedication of *all* MATSOL members. You can read about and join the celebration [here](#).

On June 22, in response to the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and

Ahmaud Arbery, MATSOL released a statement on racial justice (see the text on p. 17 of this issue). We conducted a survey of our membership and held an online listening session to begin gathering ideas about specific steps that MATSOL can take to move toward racial justice. In the coming weeks we will convene a task force to develop an action plan for MATSOL. We hope you will consider joining the task force and/or providing feedback on the action plan as it develops.

In the coming weeks we will convene a task force to develop a [racial-justice] action plan for MATSOL.

In June, I attended the remote TESOL Advocacy Summit along with nine other MATSOL members. Although we were not able to visit Capitol Hill in person, the remote summit gave us a unique opportunity to learn about advocacy in the field of TESOL, both nationally and internationally. You can find out about the issues TESOL is tracking and take action using the [TESOL Advocacy Action Center](#), which is free to TESOL members and non-members.

In this issue of MATSOL Currents, you will find reports on MATSOL's activities during this terrible pandemic; on our annual Teacher of the Year, Anne Dow, and Linda Schulman awards; and on our special interest groups (SIGs), including the Massachusetts English Language Leadership Council (MELLC). There are articles on strategies for teaching academic conversation, science vocabulary, and dictionary use, along with a survey of high-interest, low-readability books for bilingual learners, and an appeal for all of us to sustain an asset-based approach in the midst of the coronavirus. We have an engaging personal-experience essay by Ron Clark, a former editor of MATSOL Currents. And there are reviews of the *New York Times: The Learning Network* and of Zaretta Hammond's *Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*. We hope you will find something of interest to you! 

With heartfelt appreciation for all that you do,

Melissa Latham Keh

MATSOL President

MATSOL's 48th Annual Conference, ONLINE!

From May 26 - June 4, 2020, MATSOL held its first online conference, with ten pre-conference presentations focused on remote teaching technologies followed by a two-week conference proper with 21 synchronous sessions. Altogether, there were 2687 attendees throughout the three weeks, with an average attendance of 112 participants per session. Here are some screenshots from conference presentations (courtesy of Jason Fei):

Lesson #3 Activity

Compare and Contrast: parks

Materials:

- Venn Diagram chart, photo cards, index cards

Activity:

- explore different kinds of parks through read alouds, videos, sharing experiences.
- write facts/details about different types of parks and add them to a Venn Diagram.











From "A Hands-on Exploration of Newly Developed ESL Units,"
by Jessica Nguy, Arlington Public Schools & Heather Smith, Arlington Public Schools

Talking Points

- Supports 100 languages
- Communication app
- SMS Parents
- Compose messages in English and families receive communication in home language
- Families can receive information through app, text, or email

(Screenshot of TalkingPoints interface showing a message in Spanish: 'Hola! Como estas?')

(Illustration of a girl reading a book)

From “Digital Tools to Help English Learners Survive, Succeed, and Excel,”
by Kara Wilkins, Lowell Public Schools

hp

RECOMMENDATIONS

Framework

1. Revise and update statewide ESL related definitions, roles and responsibilities **(Step 1)**
2. Develop ESL Framework to enhance WIDA ELD Standards **(Step 2)**
3. Develop various resources to support ESL Framework **(Step 3)**

- Vision and/or mission statement for English learner education
- Overview of WIDA ELD standards and implementation guidance for various ESL instructional models
- Best practices for curriculum and instruction by ESL instructional models, proficiency and/or developmental levels
- Strategies for social and academic language development
- Lesson and unit planning guides that are clear, concise, and applicable to different
- Guidance for effective classroom assessment

EXPERT ADVICE

(Illustration of two figures holding a sign that says 'EXPERT ADVICE')

Findings and implications of the ESL Research Project by Judith MagLoire, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

What research says ...

Torff and Murphy (2020) write, "Rigor of curriculum is a significant factor in a variety of achievement gaps, and students typically achieve more when challenged." (Beard, 2018; Croucher & DeStefano, 2017).

1 in 3 English learners don't graduate on time – and 1 in 7 drop out of school entirely.

Group	Graduation Rate	National Ranking
White	92%	4th
English Learners	64%	25th
Latino	73%	13th
All Students	88%	13th
Low Income	78%	18th
Asian	53%	14th
Black	79%	19th

2016 Graduation Rate/National Ranking

The Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership, 2018

From "Improving Rigor for High School Newcomers through Analysis and Inquiry by Stephanie Bielagus, Enlace, Lawrence High School, Katherine Sugg, Enlace, Lawrence High School & Chris Bishop, Enlace, Lawrence High School

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Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

From "Massachusetts Interactive Blueprint for EL Success," by Sibel Hughes, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

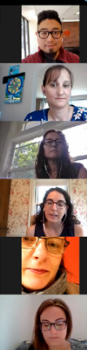
GLOBE Project Activities: What are Hub districts doing?

2019-2020 Hubs:


- Rania Caldwell: Lynn PS
- Erin Goldstein: Worcester
- Katie Richardson: Amherst
- Anne Day: Holyoke
- Kellie Jones: Brockton

Reached the GLOBE Project Goals


- **Partnership**
- **Recruitment**
- **Wraparound supports** for candidates through the recruitment and preparation: e.g., fund coursework for candidate, fund BE MTEL, fund professional development, licensure test preparation, etc.)



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



From “The GLOBE Project: “Grow Your Own Bilingual Education Educator”
Initiative by Zhaneta Liti, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education , Anne Day, Katie Richardson,
Rania Caldwell, Erin Goldstein & Kellie Jones

Recordings were made of 28 sessions, which can be found at <https://www.matsol.org/2020-conference>. (Find a session you want to view; then scroll to the right and click on the recording link.) 

MATSOL Members Come Together in the Pandemic: A Report from MATSOL's Executive Director

Helen Solórzano

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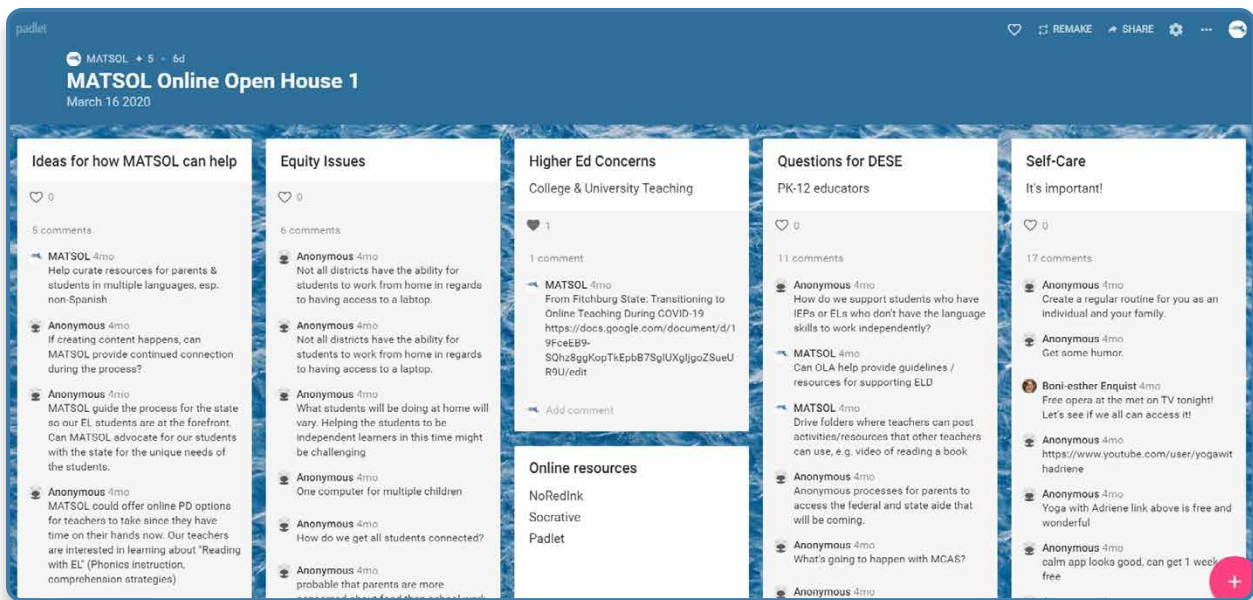
WHEN Governor Baker closed school buildings in mid-March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were fearful about what the future might bring. But as we thought about how to respond to the crisis, we knew that you — our members — would be our greatest resource. MATSOL members are always willing to share their expertise and their creativity. Our Board and staff did not have the answers for the new world of remote learning, but we knew that our members would be eager to support one another, and we were in a unique position to make that happen.

To facilitate connections among our members, we scheduled a series of MATSOL “Open Houses,” using the Zoom meeting platform. We chose a simple format — a brief introduction and update, and a short tutorial on Zoom-meeting features. Then we divided the participants into small groups to network and share their experiences, providing Padlets to record their ideas and share links. We closed the meetings with a brief report-back from the small group discussions.

Between March and May 2020, we held a series of eleven Open House meetings, hosted by MATSOL staff, with an average of 43 attendees per meeting. The largest meeting was held on March 25 — the day after the stay-at-home order was issued — with 64 members. Some members attended only one or two meetings, but others logged in for most or all of the meetings, finding a source of stability and support during a time of uncertainty and change. Most meetings had a general focus, intended for all members, but we also held three Open House meetings for ESL faculty in community colleges.

Looking at the comments on Padlet, we can see how the questions and concerns of EL teachers evolved over time. Throughout the spring, our members expressed their concern about equity issues for EL students, including lack

of access to technology, financial insecurity due to job losses, and lack of available information in the students' home languages. Many teachers were worried about students that they had not heard from since the shutdown, and their colleagues suggested ways to reach out to those students and their families. When members expressed a need for more assistance from their school districts or institutions and from DESE, including guidance on remote teaching, training for remote teaching, and resources for online instruction, their colleagues generously filled the gap with materials, apps, and other resources,



as well as ideas for successful activities that had engaged their students.

While Zoom meetings were new to many members, MATSOL had been using Zoom for over a year for meetings of our Board and member groups. Drawing on that experience, we shared tips and best practices for using Zoom in a session hosted by Jason Fei, MATSOL's Program & Member Engagement Coordinator.

Many of our members do not know what to expect when school resumes in the fall, not even whether they will be teaching in person or remotely or some combination of the two. MATSOL doesn't have the answers, either, but we will continue to collaborate with and be inspired by our members, and we will continue holding regular Open Houses as long as they are needed. C

A Report from MATSOL's Director of Professional Development

Victoria Ekk

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SCHOOL year 2019-2020 began with some major changes in our Professional Learning Team, with the change in leadership from our beloved Ann Feldman, now happily enjoying retirement in San Miguel de Allende, to Victoria (Vicky) Ekk, former PK-12 administrator and MELLC member. During Fall and Winter, MATSOL offered eighteen sheltered-English-immersion (SEI) courses and twenty-two 15-personal-development-point (15-PDP) courses, some offered as open registration and others as requested by districts for their personnel.

Then, the news of a looming pandemic threw everything into a tailspin. Our world, like that of other educators across the Commonwealth and the entire country, changed dramatically overnight. We immediately set to work to transfer our SEI courses onto an online platform, searching for ways to teach crucial content as interactively as possible in a Zoom-meeting format. Instructors who were halfway through teaching 15-PDP courses had to figure out how to complete them online. We were able to meet the emergency by working as a team and learning alongside our instructors and course participants what worked well and what didn't. As of this spring, all of MATSOL's 15-PDP courses have been or are in the process of being transferred into an online format so that, whatever happens, teachers of English Learners (ELs) will have access to high-quality professional learning. We continue to look for new tools to increase interaction and improve how we teach remotely.

Because of the pandemic, our in-person MATSOL Annual Conference had to be cancelled. However, all was not lost, due to the hard and creative work of MATSOL's Program & Member Engagement Coordinator, Jason Fei, and our Executive Director, Helen Solórzano, who led a series of online Open Houses and a fantastic two-week virtual conference!!!

MATSOL has never held courses during the summer, but given the current state of our educational system, we changed precedent to offer two sets of 15-PDP courses this summer, one set starting June 20 and a second set beginning August 1. The June 20 session consisted of three online 15-PDP courses: EL-109: “Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students with Special Needs,” EL-113: “Students with Interrupted or Limited Formal Education,” and EL-114: “Social and Emotional Learning for English Learners.” All three courses were well attended. Our second session, beginning August 1, includes a repeat offering of each of these courses, plus EL-103: “Supporting English Learners in Specialty Subjects.”

We are currently developing new courses to support EL teachers with planning to teach sometimes in person and sometimes remotely.

Among our 15-PDP offerings for the 2019-20 school year was a new state-of-the-art course, “Social Emotional Learning for English Learners,” which took off quickly and continues to be enrolled at capacity this summer. In addition, MATSOL PD team member Boni-esther Enquist is offering a new course for administrators this July and August: “Leadership for English Learner Equity and Achievement.” We are currently developing new courses to support EL teachers with planning to teach sometimes in person and sometimes remotely, which they may have to do when schools open in the Fall.

For Fall 2020, we are scheduling our SEI courses to be held entirely online, with synchronous sessions for the twelve required classes and the capstone presentations. We will determine in the spring if we can also schedule the traditional hybrid courses that meet in person. Course schedules and registration forms will be posted on the MATSOL web site.

MATSOL’s Professional Learning Team is always looking for new ways to meet the needs of our members and non-members who teach and support ELs. Please send us your requests, comments, and ideas for the development of new courses that will promote equity and excellence for the education of ELs to pl@matsol.org. ■

A Report from MATSOL's Program & Member Engagement Coordinator

Jason Fei
jfei@matol.org



FROM the very beginning of this horrific pandemic, MATSOL has been able to continue offering support to our members and collaborators because the systems and platforms were already in place to host everything online. Most of our special interest groups (SIGs) were already meeting online, and the few that had previously met face-to-face quickly adapted to an online format.

During the transition period, we initiated a series of virtual Open Houses, as a platform where our members could come together to commiserate with and support one another. Each meeting began with an update by MATSOL staff about what was happening in MATSOL and in the state. Then members would divide into breakout groups according to their job assignments, to share strategies and resources, all of which were recorded in shareable documents for later reference. Each meeting ended with a large group share-out.

[W]e initiated a series of virtual Open Houses, as a platform where our members could come together to . . . support one another.

From March 16-27, during the first two weeks of the school shutdown, we held four Open Houses with over 200 attendees each. We continued to hold Open Houses every Wednesday until May 13, just before the beginning of MATSOL's Virtual Conference. Attendance fell off as time passed and people became more comfortable with remote teaching and learning, but we still averaged over 35 participants at each Open House.


On March 24, still near the beginning of the crisis, we thought it would be a

good idea to offer our members a tutorial about Zoom, going over basic controls and features, with some suggestions of how to use those features to teach a class. We unexpectedly filled up our Zoom room and had to upgrade to a much larger space, which proved fruitful later for the Virtual Conference.

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In May, we received requests from members who were struggling with remote teaching tools such as Flipgrid, Screencastify, and Google Classroom. We therefore put together a pre-conference week focused solely on remote learning. Thanks to the generosity and expertise of our members who presented, we pulled it off!

It constantly lifts my spirits to work with such talented, selfless people who are always willing to help others. Thank you to all of our SIG leaders, pre-conference and conference presenters, Board members, and my amazing colleagues, the MATSOL staff! I got a lot of plaudits for hosting our 13 Open Houses, 16 SIG meetings, and 31 sessions of conference webinars, but without the vision and leadership of our Executive Director, Helen Solórzano, none of this would have happened, and it certainly wouldn't have happened so smoothly.

If you have an idea for a SIG that you'd like to start, a webinar you'd like to present, or a project that MATSOL should begin, I'd love to work with you! Please write me at jfei@matsol.org. 

A Report from the MATSOL Board

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

MATSOL's Board held its annual retreat on June 20 of this year. Board members are normally elected by the membership at MATSOL's Annual Meeting, but because we were unable to meet in person this year, and because our bylaws preclude the electronic election of Board members, the Board exercised their prerogative to *appoint* new members to fill Board vacancies. We are pleased to welcome two new Board members: Moira Greenson and Ece Gürler.

Moira Greenson is a veteran ESL teacher with 34 years of experience working in a variety of districts and environments, including community college. She holds a BA degree in French/Secondary Education from Rhode Island College, a Master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language from UMass Boston, and a Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Management from Northeastern University.



Moira currently works in New Bedford as an ESL Teaching and Learning Specialist/Instructional Coach, where she supports new ESL teachers and provides professional development for the district, the ESL department, and local private schools. She also facilitates professional learning communities (PLCs). She tries to model instructional practices that engage and motivate students both during her PL sessions and during individual work in teachers' classrooms.

Moira recently became a member of the ESL Coaches SIG and is co-facilitating their summer book study on anti-racism. As a new member of the MATSOL Board, she is looking forward to this opportunity to take a more active role in MATSOL and to have a stronger voice in our organization. When not coaching or advocating for students and teachers, she can be found playing the fiddle, reading a historical novel, or playing with her granddaughter at the beach.

Ece Gürler was born and raised in Ankara, Turkey, where she studied Geological Engineering at Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi. She is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Creative and Critical Thinking at UMass Boston.



Ece started her career as an English teacher in Ankara in 2011. After teaching for three years, she immigrated to the United States, where she took a position as Academic Coordinator at Kaplan International in Chicago. In 2017, she moved to Boston and became Student Services Manager at Stafford House International. She is currently serving as Center Director at ELS Boston. In her spare time, she is also a writer. Her debut novel for middle grade, *Frank*, will be published by BookBaby Publishing in a couple of months.

Because she was an international student herself, Ece knows what English learners go through. This is why she wanted to become a MATSOL Board member — to be sure that the voices of students in private ESL schools are heard and represented. She hopes to use her knowledge and creativity to assist with current projects and initiate new ones to serve international students.

CONTINUING BOARD MEMBERS

Four Board members whose current terms were up — Christine Leider, Yuiko Shimazu, Mary Hughes, and Mary Clark — were reappointed for a further three-year term.

Past President Juanita Brunelle is retiring from the Board but will continue to serve on the Governance and Nominating Committee and play a role in our Community College SIG. We thank her for her tireless service to MATSOL over the past six years.

STATEMENT ON RACIAL JUSTICE

On June 22, in response to the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, MATSOL's Board of Directors issued the following Statement on Racial Justice, which was signed by MATSOL's Board and staff and sent by e-mail to all MATSOL members:

As an organization of educators, we at MATSOL want to express our sadness and anger at the recent senseless killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, as well as the longstanding racial injustices that persist in our country. It is our mission to promote equity and excellence for multilingual learners and educators and it is our belief that this includes challenging systemic racism, language discrimination, and cultural biases in our schools, communities, and professions.

We encourage all our members to join us in speaking out and taking a stand when we see members of our schools and communities being impacted by racism and discrimination. We all have an important

role in shaping the field of TESOL and English language teaching to be rooted in social justice pedagogies and to ensure that our classrooms allow all students to thrive regardless of their race, ethnicity, and primary language.

MATSOL is an organization focused on supporting multilingual students and families across the commonwealth. We have many Black students and educators in our community. MATSOL cannot be silent as we bear witness to persistent racial injustice. We stand with our students and members who are grieving, angry, and afraid, and call for change.

**MATSOL cannot be silent
as we bear witness to
persistent racial injustice.**

The MATSOL Board of Directors is committed to developing an action plan with specific steps MATSOL can take to make change, in direct collaboration with our members. We will (a) send out a member survey in the week of June 22 and (b) hold a Zoom meeting on June 29 at 4:00 PM with the objective of gathering thoughts from the larger MATSOL community on what we can do to maximize our impact.

We invite our members to join us at the meeting and/or participate in the survey so that you can share your ideas, opinions, and needs. Members should look for an email from MATSOL with links to participate.

We have now conducted the promised survey of our membership and have held an online listening session to begin gathering ideas about specific steps that MATSOL can take to promote and exemplify racial justice. In the coming weeks we will convene a task force to develop a MATSOL action plan. We hope you will consider joining the task force and/or providing feedback on the plan as it develops.


MATSOL'S FINANCES

The MATSOL Board keeps a close watch on our finances, and our financial records are audited at the end of each financial year and filed with the IRS and the Massachusetts Attorney General.

Fiscal year 2020, which ended on June 30, was a challenging year financially

because of the loss of income from our annual Conference, which is normally our largest source of revenue. However, because we also did not incur our normal Conference expenses, and because some staff positions were left unfilled for part of the year, we were able to finish the year with only a small financial loss. We also applied for and received a forgivable Paycheck Protection (PPP) Loan from the Federal government.

[W]e expect to be able to fully maintain our programming, staff, and member services throughout the coming year.

Next year, FY2021, will be still more challenging, because we will not be able to hold in-person meetings or events in the Fall. We are currently planning for an in-person 2021 MATSOL Conference in June, but are also planning for the option of holding it again virtually. The format will be confirmed before registration opens in January. However, as a result of careful budgeting over the years, MATSOL has accumulated financial reserves that should be sufficient to carry us through. Although many of our activities will have to be moved online, we expect to be able to fully maintain our programming, staff, and member services throughout the coming year. 

MATSOL's Annual Awards

The following awards were announced at MATSOL's online Annual Meeting on June 2:

THE ANNE DOW AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE AND CREATIVITY

This award is given annually to a professional who has made outstanding efforts that reflect enthusiasm and creative, energetic, independent thinking. This professional displays the ability to take risks, solve problems, support colleagues, and model ethical behavior. Specific criteria vary from year to year, to reflect the many facets of Anne's career and interests. The award is supported by the Anne Dow Family Foundation with a \$1,000 honorarium. This year's award was given for leading collaboration to support the education of English Learners.

The winner of this year's Anne Dow award is **Sandra Cunha**. Sandra is the EL Coordinator for the English Learner Education Department at the Global Learning Charter Public School in New Bedford, MA. The Anne Dow Award Committee selected Sandra for this award based on her work leading school-wide professional development, collaborating to establish the Seal of Biliteracy in her district, and helping teachers use data analysis to develop implications for teaching. The colleagues who nominated her describe her as "dynamic, multifaceted, compassionate, innovative" and "a clear pillar of strength, vitality and equity within our department, school and community. She demonstrates an unwavering professional commitment to equity and equality, and embodies the view that, with deliberate and mindful work, positive change is possible."



Anne Dow award winner,
Sandra Cunha

LINDA SHULMAN INNOVATION GRANTS

The Linda Schulman Innovation Grant was established in honor of Linda Schulman, who served on the MATSOL Board of Directors and was President of MATSOL from 1997-1998. Grants of \$500-\$1000 dollars are awarded to support pedagogical projects that embody a spirit of creativity, sensitivity, and community and benefit English language learners by improving their language competency or their understanding of American culture.

This year's grant winners are as follows:

Amy Ostroff, Baker School, Brookline. Project Title "The Baker Arboretum."

Karen Malley, Federal Street Elementary School, Greenfield. Project Title: "Reviving a Community Garden in our Own Backyard."

Christi Cartwright, International High School, Lawrence. Project Title: "Powered Up: A Computer Cart for Our Classroom."

Jen Noorjanian, Woodland Elementary School, Milford. Project Title: "Project WEAVE: Welcome and Engage to support Adjustment via Education."

Megan Gabellieri, Woodland Elementary School, Milford. Project Title: "Mindful Practice for ELs."

MATSOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR

MATSOL's Teacher of the Year Award was established to recognize educators who demonstrate a long-term commitment to the education of ELs, including successful teaching of ELs; leadership in their school, district, or the state; mentoring and support of new teachers; and strong relationships with families and community.

This year, our normal nomination process was interrupted by the pandemic, so instead of recognizing just one Teacher of the Year we wanted to honor all our teachers! We invited our members to join us in recognizing and celebrating the work English Language Education (ELE) teachers are doing to teach multilingual learners remotely across

Massachusetts. In our member meetings throughout this year, we have heard many stories about the creativity, innovation, dedication, and generosity of our members in meeting the needs of students and their families. We asked members to download and complete a sign describing what they do to make a difference, then take a photo and share it on social media.

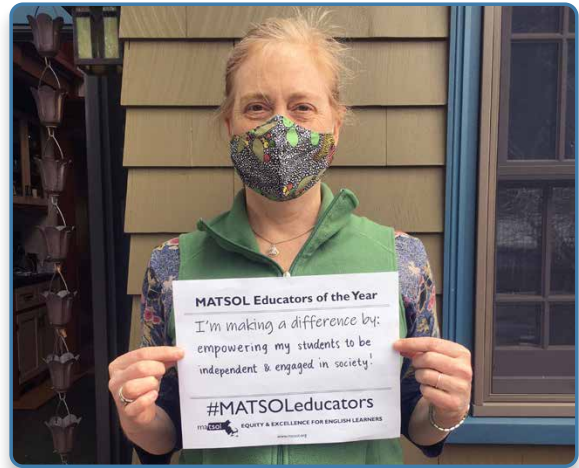
Here are a few of the photos that were posted by MATSOL Board Members:



Susan Victor



Christine Leider



Kathy Lobo



Yuiko Shimazu



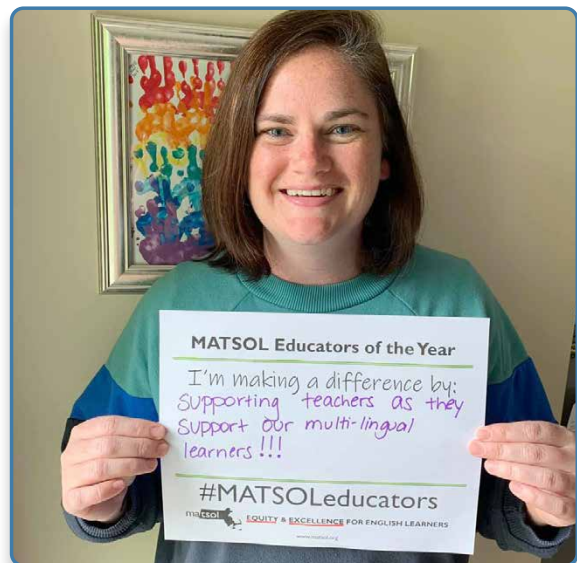
Stephanie Marcotte



Claudia Rinaldi



Jody Klein



Molly Ross

A Report on the Massachusetts English Language Leadership Council (MELLC)

Victoria Ekk

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THIS year's MELLC meetings exemplified the complexity of the world of EL Directors and Coordinators. In October and November, we explored the following themes:


- New immigration regulations and their effect on ELs, with Sarang Sekhavat (MIRA)
- Teaching to Strengths, with Drs. Zacarian and Alvarez-Ortiz
- Massachusetts English Proficiency Benchmarks, with Sibel Hughes (MA DESE's Office of Language Acquisition)
- MATSOL Special Interest Groups, with MATSOL's Program & Member Engagement Coordinator, Jason Fei
- Programs for Newcomer ELs, with a panel of EL Directors
- Equity for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students, with Karen Hall
- Using ACCESS data to improve EL support, with Melanie Manares (MA DESE's Assessment Office)

The hard-working MELLC Advisory Council — Kathleen Lange-Madden, Deborah Wall, Laurie Hartwick, Mindy Paulo, Yvonne Endara, and MATSOL's Director of Professional Learning Victoria Ekk — planned a strong March meeting with Andy McDonie, from the Office of Language Acquisition, to promote April as Heritage Language Month, discuss issues in the identification of ELs, and explain the requirements of the new Student Opportunity Act. But the COVID-19 pandemic brought our work to a screeching halt. First, we postponed the meeting, but

then had to cancel it outright and schedule an online Zoom meeting the following month. We finished the school year with two more virtual meetings in which MELLC members shared information about their districts' handling of remote teaching and learning and pondered how to engage ELs and their families in the chaos of switching to a totally new mode of communication. The opportunity to meet, even if online, was vital to MELLC members as they struggled with entirely new challenges and new concerns about equity for ELs.

[EL Directors/Coordinators will have to] find ways to engage EL families and keep them informed about new and likely complex school schedules.

As we plan for the coming school year and consider the changes our districts must make to accommodate social-distancing requirements for re-opened schools, MELLC will be considering how best to serve the needs of the EL Directors/Coordinators who must support their teachers to teach both in-person and online and find ways to engage EL families and keep them informed about new and likely complex school schedules. We are thinking hard about what our meetings should provide and how networking and information sharing can best be handled for 2020-2021. Updates will be posted on our [website](#) and through the e-list. Volunteers and suggestions are welcome!

MELLC membership is open to PK-12 ELE Program Directors or Coordinators and carries an additional registration fee. 

MATSOL's Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

MATSOL offers a variety of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) which, except for MELLC (see p. 24 of this issue), are open to all members, free of charge:

Advocacy *New!*

Coalition for Equity, Diversity, and Disability (CEDD) *New!*

Community College ESOL Faculty

Educators of Color *New!*

ESL Unit Developers *New!*

Family-School Partnerships *New!*

Instructional Coaches *New!*

Low-Incidence Programs

Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC)

Private Language Schools

Teacher Educators

For the time being, at least, meetings are entirely online. Here are reports on some recent SIG activities:

ADVOCACY

The Advocacy Special Interest Group is a new SIG that will bring together educators who want to influence local, state, and federal policies and practices that impact English Learners (ELs) and their families. We will work together to learn how to advocate at the local, state, and federal levels; support MATSOL's advocacy work and conduct specific advocacy initiatives; and develop collaborative relationships with other organizations to achieve shared goals. This SIG will officially start off in Fall 2020. Watch for information on the [SIG website](#).

COALITION FOR EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND DISABILITY (CEDD)

The Coalition for Equity, Diversity, and Disability (CEDD) is a collaboration of members from Lasell University, MABE, and MATSOL, whose aim is to address the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students with disabilities (SWD) and their families. We are working to improve supports and services for diverse SWD; improve opportunity, achievement, and outcomes for diverse SWD; assist in the dissemination of research results; and bring the voices of students, families, and educators to the development and implementation of programming and services. We expect to have a voice in initiatives that focus on diverse SWD, including DESE's [Individualized Education Program Improvement Project](#) and preparation programs for Massachusetts teachers, both pre-service and in-service. For more information on the activities of CEDD, please visit our [website](#).

[CEDD is] working to improve supports and services for diverse students with disabilities.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESOL FACULTY

Members of our SIG participated in a series of meetings hosted by Dean Christian Bednar, of North Shore Community College, at which the following topics were discussed:

- Assessment and placement
- Curriculum and program structure
- Graduation credit and transfer credit

and we worked with MATSOL to sponsor online Community College Open Houses this Spring, focusing on the following issues:

- Assessment and placement
- Credit for ESL courses
- Online/remote instruction
- Curriculum changes

We will continue to offer online Open Houses during the Fall, with dates and topics to be announced on our [MATSOL website](#). Our goal is to be a strong, unified voice that is effective in shaping and supporting the best practices for community college ESL students.

Following is a list of Community College Steering Committee members, with their college affiliations and a listing of the colleges for which they serve as contact:

Darlene Furdock - Middlesex, Northern Essex, Massasoit, Mt. Wachusett; Eileen Kelley - Holyoke, Greenfield, Springfield Tech, Berkshire; Bruce Riley - Cape Cod; Jennifer Nourse - Mass Bay; Anne Shull - Quinsigamond, Roxbury, Bristol; Teresa Cheung - North Shore, Cape Cod; Eileen Feldman - Bunker Hill.

For more information about the Community College ESOL SIG, please visit our [MATSOL website](#) or write Juanita Brunelle at jbrunelle@matsol.org.

EDUCATORS OF COLOR

The Educators of Color (EOC) SIG was organized at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year by MATSOL members Lonamae Shand and Yuiko Shimazu in order to provide a space for educators with common backgrounds, interests, and experiences to get together, build relationships, support one another, and share resources and ideas. During our hour-long meetings, beginning on December 6, we established our mission, set goals, and discussed issues of concern. We surveyed existing programs in our workplaces, explored available supports for our members, and looked at possibilities for sharing resources. We also reflected on our networking sessions at the 2019 MATSOL Conference and made plans for further networking at future MATSOL conferences.

[The Educators of Color SIG] surveyed existing programs in our workplaces [and] explored available supports for our members.

Our final session for the year, June 5, 2020, was a “listening room” session where members could share their thoughts about the pandemic and about the recent protests and demonstrations against social inequities. We reflected on remote learning and on the challenges we face in our respective roles as EOC in our workplaces. We plan to schedule additional listening sessions during the summer if members express a need.

For more information about the Educators of Color SIG, please visit our [MATSOL website](#).

ESL UNIT DEVELOPERS

The ESL Unit Developers SIG had our first two meetings this spring. We are a collaborative network for Massachusetts K-12 teachers and administrators who are interested in creating, peer-reviewing, implementing, and sharing ESL curriculum units that reflect WIDA ELD standards and MA DESE expectations.

[The K-12 Unit Developers SIG] has compiled a list of Distance Learning Lessons for ELs.

Thanks to the more than fifty ESL educators who participated, we are off to an exciting and productive start! Go to our [Curriculum Help Wanted spreadsheet](#) to join one of the curriculum development projects we're working on or to propose your own. We're currently establishing a process to review, pilot, and share our results. Also, during this challenging time, we have compiled a bank of [Distance Learning Lessons for ELs](#). We welcome you to use this resource and provide feedback or additional submissions.

In the coming year we're planning to offer training for MATSOL members who are interested in learning more about curriculum development. We welcome new members, but you don't have to be a member of our SIG to be a part of this work. Questions? Visit our [MATSOL website](#) or contact Jessica Nguy at jnguy@arlington.k12.ma.us.

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Our SIG has had an exciting first year exploring what family-school partnerships look like in various educational contexts. In November we shared information about our progress in forming English Learner Bilingual Education Advisory Councils (ELBACs) in our districts, highlighting the positive impact the councils were having while also addressing the challenges. In January and March we looked at frameworks for family engagement, beginning with Joyce Epstein's [Six Types of Parent Involvement](#) and ending with a powerful conversation with Dr. Bertha-Elena Rojas, who described the [Dual Capacity-Building Framework](#). The COVID-19 crisis led us to turn our attention to social emotional learning. Our final guests, Lisa Kingkade, SEI Director at Milford Public Schools, and Jennifer Cutler, Director of Counseling and SEL at Ashland Public Schools, provided information and resources to share with families during the pandemic.

In the coming year, we will learn how Massachusetts students and families are adapting to the re-opening of the school year. We will continue to invite guest speakers who provide insightful information and resources and trigger rich conversations. We have a lot to explore and learn from one another as we deepen our commitment to strengthening home-school partnerships.

For information about meeting times and how to join the Family-School Partnership SIG, please go to our [MATSOL website](#).

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

The Instructional Coaches SIG is a forum for PreK-12 instructional coaches, teacher leaders, and coordinators whose role includes coaching teachers on how best to meet the needs of multilingual learners. Each month's discussion focuses on a particular topic such as the roles and responsibilities of being a coach, how to support newcomers and teachers who work with newcomers, and, most recently, how to teach and support teachers remotely. Each month, one member volunteers to share a resource or best practice related to the topic at hand, and then we spend the rest of our time in small groups, discussing and networking.

Each month's discussion focuses on a particular topic such as, most recently, how to teach and support teachers remotely.

Some of our group members are continuing to meet over the summer to discuss Mica Pollock's book *Everyday Anti-Racism: Getting Real About Race in Schools*. The focus of our book study will be on the actions we, as coaches and teacher leaders, can take to move our schools and districts toward anti-racism.

For more information about the Instructional Coaches SIG, go to our [MATSOL website](#).

LOW-INCIDENCE PROGRAMS

The Low-Incidence SIG provides information and support to educators in low-incidence school districts about best practices, current research, state policies and procedures, and upcoming events. We gather and disseminate information, materials, and resources from MELLC meetings and DESE low-incidence meetings. We continue to work on formatting student progress reports and accompanying ELD strands, while helping low-incidence districts to fully understand and implement the various components of the LOOK Act.

This year we met twice in person and once online. We expanded our reach by setting up a satellite location in Dartmouth to provide easier access for our colleagues on the south coast.

For more information about the Low-Incidence SIG or to find out how to reach members of the Steering Committee, please visit our [MATSOL website](#).

MASSACHUSETTS ENGLISH LEARNER LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (MELLC)

See our report on [p. 24](#) of this issue.

PRIVATE LANGUAGE SCHOOLS


The Private Language Schools SIG held their spring workshop on Thursday, May 21. This year we were honored to have Melanie Johnson, founder of BounceEnglish, join us to share techniques for managing uncertainty and mitigating its impact. Given the difficulty of planning events in the current situation, our Steering Committee has decided to postpone any face-to-face events this year. We look forward to hosting the fall Community College/IEP conference again in Fall 2021, when we can all be together safely! For more information and notifications of meetings, please visit our [MATSOL website](#).

This spring, [the Teacher Educator SIG] collaborated on a blog post that addressed challenges associated with distance learning for ELs.

TEACHER EDUCATORS

The Teacher Educator SIG gives our members an opportunity to share best practices and collaborate on research and advocacy projects relating to the preparation of teachers of multilingual learners. This spring, we collaborated on a MATSOL blog post that addressed challenges associated with distance education for ELs.

Our plans for the 2020-2021 Academic Year include intentional collaboration and sharing of instructional strategies and content for our ESL, SEI, and Bilingual Education teacher education courses. We also plan to continue to work on group writing projects and advocacy efforts.

The Teacher Educator SIG meets online once a month throughout the academic year, on the third Monday of each month. Reminders and agenda are sent out via the Teacher Education e-list. All MATSOL members are welcome, but attendees must be registered members to access the meeting link. For more information, please visit our [MATSOL website](#). 

Get Involved in MATSOL!

JOIN A MATSOL SUBCOMMITTEE OR TASK FORCE

For members who would like to be more actively involved in MATSOL, we encourage you to become a conference proposal reader, to join a subcommittee or task force, or to consider creating a webinar on a topic of interest to our membership. Assistance is available for all these tasks. We are also always looking for volunteers to help plan and lead our SIGs. For the latest listing of volunteer opportunities, please go to our “Get Involved” webpage, <https://www.matsol.org/get-involved-with-matsol>, which has recently been updated.

SUBMIT TO MATSOL PUBLICATIONS

MATSOL E-BULLETIN

The MATSOL E-Bulletin is published monthly. It includes short (one-paragraph) notices relevant to EL/ESOL education in Massachusetts. Submission deadline: the 25th of each month for publication in the first week of the next month. For more details, see <http://www.matsol.org/matsol-e-bulletins>.

MATSOL CURRENTS

There's a lot going on in the world of TESOL and EL education, and we'd like all of it to be reflected in Currents. We want reviews of books and materials, reports on meetings and events, personal-experience accounts, and articles on everything of interest to MATSOL members: adult basic education, PreK-12 education, bilingual and dual-language programs, community outreach, ESL in higher education, educator-preparation programs, professional-development initiatives, Intensive English Institutes, private language schools, teaching ideas, profiles of and interviews with significant figures, and discussion of issues that our members should be aware of. We'd also love to publish stories from students — about their adjustment to life in New England and their experiences learning English in our English-language programs and elsewhere.

We welcome articles with scholarly content as well as those that share interesting experiences or give practical advice. If you have something to share, don't hesitate to send it to us at currents@matsol.org. We will work with you to get your article or report into good shape for publication. For more details and a copy of our submission guidelines, see <http://www.matsol.org/matsol-currents> or write to the editor, Mary Clark, at currents@matsol.org.

Sustaining an Asset-based Approach in the Midst of the Coronavirus

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I recently spoke with a teacher about a live teaching video call she had with her first-grade class in which one of her students joined along with two younger siblings. The student had to take care of her siblings, but she didn't want to miss class. This conversation made me think about how we respond to our students' circumstances. On the one hand, we can feel sorry for a student who has responsibilities at home and worry that she may not be able to keep up academically. However, taking a more positive perspective, we can see the strong motivation and management skills this first-grade student is building even while learning remotely. - Molly

REMOTE TEACHING AND LEARNING

As we move through this unprecedented time of remote teaching and learning and the uncertainty around the future of our educational system, we cannot lose sight of our multilingual learners' assets and what they have learned and will continue to learn during COVID-19 distance learning, away from our physical school buildings.

As educators begin to consider what the future of education will look like, we often worry how far behind our students may fall: *How are we going to catch students up? How are we going to mitigate the impact of English learning loss?* and *How are we going to handle students falling even further behind?* Questions like these stem from equity-driven concerns, but while they represent important concerns, a constant focus on the negative aspects of our current situation

ignores the meaningful learning that comes from the home experiences of our multilingual students. Deficit thinking leads to lower expectations and lack of access to grade-appropriate instruction and engagement for many students, including multilingual learners (TNTP, 2018).

As members of the WIDA consortium, Massachusetts educators have long focused on bringing an asset-based approach into their classrooms. By encouraging students to see their own experiences as assets, we hope to give them the power to unleash their learning skills (WIDA, 2019a). We want to encourage educators to transfer this “can-do” approach to distance education. Below are some of the ways that our students can continue to learn while they are physically away from the classroom:

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT DURING SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

While it is natural in an English-only school environment to focus on the loss of English-language skills (and we agree that is a concern), many of our students are now reconnecting to their home languages in ways that will be positive for their future educational development. They may be connecting more closely with family members and with their family’s cultural background. Research cited in USDOE (n.d.) has identified many benefits of bilingualism, including stronger cognitive development and flexibility in thinking and self-control. Heritage language development, in particular, is connected to a stronger sense of identity, which can lead to greater interest and motivation. Moreover, learning that happens in all of a student’s languages has been shown to lead to deeper understanding.

Many teachers and family members have noticed that, freed from expectations about what they are “supposed” to be learning, students are exploring subjects that truly interest them. Some students are making TikTok videos at home, which might not initially seem like serious learning until you consider the self-management skills that go into producing a video, not to mention the technological skills needed to use these online platforms. Some students are spending more time playing outside or creating art or improving their collaboration skills by playing video games. No longer forced to spend many hours a day learning what someone else has decided is important, students are free to decide for themselves what is meaningful. When students are engaged in activities that interest them, they develop a host of valuable language and literacy skills: digital literacy, “tier three” vocabulary words (often bilingually!), and the use of explaining-and-describing language to share their newfound knowledge with family members (also bilingually).

SELF-AWARENESS AND SOCIOEMOTIONAL SKILLS

Our students are being asked to do a lot of self-management in both their schoolwork and their home lives. In school, students are often told what to do as well as when and how to do it. This kind of structure isn't possible in the current environment. Students are being given more independence while their family members are working either inside or outside the home. Many are taking care of themselves in ways they may not have experienced before. They are making decisions and managing their own time. This leads to greater independence, as students figure out how they learn best or sometimes, even more importantly, what impedes their learning. Some students are learning that they really need structure and support, while others learn that they do best when given the freedom to choose their own structure.

Students will undoubtedly have a variety of different experiences. They may have seen their families dealing with problems they have not had to manage before. Some are being asked to care for siblings or other family members. Others are working to support their families financially. Still others are spending more time with family members, creating new and deeper relationships. We have to be empathetic when discovering and building upon the strength and resilience that our students have been finding within themselves.

BRIDGING STUDENT HOME-LEARNING EXPERIENCES WITH FORMAL INSTRUCTION.

It's not enough to simply acknowledge or be aware of what students are learning during this coronavirus time; we must also build on these experiences and assets in our own instruction. Below we offer suggestions on how to do this:


1. *Allow students to share their experiences.* When we are finally able to come back together, in whatever capacity that is, we must provide time for students to tell their stories. Our students will need space to reflect on the changes that were suddenly forced upon them. *What did they do during this time? Did they experience grief or loss? Did they build a greater connection to their families? Did they discover a new interest?* By allowing space for students to share, teachers will gain essential insight into their students' experiences, while helping to rebuild the community we will all need as we return to a new reality.
2. *Encourage self-reflection about learning.* Our students should be encouraged to identify what they have learned about themselves as learners. *What worked? What didn't work? What motivated them?* Also important in this process is that teachers need to *listen* and use this information to inform their own practices. Some students may have found that they learn better in the company of their peers or with more direct teacher feedback. Others may have

thrived with the opportunity to self-manage and work remotely. We have to help our students build on their new understanding of their own strengths.

3. *Learn from our students.* As we listen to our students' experiences and what they learned about themselves, we need to take note: *Are there interests we didn't know our students had? Are there ways to encourage students to continue pursuing their interests? What motivated and engaged students remotely? What didn't? Are there ways to incorporate into our learning standards the funds of knowledge our students will be bringing with them as they return to school?* We must use this time to self-reflect and figure out ways to take a more Universal-Design-for-Learning (CAST, n.d.) and Can-Do (WIDA, 2019b) approach to curricular development and instructional decisions.
4. *Hold students to a high academic standard.* We cannot fall into the trap of simplifying grade-level work because students are perceived as being "behind." Our students will still need cognitively appropriate work and assignments, as well as high expectations. We will have to figure out where our students are academically and consider what learning is truly essential: *What are the most important skills the students need in order to be successful? How can we differentiate learning for different students while holding all of them to high standards? How can we keep our students engaged and motivated?* We must continue to allow our students to try out new knowledge and skills and to grapple with challenging assignments.
5. *Maintain strong home-school connections.* Caregivers will have become more involved in their students' learning during this time, and we should encourage their continued involvement. Family members can offer a different perspective as to what engaged or motivated their students while they were learning at home: *What did they learn about their students? What do they want for their students? How do they believe they can support learning?* Many educators are learning to use translation services to connect with multilingual families and talk with them about their experience having their students learn at home. Information can be gathered through surveys, parent/teacher groups, open houses, phone calls, or text messages. Caregivers should be viewed as real partners in shaping the educational experiences of their students; this is a perfect opportunity to ensure that parents are given a voice as we move forward.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Only when we expand upon the definition of what it means to learn will we

start to see that our students are learning a great number of things while staying home. Our students will not all have had the exact same experiences, but all of their varying experiences will have had a significant impact on the new ways of thinking and learning that they will bring with them when they return to school. 

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High Interest, Low Readability¹ Books for Bilingual Learners

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AS teachers of emergent bilingual students, we have a responsibility to support our students' literacy development by connecting them with appropriate and engaging materials for independent reading. In addition to broadening students' worlds and bringing personal fulfillment, extensive reading helps students develop fluency and build vocabulary. (Pilinut Press, n.d.). However, students can't access these benefits if the text is too difficult for their current reading level. To avoid the discouraging "frustration level" of reading, students need a text that can be read independently with at least 90% accuracy (Wright, 2015).



It can be challenging for the teacher to find texts that are both engaging and at an appropriate readability level. This is especially true for older newcomers and other middle- and high-school students still working to develop English literacy; books that are both readable and appropriate to their interests and maturity levels may be in scarce supply and difficult for students and teachers to identify. On [pages 40-47](#) below, we provide a starter list of diverse high-interest, low-readability books for middle grade and young adult students.

The books in our list are organized by Lexile score. The Lexile Framework for Reading is a widely used educational tool for matching students with books

¹ The term "low readability," in this context, is used to mean "accessible to students at a low level of reading proficiency." This is the opposite of its meaning in the field of writing and composition, where it means "not easy to read." See, for example, <https://www.grammarly.com/blog/readability-scores>.

that are appropriate to their reading level. Texts are assigned Lexile text scores on the basis of word frequency and sentence length, with scores ranging from below 0L (lowest reading level) to 2000L (highest reading level). The Lexile company evaluates books for over 200 publishing companies. Students, also, receive Lexile reading scores through a variety of state or private assessments that are aligned with the Lexile system. Lexile recommends that students look for texts with Lexile measures that fall in a range of 100L below to 50L above their current reading level. For example, a student with a Lexile reading score of 550L would look for books with Lexile text measures ranging from 450L to 600L. Of course, no algorithm can perfectly predict a text's actual readability for a given learner. Many variables can skew the results; for example, a student might connect deeply with a book that falls outside of their recommended Lexile range. However, Lexile scores can serve as a helpful starting point for identifying accessible books for emergent bilingual students.

In addition to numerical readability scores, Lexile text measures may also include codes that indicate elements of the text's content or intended usage. For example, many of the books in our list are marked "HL," which means that they have been identified as high interest/low readability. In other words, these books contain content that is appropriate for seventh grade and above and have a readability score that makes them accessible to readers who are reading at an elementary-grade level. Our list also includes books that have not been officially assigned the HL code, but which have numerical ratings in the elementary range (i.e., below 900L) with content that we consider to be of interest for middle- and high-school students.

There are also some books in our list with the code "GN," which designates graphic novels, and "NP," which designates non-prose. One graphic novel is coded "N/A" because it is graphics-only and contains no text of any sort.

To compile this guide, we used a myriad of resources. To start, we included books that we ourselves have used in the past that were either HL coded or under the 900L range. We then reached out to our colleagues to get recommendations of accessible and interesting books that they have used in their classrooms. We also consulted resources such as Social Justice Books, a list compiled by Teaching for Change, a nonprofit that recommends multicultural and social justice resources to educators and families. And, finally, we reviewed a list of books compiled by Girls of the Crescent (Nasiri, 2019), a nonprofit that aims to increase diversity in literature by providing students with books about female Muslim characters.

Most of the books in our list have adolescent protagonists who are immigrants

and/or people of color, whose experiences may be especially relevant to our students. By encouraging students to engage with culturally relevant literature, we can tap into their existing cultural resources and send the important message that their backgrounds and experiences are valuable and have a place in the classroom (Stewart et. al, 2015). We hope this resource will help you connect your students with diverse and relatable books to inspire their development as readers! **C**

A LIST OF BOOKS BY LEXILE LEVEL

RACHEL GRAUBART, JILLIAN MATTERN, LINDSAY PAGANO

Less Than 500L

Lexile Level

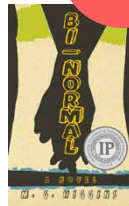
HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

In each box you will see the title, number of pages, author, and a short summary about the book. The Lexile level will be found in the circle with each book.

To find out more about a given book, go to [Google Books Advanced Search](#) and search for the book by title.

BI-NORMAL BY M. G. HIGGIN, 191 PAGES

A popular football player, Brett, grapples with his sexuality after meeting Zach. He thinks he might be bi, but he doesn't know what to do about it.



HL330L

THE ARRIVAL BY SHAUN TAN, 128 PAGES

A wordless graphic novel about a man who leaves his wife and daughter to board a steamship to a new country. The story follows his immigration journey to create a better life for his family.



N/A

GN420L

EL DEAFO BY CECE BELL, 248 PAGES

In this graphic novel memoir, Bell shares the story of her hearing loss and her experiences of using a hearing aid through goofy characters and the aid of superpowers.



BRAVE BY SVETLANA CHMAKOVA, 248 PAGES

Jensen dreams of being a big hero, but in his real middle school life, he is not. When two girls recruit him to work at the school paper, Jensen's social difficulties suddenly ramp up, creating all kinds of new problems.



GN 360L

I WAS THEIR AMERICAN DREAM BY MALAKA GHARIB, 160 PAGES

Malaka humorously retells stories of grappling with identity and belonging as she grows up in a diverse American city with her Filipino mother and spends summers in Egypt with her father.



GN490L

BOLD WORDS BY M. G. HIGGINS, 73 PAGES

After getting fired from her job, Flo learns to type and meets some strong, brave women. From here, her life begins to change.



HL200L

500L-600L

JUVIE BY PAUL KROPP, 87 PAGES

An innocent team is framed and sent to juvenile detention for a crime he didn't commit. He learns to survive in the harsh and unfamiliar world of juvie.



500L

HL590L

AKATA WITCH BY NNEDI OKORAFOR, 349 PAGES

• "Nigerian Harry Potter"
American born Sunny lives in Nigeria. She identifies as black, but is albino, and never is able to find a place to fit in -- until she finds out she has magical powers. Sunny joins a group of magical students to study magic and help track down a magical criminal.



B NEGATIVE BY VICKI GRANT, 136 PAGES

When Paddy takes a blood test and learns the identity of his biological father, he struggles with the implications for his identity and his family.



HL510L

HL590L

SERAFINA'S PROMISE BY ANN E. BURG, 304 PAGES

Serafina has a dream to go to school and be a doctor with her best friend Julie Marie. But in her rural village outside of Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, she faces many obstacles--money, unending chores, and the natural disasters that stand in the way of her dream.



HL550L

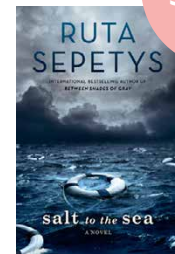
WATCHED BY MARINA BUDHOS, 272 PAGES

After the cops coerce Naeem into surveilling his Muslim neighbors, he struggles to know what the right thing to do is--and that there may be a fine line between protecting and betraying his community.



SALT TO THE SEA BY RUTO SEPETYS, 400 PAGES

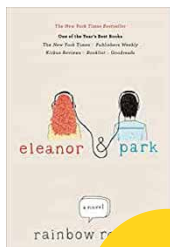
At the end of WWII, three Prussian refugees' paths cross on a ship towards freedom. They find themselves struggling for survival and finding the courage to trust one another.



560L

ELEANOR AND PARK BY RAINBOW ROWELL, 328 PAGES

This romance novel tells the dual narratives of Eleanor and Park, two star-crossed misfits in Omaha.



580L

HL580L

FIREWALL BY SEAN RODMAN, 136 PAGES

After his parents' divorce and a move to a new town, Josh becomes immersed in a virtual reality video game that seems to be eerily connected to events taking place in his own town.



500L-600L Continued

N/A

YES, I'M HOT IN THIS: THE HILARIOUS TRUTH ABOUT LIFE IN A HIJAB BY HUDA FAHMY, 192 PAGES

Recommended by [Girls of the Crescent](#)

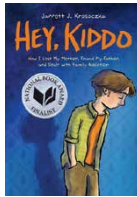
In a series of funny and honest comics, the author tells true stories of the misconceptions she's faced as a Muslim American navigating the intersections of her identity in Michigan.



HL510L

HEY KIDDO: HOW I LOST MY MOTHER, FOUND MY FATHER, AND DEALT WITH FAMILY ADDICTION BY JARRETT J. KROSOCZKA, 320 PAGES

Jarrett's mother is an addict and his father has been missing for years. He lives with his grandparents, tries his best to pretend his life is normal, and discovers drawing as an outlet to process his pain. As a teen, Jarrett decides to begin looking for his father and figuring out the truth of his family.



AMERICAN BORN CHINESE BY GENE LUEN YANG, 240 PAGES

This graphic novel brings together the stories of three characters in an exciting modern fable. There's Jin Wang, the only Chinese-American student at his new school; the Monkey King, hero of an ancient Chinese fable; and Chin-kee, a negative Chinese stereotype personified.

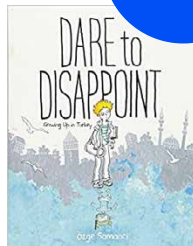
GN530L



HL570L

DARE TO DISAPPOINT: GROWING UP IN TURKEY BY OZGE SAMANCI, 200 PAGES

Growing up in Turkey, Ozge dreams of futures that her practical parents don't approve of.



HL600L

AMAL UNBOUND BY AISHA SAEED, 240 PAGES

• Recommended by [Girls of the Crescent](#)

12-year-old Amal is a Pakistani girl who dreams of being a teacher. But when she insults a member of the ruling family, she is taken to work for them in indentured servitude. Amal learns to navigate the life of a servant, and that nothing will change if she and the other servants don't find a way to stand up.

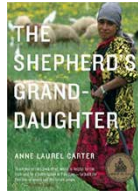


THE SHEPHERD'S GRANDDAUGHTER BY ANNE LAUREL CARTER, 224 PAGES

600L

- Recommended by Girls of the Crescent

Amani, a young Palestinian girl, learned to herd sheep from her grandfather in the land her family has grazed for generations. After he dies, she struggles to balance her responsibility to her family and the sheep and the dangers of the Israeli occupation. Together with a American boy visiting his father, Amani discovers her grandfather's secret meadow, and the answers it holds.



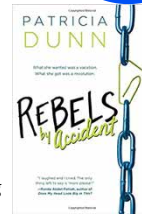
600L-700L

HL610L

REBELS BY ACCIDENT BY PATRICIA DUNN, 320 PAGES

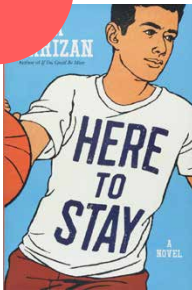
- Recommended by Girls of the Crescent

After getting arrested at a party, Egyptian-American Mariam and her best friend get sent to live with her grandmother in Egypt. While struggling with mixed feelings about her grandmother and her Muslim identity, Mariam finds herself getting pulled into the brewing Egyptian revolution.



HL690L

HERE TO STAY BY SARA FARIZAN, 272 PAGES



After Bijan makes the winning basket in a varsity playoff game, a cyberbully sends out a photo making him look like a terrorist. The school promises to investigate, while Bijan just wants to sweep the incident under the rug.

670L

THE FIRST RULE OF PUNK BY CELIA C. PEREZ, 310 PAGES



12-year-old Mexican-American Malú moves to a new town and breaks the school dress code with her punk attire. She finds her way by diving into the punk scene, starting a band, and standing up against the administration for the right of self-expression.

HL760L

LUCKY BROKEN GIRL BY RUTH BEHAR, 256 PAGES

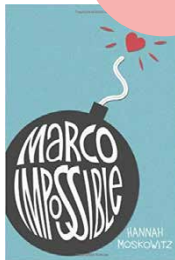
Ruthie, whose Cuban-Jewish family recently immigrated to New York City, is just starting to settle into her new life when she has an accident and ends up in a full body cast. Confined to her bedroom, she still finds her heart and mind growing as she observes and interacts with the world and people around her.



660L

MARCO IMPOSSIBLE BY HANNAH MOSKOWITZ, 256 PAGES

Thirteen-year-old Marco and Stephen are known for pulling heists and accomplishing missions at school. But when they learn that Benji, an exchange student and Marco's crush, is going to be playing bass at the high school prom, they plan their biggest heist yet--breaking into the prom so that Marco can declare his love for Benji on stage.



JACKPOT BY NIC STONE, 368 PAGES

When no one claims the winning lottery ticket at the Gas-n-Go where Rico works after school, she hopes she might get a share of the winnings if she can hunt the rightful winner down. She teams up with a wealthy--and handsome--classmate to investigate the situation.



670L

HL690L

THE LOVE AND LIES OF RUKHSANA ALI BY SABINA KHAN, 336 PAGES

When 17-year-old Rukhsana's traditional Bangladeshi parents catch her kissing her girlfriend, they send her to stay with her extended family in Bangladesh. Rukhsana finds herself immersed in a traditional religious society of arranged marriages and intolerance, but also the love of her grandmother and cousins. Reading her grandmother's old diary helps her find the courage to fight for her own future.



600L-700L Continued

HL670L

THIS SIDE OF HOME BY RENEE WATSON, 250 PAGES

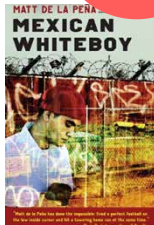
Maya and her twin sister, Nikki, have always been close. But as their neighborhood becomes more gentrified, Maya struggles to hold onto her black heritage and community pride as Nikki is enticed by the new trends. Can Maya maintain her bond with her sister and with her changing home?



680L

MEXICAN WHITEBOY BY MATT DE LA PENNA, 249 PAGES

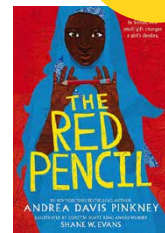
Danny, a half-Mexican baseball player, goes to a private school where they don't expect much from him beyond baseball. Danny's father gets sent back to Mexico and he spends the summer there. There he faces part of his identities that he doesn't want to uncover and also makes a new friendship he never imagined.



HL620L

THE RED PENCIL BY ANDREA DAVIS PINKNEY & SHANE EVANS

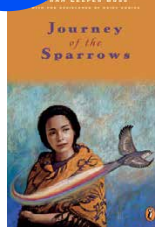
Amira turns twelve and is old enough for new responsibilities and school, but her dream does not become a reality. Her village in Sudan is attacked and she is forced to walk to a refugee camp. Here she gets the gift of a red pencil that opens her mind to new possibilities.



660L

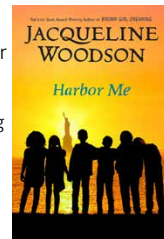
JOURNEY OF THE SPARROWS BY FRAN LEEPER BUSS, 160 PAGES

15 year old Maria, her older sister, Julia, their little brother, Oscar, and a boy named Tomas endure the journey from El Salvador to Chicago. In Chicago, the struggle to find work and live in fear of deportation to El Salvador. The story follows their heartbreaking and hopeful story.



HARBOR ME BY JACQUELINE WOODSON, 192 PAGES

Six middle school students meet for a weekly chat without adults and they discover it's a safe space for them to talk about what's bothering them: everything from a parent's deportation to incarceration to racial profiling to changing socioeconomic status. The group realizes when they are together, they can express their feelings and fears.



630L

AMERICAN STREET BY IBI AANU ZOBOI, 336 PAGES

Fabiola Toussaint thought that leaving Port-au-Prince, Haiti would finally lead her to find a good life. When they leave and come to the US, her mother is detained by immigration. Fabiola is left on Detroit's west side with her three American cousins to tackle a new school and romance all on her own.



HL690L

600L-700L Continued

HL650L

THE SUN IS ALSO A STAR
BY NICOLA YOON, 384
PAGES

Natasha, a level headed girl is not the type to fall in love at first sight on the streets of New York City. Especially not when her family is about to be deported to Jamaica in twelve hours. Daniel, a good son, good student, and someone who never is a dreamer, meets Natasha on the street and fate ensues.



HL660L

JUST JULIAN BY MARKUS
HARDWOOD-JONES, 168
PAGES

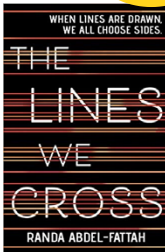
19 year old Julian feels depressed after years of bullying at school, until he meets Romeo at a party and shares a kiss with him. Romeo has a group of friends who are intolerant and homophobic. The two begin to fall in love, but take part in a vicious fight with Romeo's old friends that put them in the hospital. The two boys then take a stand for their right to respect.



HL690L

THE LINES WE CROSS BY
RANDA ABDEL-FATTAH,
400 PAGES

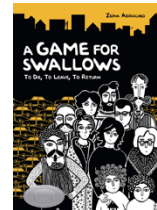
Michael, who comes from a conservative, anti-immigration family, finds his values questioned when he falls for Mina, an Afghan refugee. The two must navigate the politics and their own identities to see if they can be together, and Michael must make a decision on where he stands.



GN680L

A GAME FOR SWALLOWS
BY ZEINA ABIRACHED, 188
PAGES

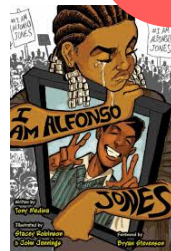
In this graphic novel, the civil war in Lebanon has been happening on and off for six years, so it's a normal part of life for Zeina and her family. One day, Zeina's parents don't return home from a visit to the different part of the city and her neighbors take Zeina and her brother in. Together they try to make it through safely.



GN640L

I AM ALFONSO JONES BY
TONY MEDINA, 168 PAGES

In this graphic novel, Alfonso Jones can't wait to play the role of Hamlet in his school's hip hop version of the play. As he is buying his suit, an off duty police officer thinks a clothes hanger is a gun and shoots him. Alfonso dies and wakes up in the afterlife where other victims of police shootings teach him about the spirit world while his family fights for justice for him in the streets.



640L

FRONT DESK BY KELLY
YANG, 298 PAGES

Mia lives in a motel with her immigrant parents where they clean rooms and she manages the front desk. Mia's parents hide immigrants for free in empty hotel rooms and could get in a lot of trouble if someone finds out. Mia wants to be a writer but English is not her first language and her mom says she should stick to math. Will Mia be able to keep her secrets, her job, and achieve her dreams?



700L-800L

730L

IT AIN'T SO AWFUL FALAFEL
BY FIROOZEH DUMAS, 378 PAGES

- Recommended by Girls of the Crescent

Zomorod is the new kid as her family just moved to California's Newport Beach. She decides to change her name to Cindy and change her personality to fit in. It's the late 1970s, and fitting in is more difficult as conflicts between Iran and the US are rising. Cindy tries to fit in, but faces anti-Iran sentiments that affect her.



750L

THE EPIC FAIL OF ARTURO ZAMORA BY PABLO CARTAYA, 256 PAGES

13-year-old Arturo balances his summer job, helping out Abuela, fighting against developers in his town, and falling in love with a poetry enthusiast and--and with poetry--during the summer in Miami.



HL700L

THE GAUNTLET BY KARUNA RIAZI, 298 PAGES

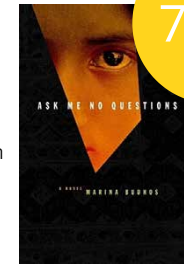
- Recommended by Girls of the Crescent
- "Steampunk Jumanji with a Middle Eastern flair"

12 year old Farah and her two friends in New York city get trapped in a board game and they need to defeat the evil game creator to save themselves, and their families trapped inside. The trio, along with the help from some friends they meet along the way, fight off many creatures along their journey. Will they defeat the creator of the game?



ASK ME NO QUESTIONS BY MARINA BUDHOS, 176 PAGES

- Recommended by Girls of the Crescent
- 14 year old Nadira is Bangladeshi American and lives in the US with an expired visa. After 9/11, her father is arrested and detained. Nadira and her sister are expected to carry on in Queens without him, but Nadira struggles.

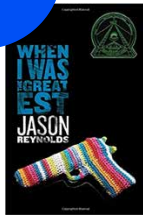


790L

790L

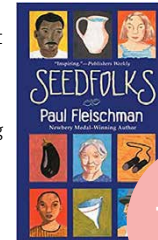
WHEN I WAS THE GREATEST BY JASON REYNOLDS, 176 PAGES

The story follows the life of three teens in Bed Stuy, New York. There's Ali, who is juggling boxing, school, and helping out at home, his best friend Noodles, who always seems to be looking for trouble, and Noodles's brother, Needles, who has a syndrome and gets these ticks and says some wild things. The three boys find themselves in the wrong place, at the wrong time with some not so friendly people.



SEEDFOLKS BY PAUL FLEISCHMAN, 112 PAGES

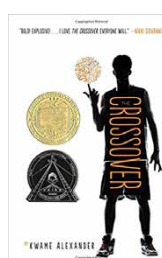
This novel follows thirteen different strangers in an immigrant filled neighborhood in Cleveland through their journey to transform their community. It all starts with a young Vietnamese girl, Kim, planting six lima bean seeds in a vacant lot. The story then follows the lives of different strangers whose stories all connect and end up bringing their community together.



710L

THE CROSSOVER BY KWAME ALEXANDER, 245 PAGES

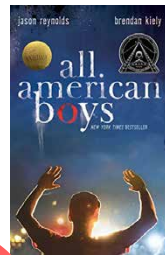
Josh and Jordan, twin brothers, must realize how they are growing up, on and off the basketball court, and growing apart. They realize breaking the rules comes at a terrible price as a major event changes their entire family. (This novel is written in verse).



750L

ALL AMERICAN BOYS BY JASON REYNOLDS, 316 PAGES

Rashad reaches for a bag of chips in a bodega and ends up being arrested by a police officer named Paul who accuses him of shoplifting because he was Black. The video clip of the brutality ends up on the news and causes a debate in the larger community and across the nation. Quinn, a white student and Rashad's teammate/classmate, as well as son figure to Paul, is the only witness and has to make decisions he has never been forced to before.



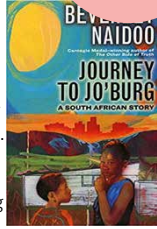
770L

700L-800L

JOURNEY TO JO'BURG BY BEVERLEY NAIDOO, 96 PAGES

760L

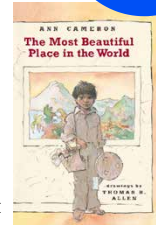
Thirteen year old Naledi and her younger brother Tiro live in a small village in South Africa while their mother lives and works in Johannesburg. When their baby sister becomes sick they set off on a journey to find their mother and bring her back. On their journey they realize the dangers of their country and individuals struggle for freedom during Apartheid.



THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE IN THE WORLD BY ANN CAMERON, 64 PAGES

750L

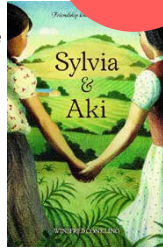
Abandoned by his mother and father, seven year old Juan lives with his grandmother in Guatemala and shines shoes. He is able to pursue his dream of going to school after gaining the courage to ask to go, fearing his grandmother would say no. Juan learns the importance of standing up for himself and courage it takes to speak up.



SYLVIA AND AKI BY WINIFRED CONKLING, 168 PAGES

760L

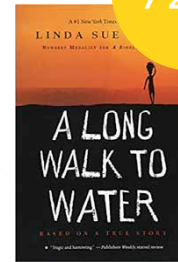
Two girls' paths cross in California during WWII. Aki's family is sent to a Japanese internment camp when all she wanted to do was stay on her family farm and finish school that year. Sylvia's father goes to court to challenge racial segregation in schools when Sylvia is sent to a "Mexican" school and not allowed to go to the same school Aki attended. The novel covers the court case that led to the desegregation of California schools and builds a case to end school segregation nationally.



A LONG WALK TO WATER BY LINDA SUE PARK, 128 PAGES

720L

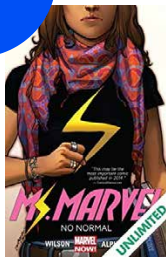
The stories follow two children in Sudan: A girl named Nya in 2008 walking hours every day to fetch water, and a boy named Salva in 1985 walking the continent as a refugee seeking his family. Salva becomes one of the "Lost Boys" of Sudan as he looks for a place to stay, while facing hardships along the way. His story goes on to connect with Nya's in a moving way.



800L+ and Plays

GN850L

MS. MARVEL VOLUME 1: NO NORMAL BY ADRIAN ALPHONA, G. WILLOW WILSON, 120 PAGES



• Recommended by [Girls of the Crescent](#)
Marvel comics remakes Ms. Marvel as Kamala Khan, a Muslim girl from Jersey City, New Jersey. Kamala discovers she has superpowers and unlocks a secret behind them. Will she be able to handle her new powers or will they be too much for her?

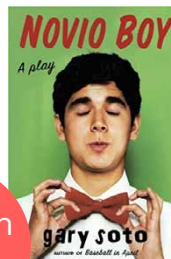
ESCAPE FROM ALEPPO BY N.H. SENZAI, 256 PAGES

880L

It's December 17th, 2010 and Nadia is turning twelve and the Arab Spring is just beginning. Anti-government protests happen in Syria and a civil war begins. Her family decides to leave Syria for their safety. The book follows her journey and gives insight on the refugee crisis happening.



NOVIO BOY BY GARY SOTO, 96 PAGES



NP (Non Prose)

Rudy, a ninth grader, has a date with an eleventh grader, Patricia. Now he needs money, things to talk about, and maturity to make it a success. In this one-act play, Rudy gets guidance from numerous people in his life to make his date one to remember.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rachel Graubart is completing her Master's of Education in TESOL at Boston University. She will pursue a career as an elementary school teacher of multilingual students. She is passionate about using authentic texts as a vehicle for culturally relevant pedagogy.

Jillian Mattern is also pursuing a Masters of Education in TESOL at Boston University. She has taught English in Japan and has worked with emergent bilingual high schoolers in Boston. She looks forward to bringing her passion for asset-based and justice-driven language education to her future work as an ESL teacher for multilingual public school students.

Lindsay Pagano is also a student in the graduate TESOL Program (5-12) at Boston University. Through previous service with two AmeriCorps programs in the Boston Public Schools (City Year and the New American Integration Program), she has discovered a passion for teaching multilingual students and advocating for immigrant families outside the classroom. She is looking forward to her first year of teaching in the fall and is hoping to create an inclusive, equitable, social-justice-based, and multilingual classroom where students can discover parts of their cultural and linguistic identities.

The Turn-and-Talk Template: An Effective Way to Engage ELs in Academic Conversation

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Nicoleta Filimon

nicoletafilimon@hotmail.com



E **DUCATORS** at all levels sometimes struggle to engage their ELs in effective peer-to-peer interaction. Remote learning during the coronavirus crisis has made this an even greater challenge, especially for students with limited or interrupted education (SLIFE). In this article, we will present an effective and easy-to-use resource — the Turn-and-Talk Template — which we have developed as a way to engage our ELs, including our SLIFE students, in academic discourse.

Even in a traditional classroom setting, ELs do not have sufficient opportunities for speaking. Soto & Singer (2020) have shown that academic oral language output by ELs amounts to only 5-10% of the school day (p. 94). As one teacher noted, “The person talking the most is learning the most, and I’m doing most of the talking in the classroom” (Soto & Singer, 2020, p. 92). Amplify that by social distancing during the COVID-19 crisis and it becomes even more of a challenge to give students quality speaking practice. How can we get our ELs to do more of the talking?

One strategy is to engage students in two-way tasks that require them to negotiate meaning and establish a shared understanding (Zwiers, 2008; Zwiers & Crawford, 2014). Drawing on Zwiers’ and Crawford’s (2014) work, we have developed the Turn-and-Talk Template as a tool to maximize speaking in every class, regardless of grade level or content area. This tool doubles as a formative assessment, providing teachers with valuable information about their students’

progress in both language skills and subject matter content. We try to embed turn-and-talk opportunities at various points throughout the lesson.

The Turn-and-Talk Template can be used in a variety of ways, but the first step is to prepare the questions and corresponding sentence stems, being as strategic as possible about the types of questions and the key vocabulary you want to focus on. The next step is deciding how you will share this template with students. One option is to display the template using PowerPoint, Google Slides, or a presentation platform of your choice. However, we usually print it out so that the students can use it as a reference while speaking. Later, as an extension activity or homework exercise, they can use their hard copy to write down their responses. During remote learning, we share our screen to display the Turn-and-Talk Template, have students take a photo of it with their smartphones, and then ask pairs of students to carry out the discussion in small breakout rooms. The added step of taking a photo was necessary because on most online meeting platforms it is not possible to continue screen sharing while in breakout rooms.

Here is one example lesson we have used, in which the students are asked to talk about people who have inspired them:

TURN AND TALK TEMPLATE 1: INSPIRATIONAL PEOPLE

Student A	Student B
1. Who is an inspirational person to you?	An inspirational person to me is....
2. What are his/her achievements?	His/her achievements are ...
3. What challenges did he/she have to overcome?	He/she had to overcome many challenges such as....
4. Why is this person inspirational to you?	This person is inspirational to me because...
5. How does this person inspire you?	This person inspires me by....

Every lesson begins by pre-teaching the essential vocabulary from the lesson or topic we are studying — not more than five words or expressions for each lesson. In this example, “Inspirational People,” the key vocabulary words are

inspire/inspirational, challenges, overcome, and achievements. To do this, we display the vocabulary word in a graphic organizer that requires the students to generate examples and nonexamples, draw a picture, and write a student-friendly definition. We give examples to show how the words are used in sentences and provide first-language support as needed. We then include these words in the Turn-and-Talk template and writing prompts. Each time the students encounter these same vocabulary words, they gain a deeper understanding.

Following this short period of direct instruction, the teacher says, "Students, now we will take some time to turn and talk about inspirational people in our lives. Who has inspired you? Why?" To model the use of the template, the teacher chooses a student to be "Student A" and ask the first question, "Who is an inspirational person to you?" The teacher then takes the role of Student B and answers, "An inspirational person to me is my mother." Student A would then proceed to the next question: "What are her achievements?" and the teacher would respond, "Her achievements are raising three children while studying to complete her college degree." After this modeling of the template, the students would then turn and talk to one another. Here's an example similar to what we have heard in our classrooms:

Student A: Who is an inspirational person to you?

Student B: An inspirational person to me is my brother.

Student A: What are his achievements?

Student B: His achievements are [getting] a good profession to help our family.

Student A: What challenges did he have to overcome?

Student B: He had to overcome many challenges such as com[ing] to the United States and learn[ing] a new language.

Student A: How does this person inspire you?

Student B: This person inspires me by working hard and helping me and my brothers.

At this point, the students would switch roles and repeat the process. If desired, the teacher may ask some pairs of students to present or share out to the whole class. This exercise can be used to prepare the students to begin researching and reading biographies of inspirational figures from history. After completing their research, they can return to this same Turn-and-Talk Template, speaking this time about the person they researched.

In addition to the vocabulary of a particular lesson or topic, the Turn-and-

Talk Templates are used to practice terminology that is prevalent throughout academic discourse. For example, the following template, “Food and Health,” relies on the vocabulary of observations and inferences, using words like *see*, *notice*, *observe*, and *infer*. This vocabulary would be part of many Turn-and-Talk Templates about various subjects, and the sentence stems *I can see...; I notice...; I observe...; I can infer...* would stay consistent from lesson to lesson. This consistency helps students internalize the academic language so that when the sentence stems are eventually removed they are able to formulate their own responses using academic language.

TURN AND TALK TEMPLATE 2: HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Student A	Student B
1. Look at the food pyramid, what types of foods do you see?	I can see... I observe...
2. What are some examples of carbohydrates?	Some examples are... I know these are carbohydrates because...
3. What are some examples of dairy products?	Some examples are... I know these are dairy products because...
4. What can you infer about foods that are high in fats, sugars, and salt?	Based on the food pyramid, I can infer...
5. What is a typical food from your country? What types of nutrients from the food pyramid are in this meal?	A typical food from my country is... ... contains many nutrients. For example, ...

For this lesson, we would be adding the new vocabulary words *nutrients*, *carbohydrates*, *dairy*, and *fat*, which would be pre-taught in the same way as for the lesson on “Inspirational People.”

Notice that, in this case, the questions in the template are based on a text the students are studying rather than on their own background knowledge and experience, as in the “Inspirational People” example. Depending on the level of our ELs and their needs, we may be able to select a text from a biology textbook, an informational text designed for ELs (Cengage and Benchmark

Publishers have many), or we may have to adapt or write the text ourselves with input from our colleagues. As the students read the text, they re-encounter the same vocabulary words and gain a deeper understanding of their meaning.


To meet the needs of students at various proficiency levels, the teacher can adapt the sentence stems in the Student B column or remove them entirely. For example, for newcomer ELs you may include only one sentence stem (I can see...), while for ELs at higher proficiency levels you may include all three (I can see...; I observe...; I notice...) or none at all, challenging the students to apply their knowledge of academic language and use it appropriately. However, we recommend starting with more scaffolds and, as the students progress, gradually reducing the sentence stems so they can internalize them and use them without support.

In a normal classroom setting, the Turn-and-Talk Template can be varied by using it in conjunction with other strategies such as “Slide and Glide” and “Concentric Circles,” to name just two. In “Slide and Glide,” students are assembled in two lines facing each other. They pair off with the student directly opposite and ask and respond to the first question on the template before sliding to the right. One line remains stationary so that each time the process is repeated students are speaking to a different partner. “Concentric Circles” is a similar process in which students form an inner and outer circle facing each other. The inner circle stays stationary while the other circle rotates to the right after each question. The benefit of these strategies is that students get to repeat the dialog many times and have the opportunity to engage with many members of the class instead of just one. The Turn-and-Talk Template can also be used as a “Think, Write, Pair, Share” activity, by having students *write* their responses in the “Student B” column and share their answers with a partner. However, for SLIFE, we recommend that educators focus first on doing the activity orally and only later complete the template in writing.

The template is also suitable for remote learning and can be used with various online platforms such as Zoom (especially in breakout rooms), Google Meet, or even FaceTime phone conversations. To do this, we recommend integrating the Turn-and-Talk Template into your lesson on PowerPoint, Google Slides, or other presentation platform and then sharing your screen with the students. As mentioned above, we found success by having students take a photo of the template with their smartphones and then move to small breakout rooms to practice. We also had success using the template in conjunction with Flipgrid,

The benefit of these strategies is that students get to repeat the dialog many times and . . . engage with many members of the class instead of just one.

a website that allows students to create short video messages in response to a prompt, which they can then share with their peers. Students are able to watch their classmates' videos and hear several repetitions of the academic vocabulary and phrases from the template, thereby providing many of the same benefits as when this strategy is used in its more traditional format.

The Turn-and-Talk Template lends itself to a variety of uses across many grade levels and content areas. As you can see from the examples above, the template helps students to begin engaging in academic dialogue by showing them how to ask academic questions and formulate appropriate responses. It allows for greater student engagement and more student-to-student interaction by eliminating the cycle of teacher question and student response. We hope you will give it a try! 

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Teaching Students How to Use Dictionaries

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STEPHEN Krashen (1989) wrote that second-language learners “carry dictionaries with them, not grammar books, and regularly report that lack of vocabulary is a major problem” (p. 440). This strikes a chord with those of us who have learned or tried to learn a second language. I, for one, still have the well-worn copy of *Larousse’s French-English/English-French Dictionary* that got me through high school and college, but I’ve never owned a French grammar book. Even so, according to Folse (2004, p. 121), many ESL/EFL teachers “see the use of dictionaries, especially bilingual dictionaries (which is the kind that most foreign-language learners use), as unhelpful and potentially detrimental to the student’s L2 growth.” According to Folse, teachers in this camp often encourage students to learn new words using context clues alone, which, he argues, is an indirect and less effective way of acquiring vocabulary.

The last 20-to-25 years have seen an uptick in research that favors the explicit teaching of vocabulary and the use of dictionaries in foreign-language classrooms. In her study of students’ vocabulary learning in the context of reading, Chen (2011) found that dictionary use “can effectively facilitate vocabulary comprehension and enhance incidental vocabulary acquisition, suggesting that dictionary use is a more effective strategy for vocabulary learning than contextual guessing [alone]” (p. 216).

The last 20-to-25 years have seen an uptick in research that favors the explicit teaching of vocabulary.

Skilled dictionary users have access to a powerful portable resource that provides not only definitions, but also lists of polysemous words, collocations, and suggestions for usage. Augustyn (2013, p. 378) notes that the ability to use all the features of the dictionary gives students greater “autonomy as learners.”

Teachers have a responsibility to give their students the tools they need to become proactive learners of vocabulary (p. 381). Unfortunately, English teachers sometimes take dictionary skills for granted. We forget that at some point we, also, had to be taught how to look up a word in a dictionary and decipher the various components of the entry.

Here (below) are a few activities for introducing and reviewing basic dictionary skills to secondary-level and adult students. These activities require no materials beyond dictionaries, paper, and pencils, and they need not take up much class time. Note that, in preparation for any of these activities, it may be necessary to lay the groundwork by systematically walking students through the process of looking up a word so that everyone starts on more or less equal footing. Some of the students in my adult beginner ESOL class have had little or no formal education in their L1s, and it would be a huge oversight to simply hand them bilingual dictionaries and expect them to start looking up words.

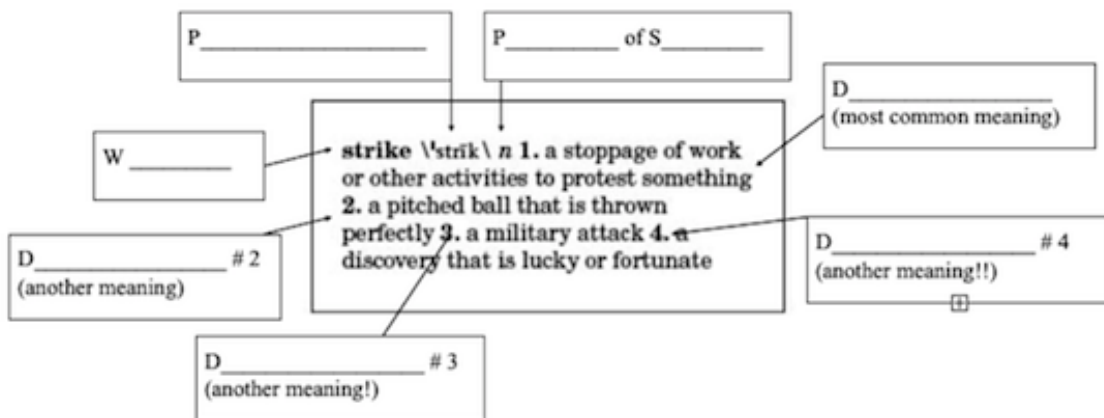
1. **Dictionary Scavenger Hunt (from Lynette & Noack, n.d.):** This activity lends itself particularly well to pair work or teamwork. The teacher gives the students a list of words culled from a current class reading and asks them to look up the words in the dictionary. To show that they have understood the information they found, the students must explain the meanings of the sentences from which the target words were taken.
2. **Layout Activity (from the British Council, n.d.):** This activity gives students practice recognizing the symbols that dictionaries use to denote parts of speech. The teacher provides a partially completed table of pre-selected words, with rows designating parts of speech. Using their dictionaries, the students complete the table by identifying the different forms of each word. For example, a completed table might look something like this:

Noun (n.)	Verb (v.)	Adjective (adj.)
roar	roar	roaring
Laugh/laughter	Laugh	laughable
store	store	X

An "X" indicates that the word does not have a form that corresponds to that part of speech. Once the students have completed

the table and the answers have been checked in class, the teacher can pass out a set of fill-in-the-blank exercises that draw on the words in the table. The students must fill in the words in their appropriate forms. For example, "Lions ____." (Students must fill in the verb form *roar*.) "I shake with _____ every time I hear that joke!" (Student must fill in the noun form *laughter*.) This activity can be adapted for more advanced learners by adding additional columns such as "adverb (adv.)," "transitive verb (tr.)," "intransitive verb (intr.)," etc., or by asking students to list the inflectional variations for each word; for example, the verb *roar* has the inflectional variations *roar*, *roars*, *roaring*, and *roared*.

- 3. New Words in Context (from Clint, n.d.):** In this activity the teacher presents a sentence with a highlighted or underlined word, preferably a polysemous word or one with multiple dictionary entries, such as "grant" or "tear." Students must look up the word and use the context to decide which definition fits best. This activity is a good way to practice the critical thinking skills that are required to use context clues.
- 4. Clock Activity:** To help students become comfortable with the organization of entries in print dictionaries, teachers provide students with full dictionary entries with spaces to label the various parts. The following example is taken from OnTESOL (2014), which borrowed it from the *Oxford ESL Dictionary*. The beginning letter of each label is provided as a hint to the student:




- 5. Old Words, New Meanings (from Selivan, 2018):** In this fun exercise, students look up words they already know to see if the words have other meanings of which they weren't aware. If so, the students must provide the part(s) of speech and write an original sentence or

sentences using the new meanings. This exercise has the benefit of making students aware of the fact that words have multiple meanings, which will hopefully encourage them to turn to their dictionaries in the future when they see a familiar word used in an unfamiliar way.

6. **What's That in Your Language? (adapted from Sketchley, n.d):** In my experience, there are few things students enjoy more than teaching new words to the teacher. In this activity, the teacher presents a list of English words with their definitions and asks the students to use their bilingual dictionaries to find equivalent words in their L1. Both teacher and student write down the English words with their definitions and L1 translations. Later in the class, or in the next class, the students call out an English word with its definition and the teacher tries to remember the corresponding word in their L1. In a class where multiple L1s are represented, the teacher can pair up students with different L1s and have them teach each other the L1 equivalents of the English vocabulary words. This activity values the use of the students' home languages and encourages them to explore the intersections between their L1s and English.

With appropriate training, dictionaries can be an invaluable resource for students, though some questions remain: How can we best use online dictionaries, with so many options available, of varying quality? And how can we teach dictionary skills

in settings like those in some adult community programs where resources are limited and students do not have their own dictionaries? This is particularly challenging in classes with more than one L1, since a single print or online bilingual dictionary cannot be used for the whole class. If we can find answers to these and other questions, then dictionaries can be a valuable resource in helping our students become self-sufficient learners. But dictionaries cannot teach themselves; they are “teacher[s] who cannot talk” (Chi, 1998, p. 565). It is up to us to ensure that our students have the skills they need to take full advantage of these powerful learning tools. 

With appropriate training, dictionaries can be an invaluable resource for students.

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Teaching High School Science Vocabulary

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INTRODUCTION

Science is an exciting subject for high school students because it involves learning about the living world and conducting real-world investigations and hands-on experiments. However, because of its complex and abstract vocabulary, science can also be very intimidating (Wright, 2015). To succeed in their science classes, students need an in-depth knowledge of the vocabulary, including the spoken and written forms, meanings, associations, collocations, and uses of each word (Schmitt, 2008). Research shows that students are better able to acquire this knowledge when they receive explicit vocabulary instruction (August, Artzi, Barr & Francis, 2018; McGlynn & Kozlowski, 2017; Mirzaii, 2012).

STRATEGIES FOR INTRODUCING NEW VOCABULARY

Here are some effective ways to introduce new vocabulary, with suggested applications to an ecology unit:

1. ANALYZE WORD STRUCTURE

Scientific words often have a complex morphological structure, so teachers should begin by breaking a new word down into its morphological units and asking the students to use their understanding of these units to construct the meaning of the whole word. This strategy fosters word consciousness and prepares the students to decipher the meanings of unfamiliar words they may come across in the future (Folse, 2004).

Examples:

biodiversity = variety of life

Prefix: *bio* = life

Root Word: *diversity* = variety

abiotic = non-living

Prefix: *a* = not

Root Word: *biotic* = living

2. PROVIDE STUDENT-FRIENDLY DEFINITIONS

Textbooks and dictionaries often provide complex, technical definitions for scientific words. Teachers should be prepared to offer more student-friendly definitions that are simple, concise, and “written in plain language” (Nelson & Watkins, 2019).

Example:

biodiversity = biological diversity; the sum total of the variety of organisms in the biosphere (Prentice Hall Textbook)

biodiversity = variety of life (student-friendly definition)

3. PROVIDE VISUALS

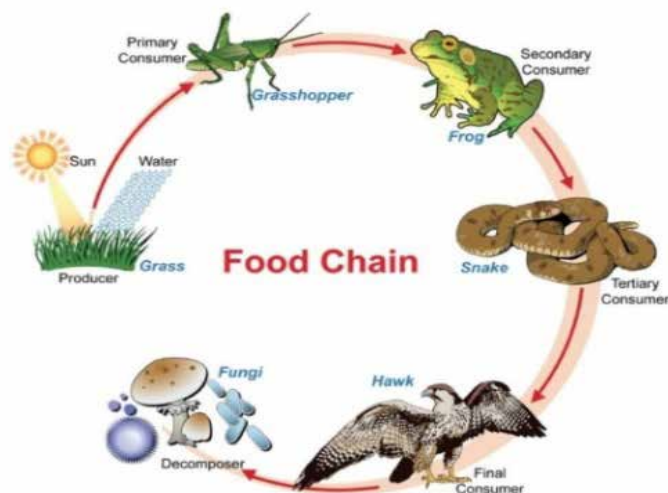
Teachers should pair new vocabulary words with a visual context such as a diagram, poster, Internet image, video, or realia. Visuals help to make science words concrete and comprehensible, and they offer students a pictorial connection that helps them remember the words' meanings (Cohen, 2012).

Examples:

Realia: For the words *biotic* and *abiotic*, pass around examples of biotic objects (flower, sea sponge, seeds, etc.) and abiotic objects (pencil, paper, rock, etc.). After passing the objects around, lead a class discussion about the differences students notice between the biotic and abiotic objects.

Video: To describe *symbiotic relationships*, show students the Amoeba Sisters video found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNjPI84sApQ>.

Diagram: To illustrate a *food chain*, use a diagram like the following:



4. ACTIVATE STUDENTS' PRIOR KNOWLEDGE.

Teachers should find ways to link new vocabulary to previously taught words and concepts and to students' personal experiences. For example, for the word *biodiversity*, students can discuss the different types of animals and flowers that are native to their home country. This makes the words more comprehensible and more meaningful (McGlynn & Kozlowski, 2017).

5. OFFER PRIMARY LANGUAGE SUPPORT.

Teachers should encourage students to use their primary language as a tool for learning new vocabulary in English. Research shows that translations "give learners instant information about the basic meaning of the L2 word" and "aid the learners in remembering these vocabulary items" for future use (Folse, 2004). This is especially useful for abstract science terms that are difficult to illustrate or model. The teacher can look up the translations beforehand or allow the students to use a bilingual dictionary. First-language cognates are especially helpful for remembering the meaning of a new word.

Example:

For the word *biodiversity*:

Spanish: *biodiversidad*

Portuguese: *biodiversidade*

Italian: *biodiversità*

French: *biodiversité*

6. HAVE STUDENTS KEEP VOCABULARY LOGS.

The students should maintain vocabulary notebooks or sets of flashcards that contain the target word, a primary-language translation, a definition in the students' own words, and examples, along with any other helpful information such as word parts, synonyms, and antonyms (Folse, 2004). They may choose to give an example of the word, draw a visual representation, or use the word in a sentence. The vocabulary logs should be neat and well organized to facilitate future reference.

Examples:

Notebook Entry

Word	Translation	Definition	Examples
<i>abiotic</i>	<i>abiótico</i>	objects that are not alive	desk, chair, pencil

Flashcard Entry

Translation: <i>biodiversidade</i>	Definition: variety of life
Word Parts: <i>bio</i> = life <i>diversity</i> = variety (many different things)	Example: A place with a lot of biodiversity has many different types of animals.

HIGHLIGHTING NEW VOCABULARY

To truly master new vocabulary, students need repeated exposure in varied contexts (Nelson & Watkins, 2019; Schmitt, 2008). Here are some suggestions:

1. WORD WALLS

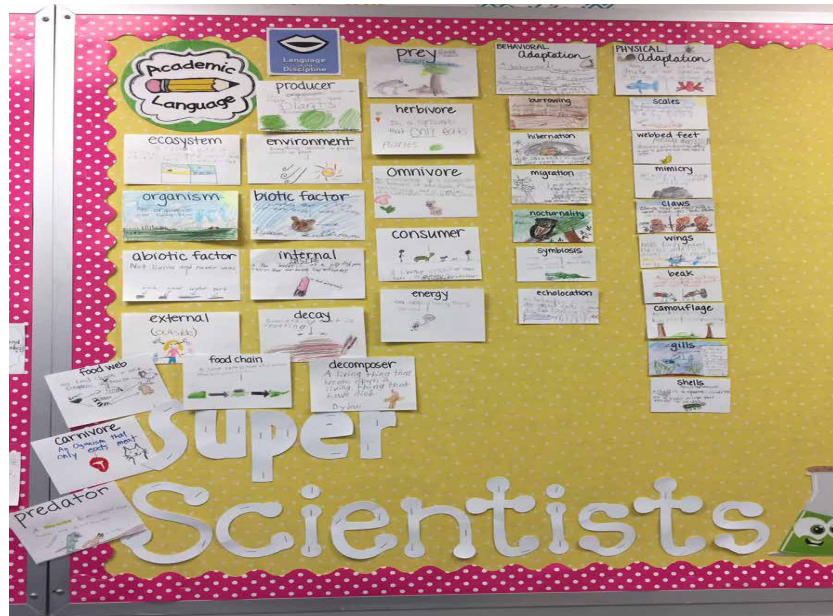
A word wall is a visual display of vocabulary words that facilitates regular, repeated reference. Effective word walls include the words' written form and an accompanying visual representation (Cohen, 2012). Teachers may also include a brief definition of the word, or translations in their students' primary languages. Since science concepts build upon one another, it is important for word walls to be ongoing and visible to students throughout the school year.

Examples:

Word wall with words and pictures:



Word wall with words, definitions, and pictures:



2. DRAWING ATTENTION TO NEW VOCABULARY

New vocabulary should be repeatedly included in text sets (Huynh, 2017). Bolding, highlighting, and underlining are useful ways to draw students' attention to important words. A video or song can be paused each time a vocabulary word is mentioned. For further practice, the teacher can assign post-reading and listening exercises that ask the students to give their own definitions of vocabulary words, match words to their definitions, or complete cloze sentences taken from the text.

Examples:

- Have students read an article about the biodiversity of their home country that includes the vocabulary words *biotic*, *abiotic*, *producer*, *omnivore*, *carnivore*, and *herbivore*. After reading, have them complete a vocabulary-matching activity and a fill-in-the-blank exercise.
- Show the introductory scene of [The Lion King](#). While watching the video, have students list examples of the biotic and abiotic factors they see. Then, have them create their own definitions for the terms *biotic* and *abiotic*.

REVIEWING VOCABULARY

Students need opportunities to practice new words in a variety of contexts

(Schmitt, 2008; Schmitt, 2009), including comprehension and production activities (Folse, 2004). Here are some strategies:

1. COMPREHENSION ACTIVITIES

- **Definitions:** Students develop their own definitions for the vocabulary words presented in a text.
- **True-false statements:** Students are given statements from a reading or listening passage and have to decide if the statements are true or false. If true, students have to explain why it is true; if false, they have to explain why it is false and then rewrite the sentence using the correct vocabulary word.
- **Sentence completion:** Students use a word bank to complete a series of statements based on a reading or listening passage.
- **Text-dependent questions:** Students use a reading or listening passage to answer comprehension questions related to the vocabulary words.

Students [can] apply their content and vocabulary knowledge to develop a comic strip.

2. PRODUCTION ACTIVITIES

- **Vocabulary flipbook:** Students create a flipbook to illustrate new concepts such as the levels of an ecological pyramid or the symbiotic relationships.
- **Description of a picture:** Students identify items in a picture, such as the biotic and abiotic elements in a photo of a farmyard.
- **Song lyrics:** Students use new vocabulary words to create song lyrics such as a song about the different types of symbiotic relationships organisms can have with one another.
- **Comic strips:** Students apply their content and vocabulary knowledge to develop a comic strip — for example, a comic strip that depicts the impact humans can have on biodiversity.
- **Recipe:** Students use the recipe format to describe a process such as the stages of photosynthesis or the steps of the carbon cycle.
- **Concept map:** Students draw a concept map to illustrate the relationships among a set of vocabulary words.

3. HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES

Because science vocabulary is often abstract, complex, and technical, it is important for teachers to incorporate hands-on learning activities that give students concrete experiences with the concepts they are learning (Huynh, 2017).

Examples:

- Students move from one station to another to observe various objects and label each object as *biotic* or *abiotic*.
- Students are given cards with pictures of animals and a description of each animal's diet and predators. They work in groups to determine the feeding relationships among the given animals and develop a food web.
- Students use the [Biome Viewer](#) to compare the biodiversity of various places in the world.


4. GAMES

Games are a fun and engaging way to practice new vocabulary. Here are some examples:

- **Kahoot!:** Students answer all-that-apply, multiple-choice, and true-or-false questions about vocabulary words.
- **Quizlet:** Students create their own vocabulary flashcards and then play a matching game to review them.
- **Taboo:** Students describe a vocabulary word without using the word itself, and their classmates have to guess the word.
- **Jeopardy:** Students identify the vocabulary word that matches a given definition or, alternatively, give definitions or examples of vocabulary words.
- **Bingo:** Students are given Bingo cards that contain the vocabulary words. As the teacher gives a word's definition, the students place a marker on the word.

SUMMARY

Research shows that teachers should use explicit vocabulary instruction to teach new science vocabulary words. To make science vocabulary more comprehensible, teachers should work to develop students' consciousness of morphological structure, relate new vocabulary to students' prior knowledge,

and use visuals, student-friendly definitions, and primary-language support. To truly master new vocabulary, students need multiple exposures across various contexts and language domains. Teachers should incorporate the new vocabulary into every lesson and draw attention to them with cognitively challenging activities that require the students to retrieve the words' meanings and use them in creative ways. To accommodate individual learning styles, teachers should use a variety of visual, aural, and kinesthetic supports and embrace students' home culture and languages as resources for learning. 

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Lessons I've Learned during 32 Years as an ESL Teacher

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CLASSROOM teachers are expected to have strong professional qualifications — expert knowledge of the content, skill in using a variety of pedagogical techniques, and the ability to use the latest technological tools, among many other talents. However, as I think back on my 32 years as an ESL teacher, mostly in higher education and IEP contexts, I'm struck by the importance of some very fundamental *human* skills that have served as the foundation of all my most productive and rewarding teaching experiences. Here are five important lessons I've learned:

1. BE YOURSELF.

This may sound corny, but I've discovered that you can't — and shouldn't try to — suppress your essential self. Whether you have a bubbly, outgoing personality or a more quiet, serious demeanor, students respond to authenticity, and it's counterproductive to fight against your basic personality traits. Some years ago, a friend of mine with no training as an educator was called upon to conduct basic adult language classes in Slovakia, simply on the grounds that she was a native speaker of English. Fair enough; her students were eager to hear and learn from a real live native. But though my friend is a sociable, happy-go-lucky sort who connects well with others, she imagined that, as a teacher, she needed to be a strict disciplinarian. This didn't work well with the population she was serving (adults and teens attending evening classes after a long day of work or school); moreover, she was fighting, rather than tapping into, her inherent personality. When I visited her class, at her invitation, I could see that neither she nor her students were having much fun or learning very much. My advice to her: Relax and be yourself; the students will respond. And they did.

We know from experience that there is no one type of teacher who succeeds with students. We all have had talented teachers and colleagues whose personalities differ significantly but who, each in their own manner, manage

to gain the respect and cooperation of their students. Such educators are authentically themselves and utilize their personal strengths to their advantage.

2. CREATE A POSITIVE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT.

Back in my grad-school days, this was known as “lowering the affective filter.” Students learn best and make the most progress when they are unafraid of joining in or speaking up and when they feel comfortable interacting with their teacher and peers. Homesick, scared, lonely, or tentative students have a hard time focusing. Students will get the most from their experience when they *know and feel* they have trusted friends and teachers they can lean on. I often remind my classes that we are in it together and that we have to support one another and be friendly, inclusive, and kind. Say this directly, and then walk the walk! Let your students know they can trust you; help them see you and their classmates as teammates and friends. Discourage cliques and isolation and encourage activities that build bonds and bridges, both in and out of class. Remind them that the more they interact with others, the more fun they will have, the more they will learn, and the more positive memories they will take home when they go.

Learning should be fun, especially language classes!

I remember one fantastically dedicated graduate student from China who seemed to be making little progress, especially in speaking. It turns out that she had been spending virtually every evening secluded in her dorm, studiously preparing her homework and extra exercises. I advised her to socialize with her classmates in the evening, explore the city, and use her English — which was already at a good level but which had not been tested. She followed through, had a lot more fun, and started gaining ground — a happy customer.

3. HAVE FUN!

Learning should be fun, especially language classes! Learning new words and new ways to communicate with people, making friends in class, and getting to know a new city and culture are all exciting. Share the fun with your students! Lunches, parties, and trips can usually be accommodated within the bounds of the curriculum or program guidelines.

To the greatest extent possible, design class activities that maximize interaction and communication and get students talking and laughing. Even quizzes can be turned into group activities or competitions with prizes (maybe books from your overstuffed shelves). This removes the quiz’s usefulness as an evaluative

tool for the individual student but adds substantial value in language practice and group interaction. As for evaluation, I try to do as much as possible during routine “authentic” activities. For example, I evaluate students’ speaking and communicative skills by monitoring group discussions.

Read the room! A group that has been working hard may need a routine-busting break. For example, on a gray day — or a Friday — an advanced reading class can work on a film version of a text they have been reading, and numerous pedagogically-legitimate spoken and written activities can follow. Or,

A group that has been working hard may need a routine-busting break.

weather permitting, a beginning-level class that has been cooped up can get outside for part of the session and explore the local environment, reviewing key vocabulary and community and cultural resources as they go. First ground rule for students: Walk (and talk) with someone who doesn’t speak your native language.

4. RESPECT AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF WHAT YOUR STUDENTS HAVE TO OFFER.

Show them that you value their stories, their culture, their special skills, and their achievements. Learn all you can about their languages and cultural backgrounds and encourage them to share with their classmates. With this approach, the students do a good amount of work for you, while practicing their language skills and finding opportunities to feel accomplished and proud.


I try to put the students in the drivers’ seat and give them agency whenever possible. For instance, if I am looking for current reading topics in the news, I may ask groups of students to brainstorm topics they are interested in and present me or the class with a short list. The groups’ topic choices can be further vetted by class-wide votes. The students enjoy discussing their interests with each other and have more buy-in on the topics. As a further step, have students choose their own topic-appropriate readings, develop comprehension questions, and do oral presentations on the topics they have researched. In situations where topics and materials have already been established, students can still be given some agency by asking them to suggest how to make the most of a given text — for example, what activities or assignments might be useful and engaging for them. They often have good ideas.

5. LISTEN AND BE UNDERSTANDING; BE KIND.

This important reminder was crystallized for me in an exchange I had with a

student I will call “Mohammed.” I may have assigned too much homework one weekend or expected too much writing by a certain date, and Mohammed spoke for himself and the class when he looked into my eyes and pleaded, “Please teacher, have *mercy!*” Have mercy indeed! We work primarily with young people — imperfect, unfinished, illogical. Forgive their flaws. Be flexible in your expectations; adjust as needed to focus on the big picture, the group’s overall welfare, or individual challenges or problems.

Mohammed spoke for himself and the class when he looked into my eyes and pleaded, “Please teacher, have mercy!”

None of these reminders is meant to suggest that serious work is not to be expected, that study and discipline will not be required, or that teacher or organizational requirements cannot be met. But a positive, nurturing learning environment and the promotion of trust and respect among all the stakeholders in the class provide the foundation upon which all else will be built. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ron Clark has taught ESL in the Boston area for over thirty years. He taught at Boston University’s CELOP for much of his career and is currently associated with the Berklee College of Music, MIT, and Suffolk University.

Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students,

by Zaretta Hammond. Corwin: A SAGE Company, 2015. 173 pages. ISBN 978-1-4833-0801-2

Reviewed by Carolyn A. Peterson

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ZARETTA Hammond, a faculty member at St. Mary's Kalmanovitz School of Education in Moraga, California, specializes in instructional design, school coaching, and professional development focused on equity, literacy, and culturally responsive teaching. In this book, she describes the challenges that English Learners and students of color face in schools and offers strategies that educators can use to support their cultural, linguistic, and educational development. For too long, she says,

[C]ulturally responsive teaching has been relegated to this realm of magic and mystery knowledge that only a select few possess. When we are able to recognize and name a student's learning moves and not mistake culturally different ways of learning and making meaning for intellectual deficits, we are better able to match those moves with a powerful teaching response. (p. 5)

[The author] offers strategies that educators can use to support the cultural, linguistic, and educational development of [ELs and students of color].

The book contains nine chapters: 1: "Climbing Out of the Gap," 2: "What's Culture Got to Do with It?" 3: "This is Your Brain on Culture," 4: "Preparing to be a Culturally Responsive Practitioner," 5: "Building the Foundation of Learning Partnerships," 6: "Establishing Alliances in the Learning Partnership," 7: "Shifting Academic Mindset in the Learning Partnership," 8: "Information Processing to

Build Intellectual Capacity,” and 9: “Creating a Culturally Responsive Community for Learning,” each with a chapter summary, an invitation to inquiry, and an invitation to “go deeper.”

Chapters 1, 7, and 9 were of particular interest to me. In Chapter 1 (“Climbing Out of the Gap: Supporting Dependent Learners to Become Independent Thinkers”), Dr. Hammond explores dependent versus independent learning and introduces her *Ready for*

Rigor Framework, which uses information from neuroscience to support the development of independent learning. “For culturally and linguistically diverse students,” she writes, “opportunities to develop habits of mind and cognitive capacities are limited or non-existent because of educational inequity. The result is their cognitive growth is stunted, leaving them dependent learners” (p. 13).


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In Chapter 7 (“Shifting Academic Mindset in the Learning Partnership: Restoring Students’ Natural Confidence as Learners”), Hammond cites research by Carol Dweck (2017) in *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, which shows that “To get dependent learners to act on feedback or to be strategic, they have to first believe in themselves as learners” (p. 108). Teachers must instill in their students the belief that “I belong to this academic community, I can succeed at this, my ability and competence grow with my effort, and this work has value to me” (p. 109).

Chapter 9 (“Creating a Culturally Responsive Community for Learning: Seeing the Environment as the Second Teacher”) delves further into the Ready-for-Rigor Framework, which uses routines, rituals, and instructional conversation techniques to build community and create an environment of social, emotional, and intellectual safety. Routines might include using music or call and response to gather the students at the beginning of the day, and a transition time after lunch to return to schoolwork; rituals might include beginning the day with a poem or reciting a verse; watching and engaging with TED talks; and poetry, quotes, and songs that connect with students’ cultural values, experiences, and academic mindset (pp.146-147). “In culturally responsive pedagogy,” Hammond writes, “the classroom is a critical container for empowering marginalized students. It serves as a space that reflects the values of trust, partnership, and academic mindset that are at its core” (p. 143). By supporting our students’

cultural values and including representative symbols and artifacts, we create a classroom in which our students feel valued and ready to succeed.

As a special education teacher and reading specialist working with students from diverse backgrounds, I have to determine if a student's struggle is due to a lack of English proficiency or some other cause and find the best approach to support individualized education program reading goals. Dr. Hammond's message resonates with how I strive to teach: I try to align my teaching with the students' understanding of English and, when possible, incorporate aspects of their native languages into my instruction. As a result of reading this book, I will pay more attention to my students' academic mindset and work harder to build their confidence as readers. I will also recreate my rituals, routines, and practices to better support my students' academic, social-emotional, and cultural needs.

I recommend this interesting, informative, and engaging book to K-12 educators, specialists, administrators, parents, and higher education professionals who want to support and encourage culturally responsive teaching. 

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The New York Times: The Learning Network,

<https://www.nytimes.com/section/learning>.

Reviewed by Sarah Schoenbeck

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THE New York Times platform, *The Learning Network*, publishes over 1000 teaching resources each year. Many are focused on the same content that the *Times* produces, but on the home page there are sections for teachers of various school subjects to choose from, including a section for ELL & Arts. By selecting the [ELL part of this folder](#), a teacher can find picture prompts to inspire student writing, thematic collections of essays and activities, and a tier-two vocabulary section with strategies teachers and students can use to increase vocabulary. There is an active-listening section that uses *Times* videos and podcasts coordinated with key listening and speaking skills, and also a literacy-skills section that uses visual sources to achieve literacy skills through independent reading.

The Learning Network also provides daily, weekly, and monthly activities for students, including crosswords, a word of the day, and a current-events lesson on one article from that day's *NYT*. Weekly activities are posted on different days and consist of news quizzes, geography quizzes, and a current-events conversation

that shares student comments on articles and videos. One of my personal favorite activities is "What's Going on in This Picture" and "What's Going on in This Graph," where a photo and graph are posted, but the answer is not revealed until the end of the school day. This activity builds suspense and competitiveness and provides material for classroom conversation throughout the day. Another of my favorite features is "Teenagers in the Times," which shares an article on young people around the world. These articles are typically very culturally responsive reads that ELs can relate to. Students can also participate in the weekly film club, which offers a ten-minute short documentary with

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discussion, and there are monthly contests consisting of a podcast-submission contest, photo contests, and short-essay contests. These are great opportunities for students to have their work and ideas on display, which can increase ELs' confidence significantly, thereby meeting one of the goals of the platform to "Give students a voice — and strengthen literacy skills along the way."

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Additional resources for teachers consist of professional-development webinars and a seven-unit writing curriculum aligned with standards and based on real-world writing. *The Learning Network* also provides lesson plans every day; teachers can use five of them each month at no cost. The multitude of components for teachers and students make this a perfect resource for bringing current events and trends into the classroom and challenging students to engage with literacy in multimedia formats with an authentic, real-world perspective. This website is intended for middle and high school levels, but it can be adapted for elementary and college levels. Teachers are allowed to use the resource freely, with no commitment to membership or participation in a full curriculum. **C**

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