

matsol



Currents

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

Equity and Excellence for Multilingual Learners

Vol. 47, No. 1 Spring/Summer 2024



INSIDE

MATSOL 2024 Conference Report, page 15

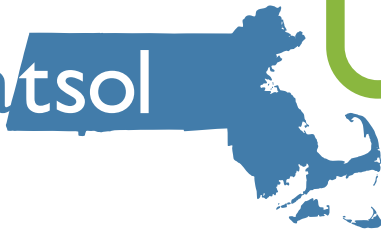
Peace Education, page 23

New DESE IEP Guidelines, page 35

ON THE COVER

Over 150 presenters and 2000 attendees came together for three in-person and three virtual conference days

matsol



Currents

MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

Equity and Excellence for Multilingual Learners

Vol. 47, No.1 Summer 2024

Contents

MATSOL News

4 President's Message

Reports

7 Reports from MATSOL's Special Interest Groups

13 MATSOL English Learner Leadership
Council (MELLC)

15 Report from the MATSOL Spring 2024 Conference

Articles

23 "Can we, language educators, bring peace into our
classroom?" Classroom recommendations from
peace education

NASIBA NOROVA

28 Immigrants' Day at the State House 2024

KELLY MOWERS

35 Optimizing new DESE IEP guidelines for
multilingual learners in MA

**KELLY COONEY &
CLAUDIA RINALDI**

47 Developing in-class speaking activities using
AI-generated images

**ILKA KOSTKA &
RACHEL TONCELLI**

52 Navigating educational improvement:
The crucial role of identifying problems

**JAIMIE BIN LI, MEREDITH G. O'LEARY,
& MARJETA BEJDO**

President's Message

DEAR MATSOL COMMUNITY,

I hope this finds you all well and rested during these warm summer days. In this issue of *Currents* I wanted to name something I have been thinking a lot about for a while now. As many of you readers already know, the population of students classified as English learners and First Language Not English in Massachusetts has been growing rapidly – not just in historically diverse places or immigrant destination gateway cities but all across the entire commonwealth (Mantil et al., 2023).

At the same time, as you also likely know, the majority of our teachers in our state are white women (about 85% according to [MA DESE](#)), a trend that mirrors [national data](#) which show that the vast majority of public school teachers in the United States remain white and monolingual (NCES, 2023). I thought about this a lot at the annual conference: MATSOL, which reflects the state's demographics, is a predominantly white space. *What does it mean to be an organization of predominantly white teachers working with racialized multilingual learners? What can we, as an organization, do to support the diversification of our teaching force?*

When thinking about what it means to do Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work in an organization of English as a Second Language and Sheltered English Immersion teachers and teacher educators we also need to grapple with the relationship between the English language and the lasting impacts of colonialism. I have written before (Dobbs & Leider, 2021) about whether it is even possible to really do antiracist work when I'm teaching the SEI Endorsement course, a course specifically dedicated to training teachers in a linguistically restrictive, English prioritizing instructional model, and as an organization I think that is something we need to think about. *What does it mean to be teaching English to linguistically minoritized and racialized populations?*

I recently read a piece on antiracist genre pedagogy in *TESOL Journal* by Kathryn Accurso and Jason Mizell where they describe the intersection of antiracism and (English) language education as:

“Antiracism is a long game, both inside the language classroom and out. Because teachers have not been rewarded for or prepared to

teach language in antiracist ways, learning to do so will require persistent effort and, perhaps more uncomfortably, “persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination” (Kendi, 2019, p. 22; Cho, 2017; Matias, 2016).” (Accurso & Mizell, 2020, p. 11).


When I read this I thought about how in 2021 the MATSOL Board of Directors worked with an external consulting firm to develop a new Strategic Plan which led to three goals and corresponding objectives. Specifically, Goal 2 and the corresponding objectives were as follows:

- Goal 2: Increase capacity of educators in Massachusetts to effectively support multilingual learners
 - Objective 2A: Evaluate PD strategy, including developing new professional development opportunities, addressing unmet needs related to ELE/MLE, and incorporating a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) lens.
 - Objective 2B: Evaluate, revise and potentially expand current MATSOL awards and grant programs to provide clear criteria and processes, incorporating a DEI lens in the advertising, application and awards process.
 - Objective 2C: Develop strategy to increase and nurture volunteer involvement and leadership in MATSOL SIGs and committees, incorporating a DEI lens.

In the 24/25 Academic Year, the MATSOL Board of Directors – currently a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse group as well as representing multiple career points and teaching experiences – is going to be dedicated to addressing these objectives. In particular, we hope to consider PD offerings and discussions around bystander intervention training, racial identity development, gender inclusivity, anti-ableism, and antiracist pedagogy. We would also like to dedicate resources to supporting early career educators and educators of color in our community. Molly Ross, MATSOL Vice-President, and I have begun discussion with the MATSOL Executive Director around various mentorship programs, including a teacher leadership development program for educators of color. *As members of MATSOL, what are YOU doing to reflect on and respond to our goals and objectives?*

In closing, I’m reminded of bell hooks’ words: “As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another’s voices, in recognizing one another’s presence.”

Doing this work together as a community and organization means listening to each other and learning together. So, MATSOL community, I ask you this: *What professional learning opportunities and additional spaces would you like to have, so you can better engage in antiracist work in your role as an educator of racialized multilingual learners? Teachers of color, what do you need so you can feel better supported in your work?*

As always, keep reading the Currents and attending our annual conference as a source of professional learning. This summer issue will offer highlights from the 2024 Spring Conference, as well as articles on [peace education](#), [Immigrants' Day at the State House](#), [the new DESE IEP guidelines for multilingual learners](#), [using AI-generated images for speaking activities](#), and [the process of identifying problems for educational improvement](#). This issue is the last one by outgoing editor Johanna Tigert, who wishes to thank the community of contributors and publication committee members for their work over the past three years. 

In solidarity,

Chris Montecillo Leider

MATSOL President

cmleider@matsol.org

REFERENCES

Accurso, K., & Mizell, J. D. (2020). Toward an antiracist genre pedagogy: Considerations for a North American context. *TESOL Journal*, 11(4), e554.

Dobbs, C. L., & Leider, C. M. (2021). A LangCrit analysis of teachers' beliefs about language learning and language diversity. *Journal of Multilingual Theories & Practices*, 2(1), 25-46.

hooks, b. (2014). *Teaching to transgress*. Routledge.

MA DESE (2024). 2023-24 Race/Ethnicity and Gender Staffing Report. Retrieved 03 July 2024 from <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/teacherbyracegender.aspx>

Mantil, A., Papay, J.P., Ferguson, I.M., Mbekeani, P.P., & Murnane, R.J. (2023). *Rising numbers, unmet needs: Immigrant newcomers in Massachusetts high schools*. Providence, RI: Educational Opportunity in MA, Annenberg Institute at Brown University.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). *Characteristics of public school teachers. Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved 03 July 2024 from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/clr>

Reports from MATSOL's Special Interest Groups

MATSOL offers a variety of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) which, except for the Massachusetts English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC), are open to all members free of charge. For more information on the SIGs and to sign up, please visit the SIGs website <https://www.matsol.org/member-groups>. Here are reports on recent and upcoming SIG activities from the following SIGs:

Advocacy

Community College ESL Faculty

Educators of Color

Emerging Scholars Circle

ESL Co-Teaching (NEW)

ESL Unit Developers

Instructional Coaches

Teacher Educators

MELLC

ADVOCACY

The Advocacy Special Interest Group is a 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, conduct specific advocacy initiatives, and develop collaborative relationships with other organizations to achieve shared goals.

A webinar, *Banned Books: Advocating For Intellectual Freedom In Education*, created a year of investigation and amazing opportunities to meet with esteemed individuals who are leading the fight to keep books on our shelves and in our classrooms across Massachusetts. Despite all the time and effort dedicated to this topic, we only scratched the surface. There is so much more that needs to be done! Please join us in our efforts to advocate for our students and intellectual freedom in education. Watch for information on the SIG website.

Steering committee: Katie Peterson, Kelly Mowers, and Golnar Fotouhi

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESL FACULTY

The Community College Interest Group conducted its annual survey this spring to gather information on the status of ESL/ESOL courses and services among the fifteen community colleges in Massachusetts. We received responses from eleven colleges. At the MATSOL Annual Conference, on June 7, we held a workshop to present the data from this survey. Following are highlights of our report.

Most colleges have seen an increase in enrollment in ESL this academic year. Of the eleven colleges reporting, eight colleges offer credit-bearing ESL courses, with 2-4 levels offered. Two colleges have lost levels; one college has gained levels. Four colleges have lost faculty positions. ESL courses count as humanities credits toward graduation in the majority of the colleges. Transfer of these credits to four-year public colleges is not consistent among community colleges. A variety of services is available for ESL students across the system. There is a trend for colleges to accept the MA Seal of Biliteracy. With enrollment in ESL courses continuing to rise throughout the state, it is an opportune time to advocate for more full-time ESL faculty, more credit-bearing ESL courses, more designated ESL services, and consistent ESL graduation and transfer credits in our fifteen community colleges. For more information, contact jbrunelle@matsol.org.

Our goal in this Community College Special Interest Group is to be your advocate to strengthen ESL programs in your college. We welcome your input and involvement.

Steering Committee: Juanita Brunelle, Teresa Cheung, Eileen Kelley, Anne Shull, and Jennifer Valdez

EDUCATORS OF COLOR

The Educators of Color SIG is a collaborative network of educators of color. We meet monthly to provide a space for our members to network and build supportive relationships. Members also discuss shared experiences and best practices as a way to support each other.

In January 2024, we launched a series of cultural presentations by our own members to share and celebrate their cultures. The first speaker, Méritès Abelard shared his Haitian cuisine and history. In February, Yuiko Shimazu presented her Japanese culture and talked about Girls' Day celebration. Lonamae Shand presented her Jamaican culture and talked about Easter celebrations during

the March session. In April, Jason Fei presented his Chinese culture and taught us about the history of Chinatown in Boston. SIG members were excited to learn about each other's cultural traditions and on Juneteenth, we met at a Haitian restaurant in Brockton, recommended by Méritès. Participants in attendance enjoyed the food and great conversation. We would like to continue to learn about our members' cultures and celebrate them. The goal is to plan additional meetings at restaurants periodical for networking. Other SIG members are encouraged to volunteer and share their culture in future meetings. The EOC SIG actively participated in the MATSOL 2024 Conference. We had a networking session and discussed EOC recruitment and retention in the field of education. We also hosted the SIG table and recruited new SIG members! Going forward, the EOC SIG aims to continuously support EOCs by providing a safe space to support each other. We also would like to create more opportunities for our members to present and share their talents and experiences at our SIG meetings. We continue to encourage our members to take on leadership roles in MATSOL and their communities.

Steering Committee: Yuiko Shimazu and Lonamae Shand

EMERGING SCHOLARS CIRCLE

The Emerging Scholars Circle SIG is open to undergraduate and graduate students worldwide who are interested in social justice-related research on equity, diversity, inclusion, and empowerment. The Emerging Scholars Circle SIG is a bridging space for students in scholarly research and undergraduate/graduate school coursework.

At our last meeting, we committed to enhancing the interactive nature of our activities. This year, under the theme "Collaborations and Communities," we've organized webinar sessions with invited guest speakers to discuss how researchers and practitioners collaborate with communities of diverse backgrounds. We believe this interactive approach was effective in providing valuable insights and fostering a sense of community among our MATSOL and SIG members.

Two virtual meetings aligned our thematic approach this spring semester and helped us engage with our members. So, we devoted the first March meeting to examining family literacy practices to maintain heritage language in a trilingual family and exploring the possibilities of conducting ethnographic research in one's family. In our second meeting, which took place in May, the steering committee invited a speaker who shared their expertise and knowledge on ethical aspects of doing research with immigrant culturally and linguistically diverse chil-

dren, youth, and families. Our SIG steering committee leaders also successfully organized in-person and virtual presentation sessions at the MATSOL conference in May and June.

We plan to engage our members with more meaningful topics for the next academic year. We will announce a call for webinar proposals and continue to explore subtle aspects of scholarly and pedagogic work with diverse communities by inviting more guest speakers and organizing webinars.

Steering committee: Nasiba Norova, Iuliia Fakhruddinova, and Vanessa Quintana Sarria

ESL CO-TEACHING

The ESL Co-Teaching SIG is dedicated to enhancing the collective knowledge and capacity of educators and educational institutions regarding best practices in ESL co-teaching. Our goal is to foster professional development and advocacy for effective ESL co-teaching methods.

Recent Activities: Our first meeting featured insightful presentations by steering committee members Nathan Couto and Julie Miller, who shared their successful co-teaching experiences and discussed overcoming various challenges. This session was well-received and provided practical strategies for attendees. During our second meeting, held during the lunch hour of the MATSOL 2024 Virtual Conference, we focused on what school and district leaders can do to support effective ESL co-teaching practices. This session highlighted the critical role of leadership in fostering a supportive environment for co-teaching.

Upcoming Plans: The ESL Co-Teaching SIG is committed to holding bi-monthly meetings resuming in August that continue to prioritize professional development and advocacy for best practices. These sessions will offer ongoing support and resources for educators dedicated to improving ESL co-teaching.

Join Us: If you are interested in joining the ESL Co-Teaching SIG, please visit our MATSOL website or use the following Bitly link to register: bit.ly/ECoTSIG. For any questions or if you wish to join the steering committee, please contact Nathan Couto at nccouto@newbedfordschools.org.

Steering committee: Nathan Couto and Julie Miller

ESL UNIT DEVELOPERS

The ESL Unit Developers SIG is a collaborative network for Massachusetts K-12 educators who are interested in creating, peer-reviewing, implementing, and sharing ESL curriculum units that reflect WIDA ELD standards and MA DESE expectations. Over the course of the 2023-2024 school year, we:

launched a [Collaborative Unit Sharing Platform \(CUSP\)](#) through Airtable!
collaboratively wrote three newcomer units: Doing School, Massachusetts, and Planning a Party (Language for Math).

highlighted ESL Unit Development Tools (WIDA Standards Satchel, ESL Curriculum Modules, Collaboration Tool).

provided a step-by-step “How to Write a Unit” guide and templates.
hosted a Grand Unit Sharing.

This summer, go to our [Curriculum Help Wanted spreadsheet](#) to join a curriculum development project or to propose your own. Please join us in September for our monthly Zoom meetings. Unit developers of all experience levels are welcome! Questions? Visit our website or contact Viviana V. Martinez at martinezv@fitchburg.k12.ma.us or Jessica Pulzetti at jpulzetti@arlington.k12.ma.us.

Steering Committee: Jessica Pulzetti, Liana Parsons, Kerry DeJesus, Susannah DiMauro, and Viviana V. Martinez

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

The Instructional Coaches SIG is a forum for PreK-12 instructional coaches, teacher leaders, and coordinators. The goal of the Instructional Coaches SIG is to facilitate collaboration of instructional coaches across Massachusetts in order to improve coaching systems and strategies that support General Education and ESL teachers in meeting the needs of multilingual learners.

The Problem of Practice Protocol is a staple at every meeting. The protocol encourages coaches to think more expansively about a specific and concrete dilemma. Using the protocol helps coaches to develop a capacity to see and describe issues and encourages participants to understand and collaborate on possible solutions. Each month’s Problem of Practice discussion focuses on a particular topic such as the roles and responsibilities of being a coach, the support of newcomers and teachers who work with newcomers, co-teaching and the (mis)use of translating in the classroom.

For more information about the Instructional Coaches SIG, go to the MATSOL website to get up to date information for when we meet and sign up for the Instructional Coaches “Special Interest Group” e-list.

Steering Committee: Ivone Spencer and Mary Kennedy

TEACHER EDUCATORS

The Teacher Educators SIG is a place to talk about teacher education spanning from pre- to in-service learning, for SEI, ESL, and bilingual educators, and including every level of learning from early childhood through adult English learning. Members come from districts, professional development companies, universities and colleges, as well as from community based ESOL programs.

This year we built upon our “hard lines” for knowledge and skills required to best serve multilingual students, developed in the 22-23 school year. Throughout the year we shared and analyzed lesson planning elements to determine how each could be used to further develop the teaching skills. Simultaneously, we discussed levels of proficiency of particular skills new teachers should have for ‘day one’ of their first job vs. those that could be developed within the first 3 years of their career. Throughout these discussions, we share a variety of teacher education methods, materials, and resources and we always leave full of new information to enrich our various programs. At the MATSOL conference this year, we debuted a new [lesson plan template](#), which can be used as a tool for new and veteran teachers to prioritize instructional goals and to assess effectiveness.

We hosted a variety of educators and researchers to share their work and inspiration including: 2023 MA History Teacher of the Year Jessica Lander, author of [Making Americans: Stories of Historic Struggle, New Ideas, and Inspiration in Immigrant Education](#), Prof. Leslie Duhaylongsod about her work [Talk is Literacy](#), and Prof. [Sovicheth Boun's](#) work on his research in Cambodia. In addition, weekly we shared a ‘goody bag’ item which included many teaching resources and tools useful for all.

We look forward to building on these topics and more in the coming school year. Please join us if you are interested in exploring the development of teachers from their preparatory through their golden years of teaching multilingual students!

Steering committee: Melanie Gonzalez and Rachel Kramer Theodorou

MATSOL English Learner Leadership Council (MELLC)

MELLC continued meeting in a hybrid format, with in-person meetings with the option for facilitated online participation, alternating with virtual online sessions. The meetings are sponsored by Fitchburg State University, which provides a beautiful meeting space for our group on campus. Meetings are planned with guidance from the MELLC steering committee, Wendy Anderson, Kate Mailloux and McClain Powell, and are facilitated by Mary DeSimone with support from MATSOL staff.

The February 16, 2024, virtual meeting addressed using technology tools for compliance in ELE programs and an ACCESS testing debrief. Members met in small breakouts to share about tools and procedures, both commercial and home-grown, that EL directors use for compliance. In breakouts on ACCESS testing, topics came up such as providing PDPs for teachers doing ACCESS testing, ways to prepare students for testing, and how to communicate to all staff about the importance of ACCESS testing for ELs.

The March 5 hybrid meeting focused on trauma. It featured presentations by two experts. Dr. Kim Kusiak, UMASS Medical, Psychiatry, presented on trauma and the brain and how trauma can impact student learning. John Crocker, Director of Mental Health and Behavioral Services at Methuen Schools & founder of Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium, discussed how to recognize and manage secondary traumatic stress, which teachers and school staff can experience as a result of the cumulative effect of working with traumatized students and their families that leads to negative changes in how staff views themselves, others, and the world.

In the virtual meeting on April 12, members discussed their work with ELPACs. After reviewing the history of ELPACs in the LOOK Act and DESE resources available to support them, members went into small breakout groups to discuss and share experiences with different aspects of ELPACs, such as virtual/hybrid ELPACs, sustaining ELPACs, and events to encourage family participation.

The hybrid meeting on May 3 focused on literacy instruction for English Learners. Linda Cavazos, Ph.D., Executive Director of ELLAS Consulting (English Learner Leadership Advocacy Support) presented on “Supporting Oral Language Development and Literacy for Multilingual Learners”. This was followed by an interactive small-group review of the recent publication *A Framework for Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction for English Learners* (Council of Great City Schools, 2023*). Members examined the sections of the report on the approach to foundational literacy and the selection of instructional materials and discussed how the principles could inform literacy instruction in their programs or districts.

The final MELLC meeting on June 7 took place during the MATSOL Virtual Conference after the keynote address by Kevin Wong. The group reflected on the keynote and other sessions attended during the conference, reviewed the past year, and discussed ideas for 2024-25.

We thank all our members for their participation and involvement this year and look forward to next year’s meetings. 

The MATSOL English Learner Leadership Council is a group for Directors and Coordinators of English Language Education Programs in Massachusetts. It is a professional community that supports and guides EL educators in the administration of ELE programs at the district level through collaboration and advocacy. Find out more at: <https://www.matsol.org/mellc-k-12-directors>.

*Council of Great City Schools. (2023). *Framework for foundational literacy skills instruction for English Learners*. https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/domain/35/publication%20docs/CGCS_Foundational%20Literacy%20Skills_Pub_v12.pdf

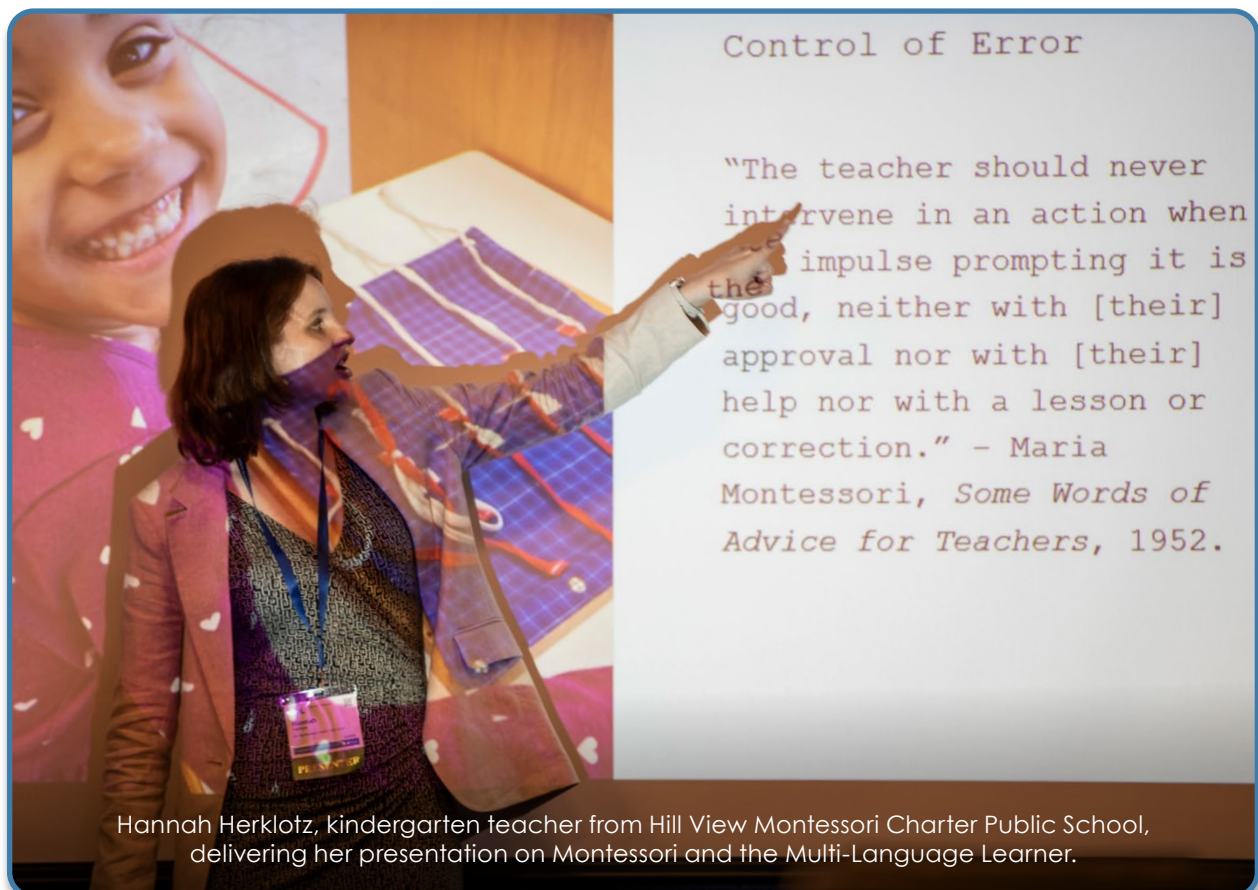
Members examined the sections of the report on the approach to foundational literacy and the selection of instructional materials and discussed how the principles could inform literacy instruction in their programs or districts.

Report from the MATSOL Spring 2024 Conference

Méritès Abelard

Associate Editor

A S I WALKED INTO THE SHERATON FRAMINGHAM HOTEL and Conference Center on May 29, 2024, the first day of the MATSOL conference, I heard somebody shout my name. I looked over, and it was a colleague I met last year at the conference. She remembered everything I shared with her last year: my name, my face, where I worked, my being new to the position. I also remembered her very well; in fact, we had exchanged a couple of emails throughout the school year. She is a very energetic colleague and full of ideas. She asked me whether I'd tried implementing some of the sug-



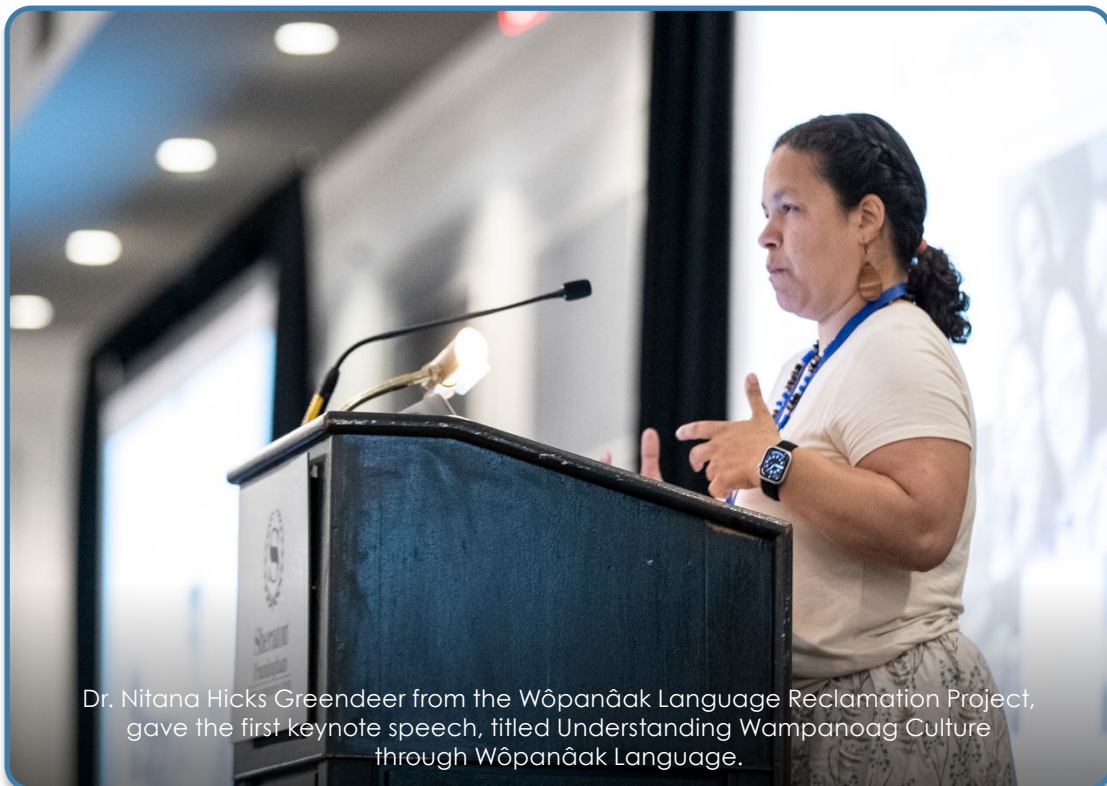


Attendees took advantage of breaks in the program to browse the vendors' tables.

gestions she had provided, and she gave me a warm hug. What a great way to start the first day at the conference! From that moment on, I was reminded that the conference is more than just the presentations and their contents. Networking is one of the great things that make the MATSOL conference an event worth attending every year.

We had a good ten-minute conversation before we each proceeded to our first session of the conference that we wanted to attend. I took a brief tour of the vendors area where there was a variety of resources to explore. I was excited to meet in person with the rep I had been working with throughout the year for the new curriculum adopted in my district. That was MATSOL.

It was sometimes difficult to decide which sessions to attend. The menu was rich and there was a wide variety of topics raising attendees' curiosity, and several appealing sessions happening at the same time made the conference more exciting to attend. A few of these sessions are briefly summarized below.



PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER: DESIGNING EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING FOR NEWCOMER STUDENTS.

The facilitators for this session were Shannon Smith, MLL coach from SupportEd, and Allison Balter from the Office of Language Acquisition at MA DESE. The session began with warm up questions about the assets that newcomers bring to EL programs and the challenges we may have to face when educating newcomer ELs. Then the presenters proceeded to lead the discussions on who our EL newcomers are and what they mean for our districts. About 27 percent of Massachusetts ELs are newcomers and the share has been growing exponentially. Presenters discussed strengths newcomer ELs bring to our schools, their characteristics, and cultural challenges that they face. Further, the presenters offered some strategies and tools to consider when planning programs for newcomer ELs. One teacher sitting at my table whispered to another colleague, "I could be in this presentation for the whole day and would never get tired." I looked at her with a smile and said, "I feel the same way."

KEYNOTE SPEAKER, 2ND DAY

In this presentation, Dr. Diep Nguyen examined the key mindsets, commitments



Dr. Diep Nguyen delivering her keynote speech on Day 2

and practices of the CLEAR Paradigm, a framework that enables educators to continue to grow their equity-centered teaching practices to best serve their students. Stories and examples were used to show that ambitious, equity-centered teaching requires commitment, collaboration and nuanced decision-making that challenge the status quo of school policies and practice.



Nicoleta Filimon and Christi Cartwright from Haverhill Public Schools speak to an interested audience about engaging SLIFE in content-area presentations.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER (VIRTUAL)

In this keynote presentation, Dr. Wong engaged with today's tapestry of multilingual, multicultural, and multiracial classrooms. He discussed the critical intersections of language, race, and culture and the role educators play in fostering meaningful, reflective, and restorative conversations about identity, diversity, and belonging. The session used multiracial children's literature and practical classroom examples to help educators "enter the conversation," even when their own backgrounds differ from those of their students. Dr. Wong encouraged educators to become more proactive and engage in continuous learning with a growth mindset.

ATTENDEES' IMPRESSIONS

Many first timers and teachers who had been attending MATSOL for years were quite expressive regarding how they felt about the conference, from the excitement of attending in person to the quality and variety of the sessions. Some of them agreed to be briefly interviewed.

Nancy, a teacher of MLL at Hope Academy in Providence, RI, was not bashful in sharing her impression. One of the first statements she made as we began the conversation was, "I received a wealth of information and look forward to coming back next year." Her favorite session was on how to get parents of MLLs more involved. One key takeaway for her from that session was about the kind of questions to ask to parents to elicit more productive responses. Nancy is determined to encourage her colleagues to attend the conference as there is so much to learn. It was her first time attending MATSOL, but she said she loved it. Besides, she intends to join a Special Interest Group (SIG) in the near future.

Emily is a new MLL teacher. Excitement was on her face as she explained why she enjoyed the sessions she attended. "I am enjoying it immensely," she said when asked how she felt about the conference. She particularly enjoyed chat-



MATSOL leadership enjoyed connecting at the conference. Facing the camera, from the left: President Chris Leider, Executive Director Helen Solorzano, Vice President Molly Ross.

ting with other colleagues from her own district as well as colleagues from other districts. “It was nice to connect and validate the fact that we are all in the same boat,” she said with a contagious smile on her face. She had just attended a session that talked about comprehensible input and scaffolding. She found there to be a great balance between theory and practical activities she could bring to her class the next day. She also appreciated the variety of topics in different sessions.

Denise Lopes is in her 6th year of attending MATSOL. She missed the in-person conference which was interrupted by COVID-19. She attended a session that addressed how to design effective programs for newcomer students. Denise thinks that MLL teachers should not miss the MATSOL conference. “You are missing out. You should go, because there are a lot of experts addressing problems you may be experiencing, and you realize colleagues in other districts have the same problems too. It is a good way to realize you are not alone.” Denise’s favorite thing about the conference, in addition to learning, is networking with colleagues from different districts.



Facilitated by Carolyn Navikonis of 826 Boston, alumni of the Boston International Newcomers Academy (BINcA) shared stories from their lives and careers with a packed ballroom of MATSOL attendees.



Some sessions drew an overflow of audience.

The MATSOL conference was a successful event overall. A variety of sessions were offered on a wide range of topics, and at times, it was difficult to choose when there several appealing sessions happening concurrently. In addition to the quality of the sessions, the variety of the topics, and the expertise of the presenters, networking is a key part of the experience. We look forward to another exciting MATSOL conference next year. [C](#)

“Can we, language educators, bring peace into our classroom?” Classroom recommendations from peace education

Nasiba Norova

nasiba.norova001@umb.edu



CAN we, language educators, create a peaceful environment in our classrooms? This is a question that many educators ask themselves, especially in today's world where conflicts and violence seem to be happening all around us. In this context, it becomes more important than ever to promote peace education in schools. As someone who identifies as a Muslimah, a mother, a woman of color, a teacher, a student, and a human being, I have personally experienced people's "special interest" in me because of my hijab and asked where I am from at least four times for the past week. I wonder if this would be the case in a world where peace prevails, and people are accepting of each other's differences. This line of thinking led me to reflect on the diverse student populations in K-12 classes, including those who are culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse and may have experienced forcible displacement, internal conflicts, international wars, and/or natural disasters. According to the Rule of Law in Armed Conflicts project, there are currently over 110 armed conflicts around the globe, with more than 45 occurring in the Middle East and North Africa, over 35 in Africa, 21 in Asia, seven in Europe, and six armed conflicts in Latin America. However, only some of these conflicts attract more media attention than others, so it's important to keep in mind that the world is not at peace. In light of this, the U.S. K-12 educational setting is a unique multicultural, multiracial, and multiethnic setting where we can find original narratives that illuminate war and peace, conflict and resolution, trauma and healing that transcend geographical, political, and religious barriers (Morgan & Vandrick, 2009). One way to promote peace in the classroom is through peace education.

Peace education is a movement that began in the late 1950s that promotes values such as tolerance, empathy, responsibility, understanding, and respect (Galtung, 2008). Prominent educational scholars such as Dewey and Freire have contributed to the development of peace education through their pedagogical contributions (Bajaj, 2008). For John Dewey, peace education was seen as an instrument for effectively promoting global understanding and international harmony which could have been possible only by transforming the way Geography and History classes are taught in the United States K-12 schools (Howlett, 2008). For a radical humanist, Paulo Freire, on the other hand, who has lived in exile for 15 years due to the military dictatorship in Brazil, education is a form of politics and schools are far from neutral institutions. Hence, liberation and peace can be achieved through dialogic problem-posing education, which develops learners' critical consciousness; and leads to the co-construction of knowledge (Bartlett, 2008).

Peace education nurtures interpersonal, intercultural, and international values such as tolerance, empathy, responsibility, understanding, and respect. Through peace education, students learn about the threats of violence and how to strategically approach peace.

Peace education nurtures interpersonal, intercultural, and international values such as tolerance, empathy, responsibility, understanding, and respect. Through peace education, students learn about the threats of violence and how to strategically approach peace (Bajaj, 2008). Peace education emancipates children's spirits and promotes love and appreciation of peace as a fundamental value in people's lives. In addition, the topic of peace education is connected to the peaceful co-existence of diverse cultures, ethnicities, racialized groups, and diverse religions which entails discussing critical topics such as racism, sexism, social discrimination, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other social injustice issues happening in societies across the globe (Guetta, 2013).

Montessori wrote that "Preventing conflicts is the work of politics; establishing peace is the work of education" (as cited in Guetta, 2013, p. 167). So, even though there are ongoing conflicts between religious groups, brotherly peoples, and sister nations, peace can be established in the classroom by carrying out peace education activities in the classrooms (Bajaj, 2008; Harris, 2004). Below

are some suggested activities by prominent peace education scholars that can be transferred to English as an additional and/or English language art classes. Peace activities can foster inner peace (peace inside us), interpersonal, inter-group/national/cultural, and peace with the land we reside in and sustain our livelihood in (Oxford, 2008).

For Pentón Herrera and colleagues (2003), storytelling is an intellectual process of peacebuilding in the classroom that can lead to healing and peace for the narrator and the audience. Martínez-Alba and Pentón Herrera (2022) suggest using wordless books or picture books that do not include written texts with a focus on how students conceptualize peace and how they wove peacebuilding into the plot of the wordless books. As an illustration, they offer to use a wordless book entitled "The Chicken Thief" by Béatrice Rodriguez for pre-K through first grades. In this peacebuilding storytelling activity learners are asked to discuss an array of emotions the chicken and friends experience and create a peaceful ending for the emergent conflict.

Rebecca Oxford (2017) offers a range of activities that can be applied to a range of age groups. One of the activities for understanding and exploring peace in the classroom is to "Think about peace definitions" (Oxford, 2017, p. 134). Indeed, peace can be perceived differently by many people, for instance Pentón Herrera & Martínez-Alba (2022) argue, "In most cultures, peace is understood as a state of tranquility, quiet, or harmony in personal relations. In a social and global sense, peace is often associated with happiness, prosperity, respect, friendship, and agreements" (p. 72). After identifying how students make sense of "peace", they can discuss the most and the least favorite definitions as well as discuss similarities and differences among generated definitions. Moreover, Oxford (2017) recommends approaching peace education multimodally which engages students both individually and collaboratively. In these activities, students "Create Individual Artwork About Peace"

After identifying how students make sense of "peace", they can discuss the most and the least favorite definitions as well as discuss similarities and differences among generated definitions.

which is gradually developed into a “Collaborative Peace Mural”. Because these activities are carried out in teams and groups, they promote interpersonal communication and a multimodal approach to language learning. Some other activities for teaching peace in the classroom include:


Peace education is a human right. Respectively, studying and living in peace are inherently human rights.

“Positive self-talk” as a way of cheering up oneself to feel stronger, empowered, and self-directed.

“Writing a love letter” to people, a land piece, a formerly inhabited house, to mother nature or anything that people are missing or affectionate about

“I trade __X__ for peace” that makes students reflect on things they would be willing to give up for establishing peace in certain places and among certain people.

Searching for peace in media outlets in different genres such as stories, editorials, poems, video podcasts, and/or artwork and exploring them together with class.

According to Freire (1970/1990), knowledge is a product of co-construction and interaction among teachers and students. It “emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopefully, inquiry men [sic] pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 58). Galtung (2008) also argues that “Both peace research and peace education will ultimately lead to peace action” (p. 50). In another publication (Norova, 2022), I called for educators to promote peace in their classrooms and create classrooms of peace in English classrooms. Education is a human right. Peace education is a human right. Respectively, studying and living in peace are inherently human rights (Page, 2008). I want to finish my article as a way of sending my peaceful wishes to you, your families, and your students “As-Salaam-Alaikum” which means “peace be unto you”. 

REFERENCES

Bajaj, M. (Ed.). (2008). *Encyclopedia of peace education*. Information Age Publishing.

- Freire, P. (1970/1990).** *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum Press.
- Galtung, J. (2008).** Form and content of peace education. In M. Bajaj (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of Peace Education* (pp.49-59). Information Age Publishing.
- Guetta, S. (2013).** From peace education to culture of peace: contexts and issues. *From peace education to culture of peace: contexts and issues*, 167-179.
- Harris, I. M. (2004).** Peace education theory. *Journal of Peace Education*, 1(1), 5-20.
- Howlett, C. (2008).** John Dewey and peace education. In M. Bajaj (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of peace education* (pp.15-25). Information Age Publishing.
- Lesley Bartlett, L. (2008).** Paolo Freire and peace education. In M. Bajaj (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of peace education* (pp. 39-45). Information Age Publishing.
- Martínez-Alba, G., & Pentón Herrera, L. J. (2023).** Strength in storytelling: Peacebuilding via wordless books. *TESOL Journal*, e735.
- Morgan, B., & Vandrick, S. (2009).** Imagining a peace curriculum: What second language education brings to the table. *Peace & Change*, 34(4), 510-532.
- Norova, N. (2022).** World Englishes and linguicism: Spreading linguistic tolerance. In B. Birch (Ed.), *Creating classrooms of peace in English language teaching* (pp. 208-225). Routledge.
- Oxford, R. (2017).** Peace through understanding: Peace activities as innovations in language teacher education. In T. Gregersen & P. MacIntyre (Eds.). *Innovative practices in language teacher education: Spanning the spectrum from intra-to inter-personal professional development* (pp. 125-163). Springer.
- Page, J. (2008).** The United Nations and peace education. In M. Bajaj (Eds.). *Encyclopedia of peace education* (pp.75-85). Information Age Publishing.
- Pentón Herrera, L. J., Trinh, E., & Park, G. (2023).** Storytelling as an outlet for restoration and peacebuilding: An introduction to the Special Issue. *TESOL Journal*, e763.
- Rule of law in armed conflicts (n.d).** Geneva Academy. <https://geneva-academy.ch/research/rule-of-law-in-armed-conflicts-rulac>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nasiba Norova is a doctoral candidate in Applied Linguistics at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Her research interests include second-language writing, Global/World Englishes, culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies for multilingual learners, racial literacies, and internationalization in the composition classroom for multilingual writers. Her doctoral dissertation concerns international Asian students' experiences with race and racial literacies in the composition class.

Immigrants' Day at the State House 2024

Kelly Mowers

kellyelizabethmowers@gmail.com



IT WAS A WET DAY IN BOSTON, but that did not deter people from attending *Immigrants' Day at the State House* on March 28th. The line moved slowly through security and grew so long that it was impossible to see where it ended. I was behind a group in matching blue t-shirts. They were laughing and smiling, and their excitement was contagious. If I hadn't been so shy, I could have properly met them and learned more about them. Instead, besides smiling at each other, our only interaction was when this mysterious group in blue asked me what time it was and if I had the program of events. I took out my printed version and let them know that at that time, there was a networking and story collection time and that we were currently missing the Haitian choir, which I was sad about because I had purposely woken up at 5 a.m. so that I could share stories and hear the choir sing. The circle dressed in blue all looked a bit nervous and thanked me. I later learned they were members of the BMBCC's (Boston Missionary Baptist Community Center) Haitian choir that sang beautifully in the Hall of Flags. I had not realized this group was part of the choir and was missing their performance. I would have suggested that the choir members move to the front of the line. The lesson I learned is to always introduce yourself, even if you feel like you are intruding.

There were many excellent speakers, and the Hall of Flags was breathtaking and well-attended. I did not think we could fit any more people in the space, but we kept adjusting and forming little circles where we would introduce ourselves. I met some lovely students from around the world who attended UMass Boston. At 10:45, a member of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) came out on the balcony to take the annual group photo. I do not think anyone will see me waving from the far wall!

The Speaker Series featured a variety of distinguished guests. Additional information about each person can be found on MIRA's website.

- Cristian Dubon Solis, Program Coordinator for Stories Inspiring Movements (SIM)
- Gladys Vega, Executive Director of La Colaborativa (formerly Chelsea Collaborative)
- Elizabeth Sweet, MIRA's Executive Director
- Ronald J. Mariano (D-Quincy), Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives
- Manny Cruz, State Representative (D-7th Essex)
- Lydia Edwards, State Senator (D-3rd Suffolk)
- Maroni Minter, Master of Ceremonies and MIRA's Political Director

The speakers were fascinating and created an atmosphere of unity. After the speeches, many of us visited various legislators' offices to speak with them about concerns and to give them literature about MIRA's State Legislative and Budget Priorities.

These speakers were fascinating and created an atmosphere of unity. After the speeches, many of us visited various legislators' offices to speak with them about concerns and to give them literature about MIRA's State Legislative and Budget Priorities. They have ten powerful priorities that our representatives should be supporting. I visited Senator Julian Cyr's office without an appointment. I was welcomed in, and a top aide came to discuss the issues I was concerned about. Senator Cyr was in another meeting, but I feel confident he is an ally in our efforts to support and welcome immigrants to the Commonwealth.

Here are a few of MIRA's legislative and budget priorities:

- Language Access and Inclusion Act would ensure that state agencies provide public information and services in the primary languages of its limited English-proficient state residents.
- Upstream RAFT Act would protect all low-income state residents from eviction or foreclosure by codifying and streamlining access to

DHCD's homelessness prevention program.

- Safe Communities Act would end state and local involvement in civil immigration enforcement, increasing immigrant access to court and police protection.
- Tuition Equity Act would ensure that all MA high school graduates have access to in-state tuition at the Commonwealth's public colleges and universities, regardless of immigration status.
- Cover All Kids Act would expand comprehensive MassHealth coverage to children and young adults whose only barrier to eligibility is their immigration status.
- Physician Pathway Act would marshal the skills of seasoned, internationally-trained physicians to address acute physician shortages in Massachusetts by creating a streamlined pathway to full licensure.

I often look to MIRA for advice and direct individuals to MIRA's website and telephone assistance helplines.

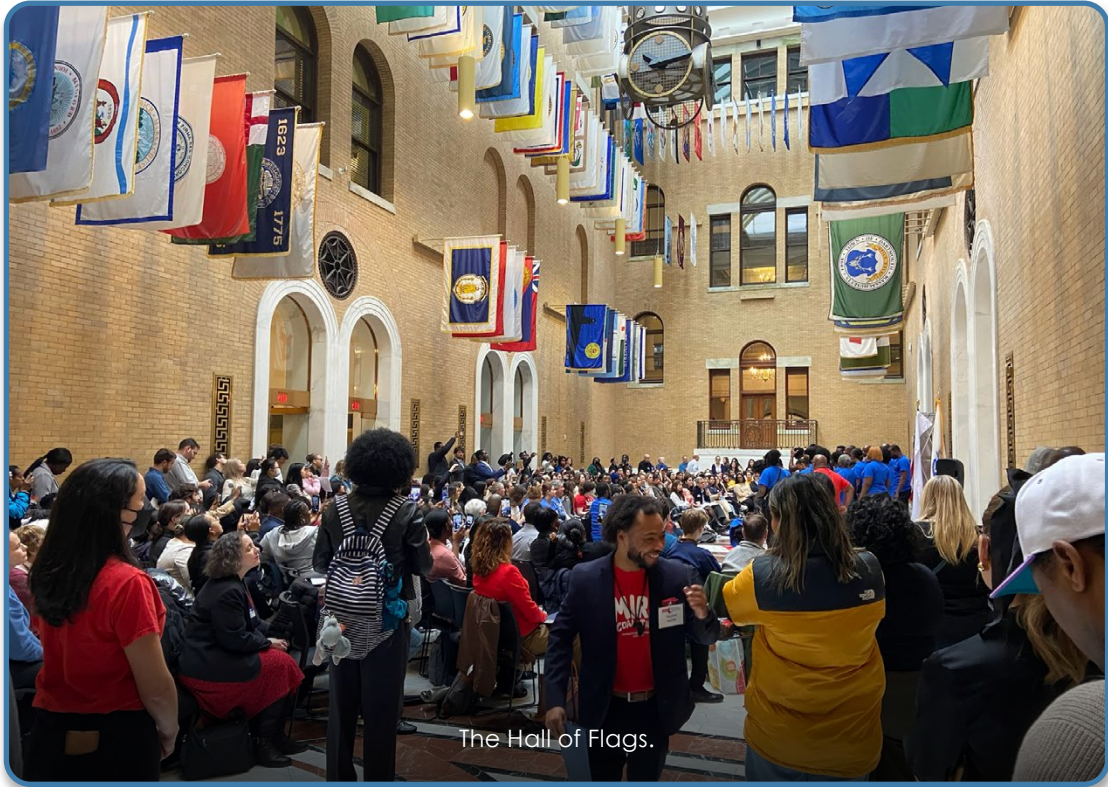
As educators of MLLs, we often wear many hats. We help families navigate this new and unknown land many have recently arrived in. I know I have helped with housing, medical appointments, health insurance, legal assistance, jobs, interviews, immigration, driving licenses, car insurance, FAFSA, and university applications, to name the first examples that come to me. As professional educators, we don't always have all the answers to questions that families from other countries may ask us and need to know. This is why MATSOL's collaboration with other organizations is so important. I often look to MIRA for advice and direct individuals to MIRA's website and telephone assistance helplines. All of MIRA's priorities are pieces of legislation that most MATSOL members would also support, as they open doors to refugees that have been closed for far too many years.

One of the absolute highlights of the event for me was seeing the impact of MATSOL's partnership with MIRA. They had set up many tables outside of the singing and speeches, filled with pamphlets and materials that could support our students and families. They also sell fantastic bumper stickers, bags, and t-shirts that we can purchase on their website. It was a proud moment for me to see MATSOL being recognized as a sister organization to MIRA, and I could sense their excitement at our presence. Our partnership is truly making a difference, and I'm proud to be a part of it. MIRA stands behind MATSOL's mission, and MATSOL stands behind theirs.

I would also like to share that the MIRA coalition has started an Immigration Advocate Legal Helpline as advertised on their website: “24/7 Immigration Helpline open to all Massachusetts-based providers serving immigrants and refugees... aims to provide community-based organizations with answers to the most commonly asked legal questions. This helpline accepts voicemails 24/7 at (508) 293-1871.”

I just helped my daughter and her new husband from Greece prepare his paperwork for the USCIS. I cannot stress enough how complex this paperwork was to fill out and how expensive it was to pay for. I knew it was challenging, but we researched information for weeks. Not only were we lost with which documents we had to finish, but we were also extremely worried that we were not understanding the questions correctly. We turned in a packet of over one hundred pages of information, pictures, and medical exams. He just had his fingerprints taken, and now we are waiting. I hope he is able to stay in the U.S.A. because if they deny him, my daughter will also move away. I wish I had known about this helpline while we struggled to complete the requirements. We had many ques-

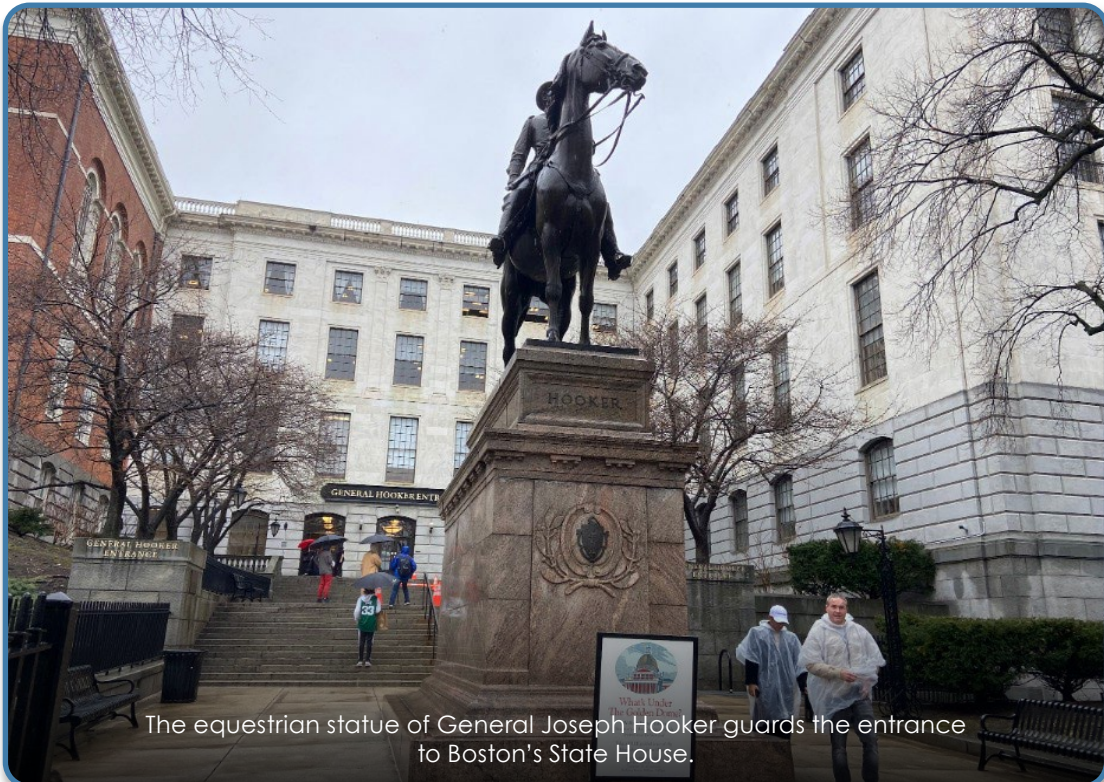




The Hall of Flags.



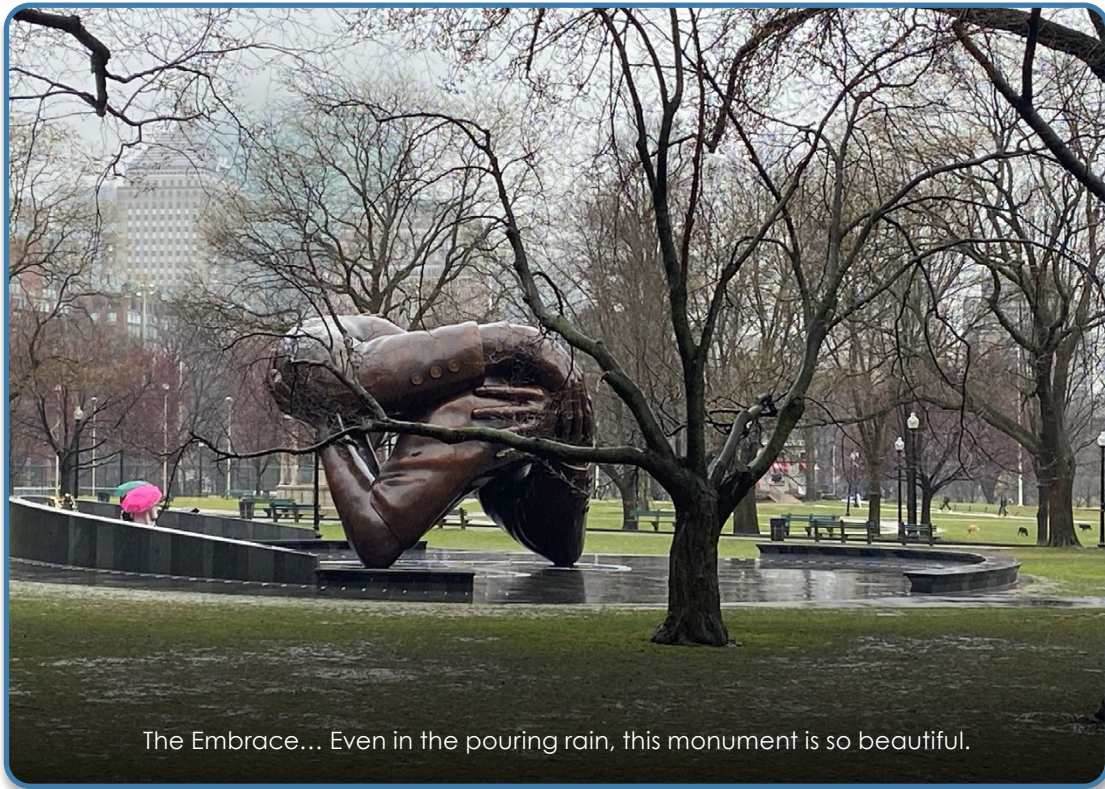
Senator Lydia Edwards speaking to an enthralled audience.




The equestrian statue of General Joseph Hooker guards the entrance to Boston's State House.



I found the State House to be a labyrinth inside, but it is so worth getting lost and wandering!



tions and couldn't afford to hire a lawyer. MIRA is aware of the ambiguity of the questions and the financial strain of legal advice and has found a way to help everyone figure things out independently. It is a highly stressful process, and this helpline can make it easier for everyone needing to navigate the immigration process. Please share this information.

I would encourage everyone to attend this event next year and visit MIRA's website to find resources for our families. I thank MIRA for organizing this important event. I have included some photos from my visit. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelly Elizabeth Mowers is a writer and teacher of English for Multilingual Learners. She has taught in various locations worldwide during her travels. Her latest teaching adventure has brought her to Massachusetts. Kelly is on the steering committee of MATSOL's Advocacy SIG and is also a member of MATSOL's Board of Directors.

Optimizing new DESE IEP guidelines for multilingual learners in MA

Kelly Cooney

cooneykel@gmail.com

Claudia Rinaldi

crinaldi@lasell.edu



WHO IS A DUALY IDENTIFIED STUDENT?

Students identified as both English learners (ELs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) are referred to as dually identified students. Every classroom thrives on the unique strengths and talents its students bring. Dually identified students are no exception. They possess a remarkable ability to navigate multiple languages and cultures, demonstrating a strong foundation for communication and critical thinking, and many show remarkable creativity and resilience in navigating their disabilities. Understanding their individual learning styles and providing tailored support can unlock their full potential and empower them to become confident and successful.

In April 2023, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) released a new Individual Education Program (IEP), which districts are expected to transition to by 2024 as part of the IEP Improvement Project. The IEP was redesigned to increase team members' collaboration, center students' vision, provide transition guidance, and “identif[y] language acquisition issues for English Learners in the student profile” ([The Policy Minute, Massachusetts Teachers Association](#)). In this article, we will provide guidance on how to use the new IEP from the Massachusetts Department of Secondary and Elementary Education (MA DESE so that it is culturally and linguistically sustaining. Specifically, we will suggest conversation starters to support collaborative teams in the IEP development process.

LEGAL BACKGROUND

Several important federal laws guarantee the rights of ELs and SWD. Multilingual learner (ML) educators should know the laws to advocate effectively for students and families. In some districts, there is still confusion about special ed-

education services “trumping” English as a Second Language services, and whether laws governing EL education are enforceable (Kangas, 2018). However, the laws are clear: schools must provide dually identified students with both the language assistance and disability-related services to which they are entitled.

Schools must provide dually identified students with both language assistance and disability-related services.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all eligible children with disabilities, including (ELs). Schools must also meet their obligations under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), reauthorized as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), *Lau vs. Nichols*, 1974, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA) and *Castaneda v. Picard*, 1981. These laws ensure ELs can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs. Furthermore, IDEA requires EL’s parents and guardians to understand and participate fully in IEP meetings. This requirement includes providing access to translation (written) and interpretation (oral) services, which foster the collaborative environment necessary to make informed decisions about how to best support the EL student’s success.

CULTURALLY & LINGUISTICALLY SUSTAINING MTSS

To avoid over and under-identification of English learners in Special Education due to a lack of instruction and practices that meet their assets and needs, schools need to create culturally and linguistically sustaining (CLS) approaches as part of their overall Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and particularly within Tier 1 instruction. The MTSS is a data-driven approach to education that ensures all students receive the right level of academic, social-emotional, and behavioral support. Schools use data to identify students who need help and provide them with targeted interventions that increase in intensity as needed. ([MA DESE MTSS Blueprint](#)).

CLS pedagogy refers to assets-based practices that honor students’ lived experiences, cultures, and linguistic backgrounds (Gay, 2003). In addition, Lucas and Villegas (2002) emphasize the importance of valuing linguistic diversity as a resource to be leveraged in the classroom. Table 1 summarizes key practices of CLS that we propose should be embedded into MTSS and the pre-referral process.

Table 1. Developing Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices

1. Build sociocultural consciousness
2. Develop an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds
3. Develop the commitment and skills to act as agents of change
4. Understand the constructivist foundations of culturally responsive teaching
5. Learn about students and their communities
6. Become familiar with the students' linguistic and academic backgrounds
7. Pay explicit attention to linguistic form and function because of how essential it is to second language learning
8. Develop skills for *scaffolding up* so that English learners can access grade-level tasks

Source: Lucas & Villegas (2013).

The first step in developing culturally and linguistically sustaining IEPs is to ensure Tier 1 instruction supports the needs and assets of English Learners scaffolding up, explicitly teaching language and content simultaneously, and using a translanguaging stance while also using data from universal screening and progress monitoring for both academic **and** language development.

Teachers should consider the following questions about their teaching to address preventive and proactive supports:

- *What is my culturally and linguistically sustaining philosophy?* For example, do I use an asset lens in my teaching practices? Do I believe that all students can learn with the right supports and explicit instruction? Do I learn about the backgrounds of my students? Do I seek out professional development to be able to best teach and advocate for multilingual learners?
- *How does my learning environment reflect CLS?* For example, do I have anchor charts that capture student voice, and that model the

WIDA Key Uses? Do I have multicultural books, and bilingual books in my classroom? Do I have anchor charts in students' native languages? Do I plan lessons that amplify student interactions about content?

- How do I teach explicit and systematic English language development? Do I use WIDA 2020 Key Uses to unpack the language demands of tasks? Do I plan lessons that explicitly teach the language functions and features of language needed for success across the content areas?
- *How do my assessment practices reflect CLS pedagogy?* Do I monitor my students' academic and language skills using formal and informal tools on a schedule as recommended by the MTSS framework in listening, speaking, reading and writing and share this information with ESL, Special Educator, and other relevant stakeholders? Do I provide students with checklists to monitor their own content and language development?

Answering these questions helps educators deliver asset-based, universally designed instruction that provides access for ELs.

For English learners who are dually identified or being evaluated for Special Education services, it is expected, under IDEA, that IEP meeting participants include English as a Second Language (ESL), bilingual, and other related EL educational staff, in addition to the school's standard IEP meeting participant list. This expectation ensures that representatives can bring data to reflect the student's English language development (ELD), native language proficiency, comparisons to true peers, and background information about student strengths. These collaborative structures serve as a way for teachers to learn from each other since, for example, special educators have different preparations. They might not know everything about how to make language visible using WIDA 2020 and English language development scaffolding methods. ESL teachers might not know about specially designed instruction that supports the broad spectrum of students with disabilities. Additionally, all staff should receive training on distinguishing *learning* differences from *language* differences and practices that support collaboration across special education, general education, ESL, and bilingual educators (US ED OELA English Learner Tool Kit; Honigsfeld and Cohen, 2024).

All staff should receive training on distinguishing learning differences from language differences and practices that support collaboration.

Figure 1. The MTSS Landscape: Progress Monitoring & Instructional Design

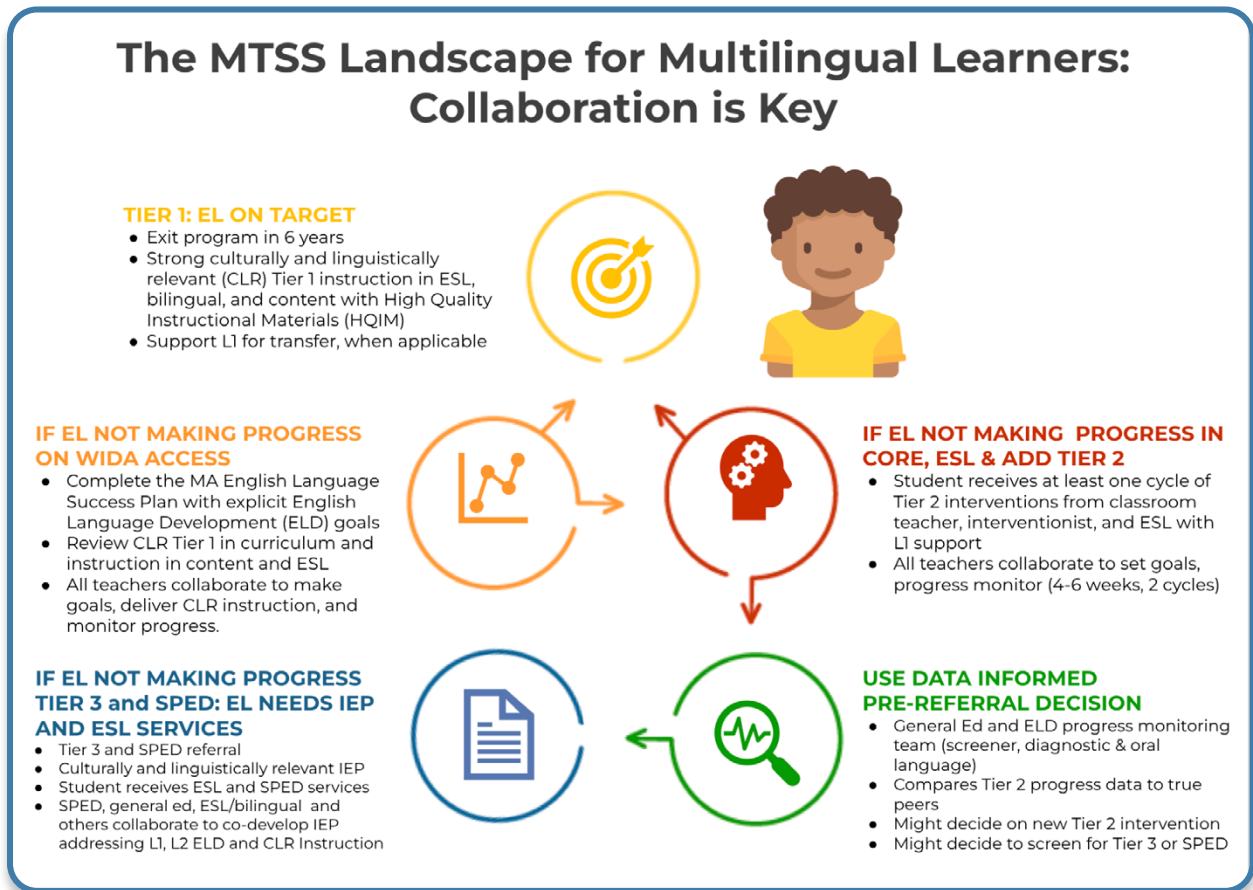


Figure 1 shows the MTSS and pre-referral landscape, which includes data from the Massachusetts English Proficiency Benchmarks ([English Proficiency Benchmarks Resources - English Language Learners](#)). ELs with two or more years of data are provided ACCESS targets determined by MA DESE. Meeting benchmarks means an EL is on track to attain English proficiency within six years of entering a Massachusetts public school. If a student does not make adequate progress toward reaching proficiency, a team of educators develops an English Learning Success Plan (ELSP) to support the student's English language development using WIDA 2020 standards and Proficiency Level Descriptors. These plans should provide individualized ELD goals that are progress monitored. MA DESE guidelines suggest that districts meld the ELSP process into the existing MTSS, pre-referral meetings, and IEP development. If an EL does not make progress on ACCESS, they should receive targeted instruction, and if an EL is not making

progress in the core subjects, they should be provided interventions. Unfortunately, EL students are denied math or ELA intervention in many schools due to their ELD level. Using ELD and other progress monitoring tools, collaborative teams should be established in the ELSP creation systems and throughout MTSS. These collaborative teams will be able to come up with a plan to support the ELs that might need additional assistance by IEP and EL educators.

Collaborative teams should be established in the ELSP creation systems and throughout MTSS. These collaborative teams will be able to come up with a plan to support the ELs that might need additional assistance.

LEVERAGING THE NEW IEP FORMAT

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) released a new IEP format that can be helpful in creating culturally and linguistically sustaining IEPs if the English learner-designated sections are completed thoughtfully and appropriately.

In this article, we will offer suggestions for conversation starters the IEP team can use to think collaboratively about two sections in particular: the English Learner and Present Levels sections. These suggestions stem from research on developing culturally and linguistically sustaining IEPs. They include consideration of En-

[Our suggestions] include consideration of English language and home language proficiency; cultural values from the student's background; and interventions, goals and progress monitoring tools that are aligned with English language development.

glish language and home language proficiency; cultural values from the student's background; and interventions, goals and progress monitoring tools that are aligned with English language development (Hamayan, Marler, Sanchez-Lopez and Damico 2023; Hoover and Patton 2017). Tables 2 through 4 demonstrate the questions that special education administrators and educators should include in the special education referral, evaluation, and IEP development process.

Table 2. IEP English Learner Section Question: Describe the student's English Learner Education program, English as a Second Language services, and progress toward English language proficiency benchmarks.

Programmatic Model Questions	Progress Toward Language Proficiency Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What English Learner Education Program is the student currently enrolled in? In previous schools? (See MA DESE ELE program types, MA DESE) • What ESL program delivery model has been used? (See MA DESE ESL delivery models) • How will ESL program delivery be provided during general Tier 1 instruction? • How will ESL program delivery support Tier 2 and 3 interventions? • How will ESL program delivery be integrated into special education services? How will direct service or consultation happen? • How will ESL be part of the annual special education evaluation process? • What is the pathway for the Seal Of Biliteracy in the district? • Is the student part of a SLIFE program? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the student's ACCESS scores prior to referral? (every year available, to see growth over time) • Has the student made progress in ACCESS Benchmark Targets? If not, which domains were highest? Lowest? What are the EL goals? Which teachers have been implementing targeted instruction to meet the goals? • Has the student made progress in MTSS universal screeners and progress monitoring data in ELA and math? Are those connected with ESL supports? • How will ACCESS English Language Benchmark goals be worked into the instructional plan in the least restrictive environment and the specialized education service environment?

The English Learner section of the IEP also includes a question about language needs. A good way to approach this question is to think of language needs in terms of assessment and instruction and the type of education programming (i.e. SEI, transitional, dual language, etc). We consider home languages to be an asset to be harnessed for both. The questions and suggestions in Table 3 are vital to the collaborative process between general education, bilingual, ELD, and SPED educators in order to generate culturally and linguistically appropriate goals and instructional practices.

Table 3. IEP English Learner Section Question: Identify any language needs and consider how they relate to the student's IEP.

Assessment Questions	Instruction Questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did classroom observations show about the student's language interactions both in interpersonal and academic situations? • Were formal assessments conducted in the student's first language (L1) and English? • Were bilingual assessments considered and conducted in the special education evaluation? • Were formative or informal assessments used in L1? What did the data show? • What do universal MTSS data screeners and progress monitoring show about responding to instruction? Is first language and ESL support part of the assessment process? • What does a comparison of student work from true peers (classmates with the same language, family background, years in EL program, age, grade) reveal? • How will the student's IEP goals be inclusive of home language and translanguaging? • How will the IEP goals and monitoring be inclusive of English Language Development? • How will the special education teacher and ESL teachers collaborate to develop goals, look at student work, and monitor progress in language and academics? • How will parents be notified of progress in their home language, as appropriate, of academic skills and language growth? • Are there any gaps in formal education? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the student's teachers embrace a culturally and linguistically sustaining philosophy and stance? • Is instruction aligned to WIDA 2020? • Does the curriculum include best practices for ELs? Is it culturally and linguistically sustaining? • What percentage of the student's teachers are highly qualified (MA DESE Educator Effectiveness)? • How is translanguaging included in instruction? • How will instruction reflect cultural and linguistically relevant delivery? • Does instruction include attention to language and content development (both, explicitly)? • What augmentative communication device (AAC) be needed and in which languages? • Does the student have access to High Quality Instructional Materials? (HQIM) Curriculum Matters: Instructional Materials and Professional Development, Next Generation ESL Tools and Resources • Does instruction include targeted attention to the goals of the English Learner Success Plan? (English Proficiency Benchmark targets)

An additional and important part of IEPs under IDEA is the consideration of Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP). This section summarizes where the student is academically, socially, behaviorally, and in communication skills. It provides a starting point for developing goals, accommodations, and modifications. For this population the focus should reflect culturally and linguistically relevant instruction and practices. Considerations of students' lived experience, home culture, and community exposure should be included in addition to the quality of former instruction received in both the core and in ESL.

For culturally and linguistically diverse students, a comprehensive PLAAFP must acknowledge the interplay of cultural and linguistic background, language acquisition, and academic ability. In addition to the questions asked in the new IEP, teams should consider the topics in Table 4.


An additional and important part of IEPs under IDEA is the consideration of Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP). This section summarizes where the student is academically, socially, behaviorally, and in communication skills.

Table 4. IEP Present Levels Section: Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

Area of PLAAF	Description of Current Skills for ELs	Resources
Academic	<p>What is the current data aligned to WIDA Proficiency Level Descriptors? What genre-specific functions and features can the student do? Be specific in describing what a student can do with explicit instruction across the domains</p>	<p>The 2020 Edition WIDA, Supporting Multilingual Learners' Language Growth through Language Development Portfolios WIDA</p>
	<p>What is the student's Home Language proficiency and context in their community? Consider the student's use of home language at home and in the classroom. Does the current level of home language use impact student learning? Observe whether a student benefits from planned translanguageing in class.</p>	
	<p>Using the high-leverage best practices available in the implementation of HQIM, what can the student do in the core subjects? Consider if and how the instruction develops content and language simultaneously</p>	<p>Benchmarks of Quality</p>
	<p>What is the student's current literacy level? Consider if the student has received Science of Reading for Multilingual Learners instruction</p>	<p>Early Literacy for Multilingual Learners: Cross Cutting Ideas, Mass Literacy - Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education</p>

Communication	Consider using statements describing cultural practices that may differ from the majority culture (e.g., eye contact, responding, touch, speaking up or not speaking up, talking back, not speaking, etc.)	Consider Culture Before Referral of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students for Special Education Services Colorín Colorado Parent interviews
Behavioral/ Social/ Emotional	Consider how home culture, history of trauma if any, or other aspects of the student's cultural and linguistic background might influence this.	Developmental Disability Across Cultures, Page 3: Cultural Influences on Behavior

The goal of this article was to serve as a guide on how to use the new Massachusetts IEP form to support dually identified students. In the new IEP, an English learner's language and culture are now at the forefront of discussion, and it is the multidisciplinary team's responsibility to ensure the right stakeholders (i.e. ESL, bilingual educators) are included in referral and eligibility decisions for ELs referred to special education.

The new IEP also presents an opportunity for the administrators, ESL, or bilingual educators to serve as an expert on culturally and linguistically sustaining practice, to ensure that ESL support is not trumped, but in fact strengthened by services provided in the least restrictive environment, whether that is in the general education classroom, pull out services or sub-separate classrooms. At this critical time, with these important changes in the IEP form, we, as English learner champions, must advocate to have a seat at the table and use our seat to ensure ELs with disabilities have a chance to achieve grade-level mastery and college and career readiness. We urge you to bring these conversations to every MTSS team meeting, child study team meeting, and special education referral meeting to strengthen professional learning and collaboration for the benefit of EL students and their families. 

REFERENCES

de Lourdes B. Serpa, M. (2011, May). An imperative for change: Bridging special and language learning education to ensure a Free and Appropriate Education in the Least Restrictive Environment for ELLs with Disabilities in Massachusetts. *Gastón Institute Publications*. 152. https://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/152/

Hamayan, E. V., Marler, B., López, S. C., & D'Amico, J. (2023). *Special education considerations for multilingual learners: Delivering a continuum of services.* Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Hoover, J. J., & Patton, J. R. (2017). *IEPs for ELs and other diverse learners.* SAGE.

Johnson, T. (2022, April 18). The importance of cultural competency in special education. Retrieved from <https://www.medbridge.com/blog/2022/04/the-importance-of-cultural-competency-in-special-education>

Kangas, S. E. (2018). Breaking one law to uphold another: How schools provide services to English learners with disabilities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 52(4), 877–910. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.431>

Lucas, T., Villegas, A. M., & Freedson-Gonzalez, M. (2008). Linguistically responsive teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(4), 361–373.

Lucas, T. & Villegas, A. (2013). Preparing linguistically responsive teachers: Laying the foundation in preservice teacher education. *Theory Into Practice*, 52, 98–109.

US ED Office of English Language Acquisition (2015). English learner tool kit: Addressing English Learners with disabilities (Chapter 6). <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html>

Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1), 20–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053001003>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kelly Cooney is a consultant working with Massachusetts and Rhode Island schools and districts to create systems that improve outcomes for Multilingual Learners. Kelly has been an educator for over 25 years as an ESL, French, ELA and elementary Newcomer teacher in K-12 setting. Kelly also consults with ELSF and Understood.com and is an adjunct professor at Lasell University. Her relationship with Dr. Rinaldi began when she was a Grade 5 Newcomer classroom teacher in Boston Public Schools over ten years ago. Kelly believes strongly in building teacher leadership with the support of university partnerships.

Claudia Rinaldi, Ph.D. is Professor of Education at Lasell University. Her areas of research are the implementation of the Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) framework in urban settings with English learners, teacher education in bilingual special education, and diversifying the teacher pipeline. She has served on the board of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), as an advisor for the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), and as a Thought Leader for the National Center of Systemic Improvement (NCST) among other consulting work. Dr. Rinaldi has been working with Kelly to support district English learner system improvement.

Developing in-class speaking activities using AI-generated images

Ilka Kostka

i.kostka@northeastern.edu

Rachel Toncelli

r.toncelli@northeastern.edu



INTRODUCTION

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) platforms, which create unique text or images in response to user prompts, have created a need for educators to rethink assignments and assessments (UNESCO, 2023). Although GenAI has disrupted educational practices, it has also opened new avenues for innovating teaching and learning (Rudolph et al., 2023). As English language teachers, we have had to rethink much of what and how we teach in the age of GenAI. At the same time, we have also found some fun uses of these tools in our classes. In this article, we share one use of GenAI to engage students in speaking activities using generated images and discuss ideas for extending this activity to different lessons.

PREPARATION

Our students include advanced proficiency multilingual international students in two post-secondary pathways programs. The lesson we describe below was used in an advanced listening and speaking course. We wanted to develop a speaking activity to help students step out of their comfort zones and practice developing fluency in an impromptu speech. We also wanted to infuse novelty, creativity, and fun into this lesson while giving students an opportunity to speak spontaneously. To achieve this goal, we generated vivid images that served as the foundation for speaking tasks.

This lesson plan requires some prior image generation before class. First, you will need to create sentences then generate images from those sentences. We used ChatGPT-4 to create sentences and DALL-E 3 to generate images. For example, one of the sentences generated by ChatGPT-4 was: "The flabbergasted flamingo found itself flamboyantly flipping flapjacks for a flock of finicky frogs." We then prompted DALL-E 3 to produce an image based on this sentence, as shown in Figure 1. For students who need additional vocabulary support, key words can be added to the images as necessary for their language proficiency (e.g., *flamingo*, *pancakes*). If teachers do not have access to DALL-E, other GenAI tools can be used such as Image Creator from Microsoft Designer or ImageFX by Google.

We wanted to develop a speaking activity to help students step out of their comfort zones and practice developing fluency in an impromptu speech. We also wanted to infuse novelty, creativity, and fun into this lesson.

Figure 1. Sample Image Generated Using DALL-E 3



Lesson Plan Focus: Introduction hooks

Objectives:


- Apply a variety of strategies (e.g., question, story, interesting fact, statistic, intriguing fact/data) to hook an audience in an impromptu speaking activity
- Reflect on strategies that were most effective for immediately grabbing the audience's attention

Materials:

- Images generated by DALL-E copied into a presentation slide deck
- Classroom projector
- Notetaking Guide (with columns for students to summarize the type of hooks they hear and open space to note hook effectiveness; See Appendix)
- Anonymous exit ticket which asks students: How did this activity help you think about engaging your audience with hooks?

Time	Task
10 minutes	Review a variety of strategies for hooking an audience's attention
Approximately 2 minutes per student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the notetaking guide with students • Invite students to take turns coming to the front of the room to use a unique image to hook their classmates* <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Give speakers 30 seconds to look at their image and prepare a hook. Let them know that you can help with any additional vocabulary or questions while they prepare. b. While each student delivers a hook, the others use the note-taking guide to record the type of hook and their impression of its effectiveness <p>*Possible scaffold: Students can be given time to practice their presentations in pairs or small groups before presenting to the whole class.</p>
3 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage students in a turn and talk to a partner to discuss: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the effectiveness of various approaches to capturing an audience's attention b. the type of hook they will try to use in their next presentation
2 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to complete a personal reflection in the exit ticket
After class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback to students on their speaking skills and use of a presentation hook

LESSON REFLECTIONS

Overall, students seemed to enjoy themselves and remain highly engaged in this activity. We also felt that its low-stakes nature increased students' comfort speaking in front of the room and provided a confidence-building experience with public speaking. Infusing an element of fun seemed to enhance the students' connections to the classroom community. We suggest that creative image generation can be adapted to any content area or topic at nearly all grade levels and proficiency levels. For example, lower proficiency students can benefit from supportive scaffolds, such as offering key vocabulary words with each image and/or having the opportunity to practice in pairs or small groups before presenting to the whole class. Of note, we co-planned this lesson and used it in each of our classes. While collaboration is always valuable, we believe it is even more important than ever because GenAI continues to rapidly evolve. We encourage readers to find colleagues with whom they can work together to co-plan lessons and activities and explore innovative uses of GenAI tools. 

REFERENCES

- Rudolph, J., Tan, S., & Tan, S. (2023).** ChatGPT: Bullshit spewer or the end of traditional assessments in higher education? *Journal of Applied Teaching & Learning*, 6(1), 342-362.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2023).** *ChatGPT and artificial intelligence in higher education: Quick start guide.* <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385146>

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ilka Kostka is a teaching professor at Northeastern University, where she has taught English to multilingual international students for the past ten years. Her current interests include exploring the potential of generative artificial intelligence in language education.

Rachel Toncelli is a lecturer at Northeastern University where she teaches English language courses to international students. Rachel and Ilka are the co-recipients of the TESOL International Association's 2024 Ron Chang Lee Award for Excellence in Classroom Technology.

APPENDIX: NOTE-TAKING GUIDE

While listening:

1. Take notes on each speech using the table below.

After the speeches:

2. With a partner, discuss
 - a. the effectiveness of various approaches to capturing an audience's attention
 - b. the type of hook you will work on for your next presentation

Presenter's Name	Type of Hook (e.g., story, question, statistic, intriguing fact/data, or joke)	Notes/Takeaways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the most memorable phrase or idea from the hook, and why did it stand out? • Did the hook evoke any emotions? • How did the hook influence your desire to keep listening? • How memorable was the hook? Is it something you would remember after the speech? Why?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Navigating Educational Improvement: The Crucial Role of Identifying Problems

Jaimie Bin Li

jyxiaolongbao@gmail.com

Meredith G. O'Leary

meredithgoleary@gmail.com

Marjeta Bejdo

marjetabejdo@gmail.com



Educators attempt to solve challenging problems in the dynamic landscape of educational settings. Identifying and framing problems of practice (PoP) accurately is a fundamental step toward meaningful improvement. Building on the idea of design-based school improvement (Mintrop, 2018), this paper stresses the importance of identifying and framing PoP in school improvement work. Drawing on examples from our experiences as we identified our PoP related to multilingual learners (MLs), this paper highlights the multifaceted nature of educational challenges and explains the steps we took to name and frame our PoP. Our narratives also provide critical explanations of what needs to be done to understand PoP before jumping to a quick solution (Bryk et al., 2015).

NARRATIVES FROM THREE EDUCATORS

We are three educators that recently graduated from the Ed.D. Leadership in Education program at University of Massachusetts Lowell. In the following section, we present personal narratives of improvement science methods to navigate problem-defining and framing through literature reviews, needs assessments, and pilot studies at our respective educational institutions as seen in Figure 1. These narratives articulate the strategies and insights gained through problem-defining and how the change in our way of understanding the problem shaped the way we think about the solutions. Through our experiences, we

hope that readers will gain valuable perspectives on the complexities of educational improvement and the transformative potential of targeted problem-solving approaches.

Figure 1. Three Educators/ Researchers and Their Problems of Practice.

Marjeta	Jaimie	Meredith
Kindergarten Teacher at a mostly White suburb school that serves around 300 students, less than 12% of students are MLs.	Emergent Multilingual Learner Teacher (K-5) at a school where there is a significant population of MLs.	Building based Literacy Coach at a Title 1-supported K-8 urban school with over 900 students, serves a diverse population with 61.4% MLs.
Bridging the opportunity gap in literacy between MLs and monolingual English-speaking students.	Supporting mainstream teachers in effectively educating emerging MLs.	Enhancing general education teachers' effectiveness in instructing MLs by providing more effective professional development opportunities.

MARJETA'S PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

I am a kindergarten teacher in Washington state. When asked to identify an equity related PoP as the focus of my doctoral work, I decided to explore the low literacy scores of MLs in my organization. Initially, I identified this problem as an achievement gap and did not have a clear understanding of what was causing the problem.

Consultation of literature improved my understanding of factors at different systemic and organizational levels that have been causing and maintaining this problem. At the macro-level, factors such as English-only policies, standardized testing, systems of accountability (Mintrop & Sunderman, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Rosales & Walker, 2021), as well as institutional racism which develops and maintains xenophobic and monolingual views (August et al., 2009; Fillmore, 2000;

Haynes, 2010; Hiebert & Rojas, 2021) create and maintain the problem. At the meso-level, failures in organizational structures, with a focus on the lack of quality professional development (PD) for educators (Babinski et al., 2018; Lee & Buxton, 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2010), impact the problem. At the micro-level, factors such as teacher capacity, especially teachers' negative attitudes towards multilinguals (Johnson, 1992; Murphy & Torff, 2019; Rizzuto, 2017) as well as multilinguals' low engagement (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Brooks & Thurston, 2010) and their low self-efficacy (LeClair et al., 2009; Soland & Sandilos, 2020) affect this problem. Literature also made clear that the problem I focused on was not an achievement gap but rather an opportunity gap between multilingual and monolingual English speaking students (Goldstein, 2021; Irvine 2010, as cited in Milner IV, 2013).

The extensive literature review and the need assessments in my organization were critical to my understanding of my PoP. This also made it possible to narrow my focus down to factors that were on my sphere of influence.

To better understand what factors are causing and maintaining this problem in my organization, I engaged in a series of empathy interviews to “ensure that the diverse lived experiences of people are centered in decisions and actions” (Nelsestuen & Smith, 2020, p. 59). These interviews were completed with stakeholders at my organization, including administrators, classroom teachers, English Language Development teachers, paraprofessionals and parents of MLs. Some of the findings from the empathy interviews overlapped with findings from literature, especially the ones on the lack of teacher capacity to support MLs in literacy. Other factors emerged from these interviews which were specifically important for my organization and those included a perceived lack of teacher collaboration and self-efficacy to support MLs.

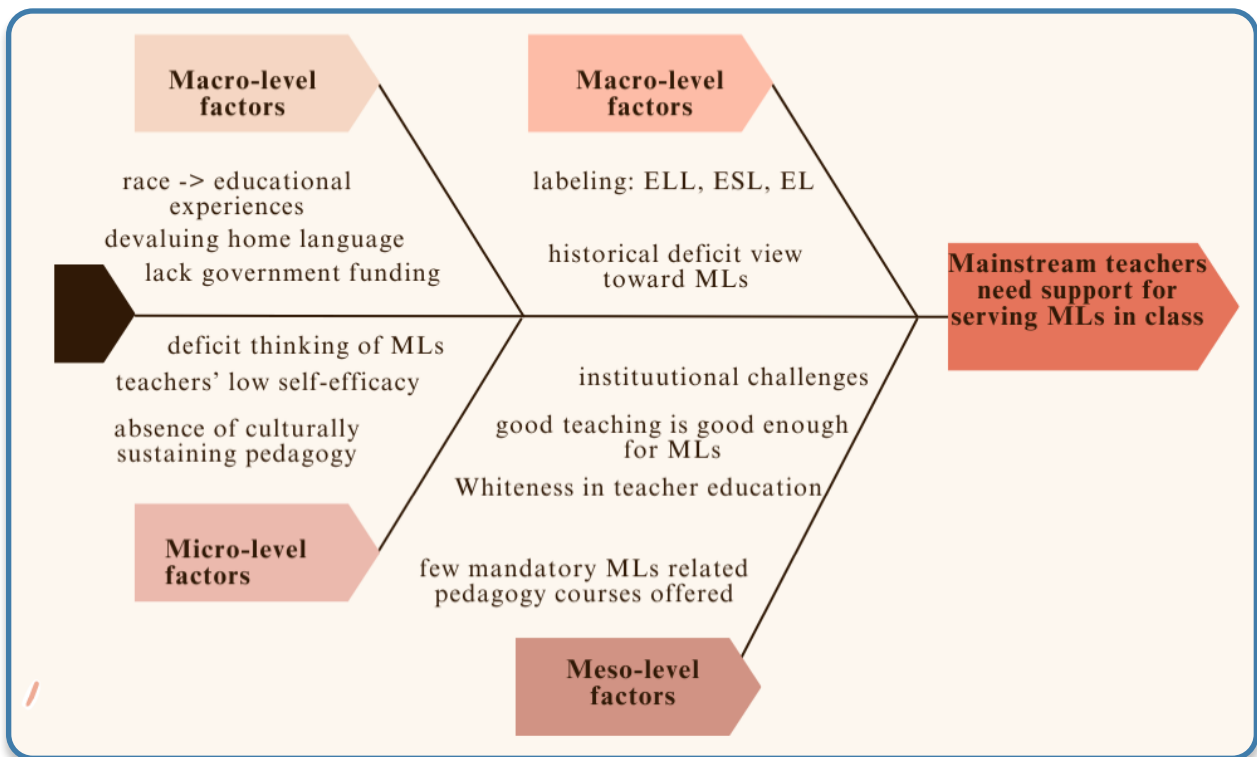
The extensive literature review and the need assessments in my organization were critical to my understanding of my PoP. This also made it possible to narrow my focus down to factors that were on my sphere of influence which included addressing the perceived lack of teacher collaboration and self-efficacy to support MLs (Bejdo, 2024).

JAIMIE'S PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

As an elementary school multilingual learners (ML) teacher from British Columbia, Canada, my PoP began with my daily observation and experiences working with mainstream teachers at my school. I assumed that some mainstream teachers were underprepared to support emergent ML students effectively in their classrooms (Li, 2024).

To narrow down the scope of my PoP so that the problematized situation can actually be improved in my sphere of power, I used a fishbone diagram (see Figure 2) to explore possible root causes contributing to my PoP. Through literature review, I gained insights into the complexities of MLs education, including issues related to teacher preparedness, instructional strategies, and cultural responsiveness.

Figure 2, Causal Factors Contributing to Current State of ML Education at Taylor Creek Elementary.



Following Mintrop's (2018) approach to involve all stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, students, parents and community members in the improvement process, I conducted a needs assessment with some mainstream teachers and a pilot study with the school principal and some MLs' parents. I crafted

Through [an] iterative data collection and analysis process, I identified issues related to teacher preparedness, instructional strategies, deficit-based perspectives and cultural responsiveness. I also learned about mainstream teachers' challenges – limited support, ML resources, and collaboration time.

open-ended questions to encourage participants to share their stories and reflections. I also investigated what was already working well at the school through an appreciative interview for potential solutions. Through this iterative data collection and analysis process, I identified issues related to teacher preparedness, instructional strategies, deficit-based perspectives and cultural responsiveness. I also learned about mainstream teachers' challenges—limited support, ML resources, and collaboration time. I sought to deepen my understanding of the specific needs and concerns of teachers, students, and families

affected by ML instruction. By triangulating findings from the literature review, needs assessment, and pilot study, I deepened my understanding of my initial thoughts about the PoP and reframed it from blaming teachers to supporting the needs of mainstream teachers in effectively educating MLs.

MEREDITH'S PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

I am a K-8 Literacy Coach in Massachusetts tasked with identifying a PoP with a social justice component to research as part of my doctoral program. As a building-based literacy coach, I first looked to schoolwide data from diagnostic and state testing. Noticing that testing scores for MLs were far lower than native English-speaking students at my school in all grade levels, I identified this as an achievement gap between these two subgroups. I then made a “mental representation of the problem” (Mintrop, 2018) and focused on the initial state of the problem; the desired state of the outcome; a set of allowable operators; and possible constraints.

Looking to literature to improve understanding led to confirmation that this “gap” existed and that many types of gaps existed and came from a variety of causes. Murphy and Torff (2019) state that there continues to be a “persistent achievement gap” (p. 7) between MLs and their native English-speaking peers. This can be seen not only on district testing but, state and national testing as well. Researchers argue that there are several different equity gaps, including

the achievement gap (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Fry, 2008; Zhang et al., 2020), racial gaps (Boykin & Noguera, 2011), and the opportunity gap (Milner IV, 2013). This gap is compounded through many levels of inequality. The macro-level factor of systemic racism (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Rothstein, 2019; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017), the meso-level factor of school capacity (Diamond & Spillane, 2002; Malen & Rice, 2004), and the micro-level factor of high-quality teaching (Boykin & Noguera, 2012; Bryk, 2010) all play their part in the impact this gap has on test scores. Furthermore, teacher training and professional development still lags behind the rapid growth of MLs in school. Teachers are not trained in strategies to support MLs and support closing the gap between MLs and their native English-speaking peers (Hutchinson, 2013, Kamps et al., 2007). Data from empathy interviews conducted with district staff indicated that participants feel that MLs are all our students, not just students that belong to the EL teacher; and that classroom teachers need to have high expectations for MLs which they were not currently holding (O’Leary, 2024).

Participants feel that MLs are all our students, not just students that belong to the EL teacher; and that classroom teachers need to have high expectations for MLs which they were not currently holding.

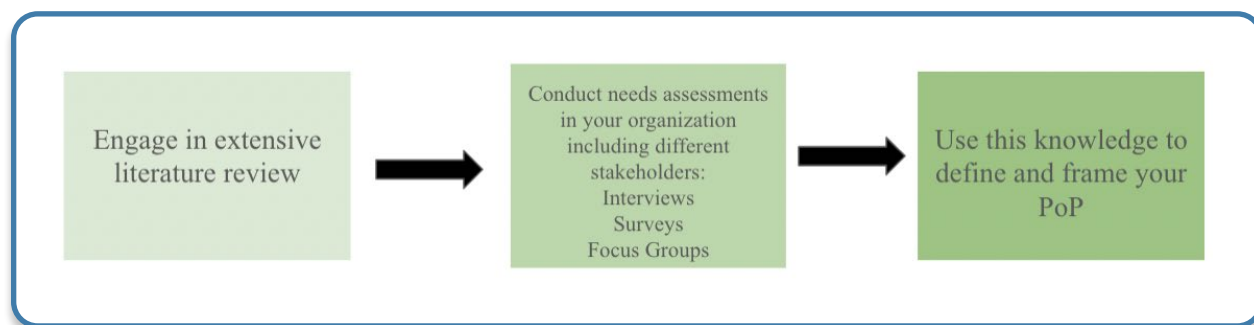
An initial understanding of the state of the PoP through local data and literature led to the creation of a desired or goal state (Mintrop, 2018) that included teacher training and support to boost teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy when working with MLs. A large study by Thoonen et al. (2011) suggests that professional development should no longer be done in isolation but be ongoing and embedded in the form of a professional learning community (PLC). Coaches can support the addition of new practices (Coburn & Woulfin, 2012) and navigating professional learning.

The operators for this would include having a classroom teacher and English Language Specialist work together to look at student work using a protocol to look for evidence of inequities in the student work and share ideas for increasing the classroom teacher’s efficacy in providing scaffolds and entry points for students.

CONCLUSION

As seen in these narratives a variety of improvement science methods including literature review and needs assessments, including interviews and focus groups, were used to identify and define the problem of PoP at each site. Figure 3 shows the steps that practitioners should use to define and frame a PoP.

Figure 3. Steps to Defining and Framing a PoP.



The narratives presented in this paper illuminate the transformative power of identifying and framing problems in educational improvement. The process demonstrated the importance of empathy-driven inquiry, collaborative problem-solving, and systemic analysis in addressing complex educational challenges. These steps were critical to our understanding of each PoP. The problem-identifying and framing process is profoundly significant in helping us internalize, develop, and utilize a collection of methods for ensuring success in the initial steps of school improvement work. [C](#)

REFERENCES

- August, D., Shanahan, T., & Escamilla, K. (2009).** English language learners: Developing literacy in second-language learners—report of the national literacy panel on language-minority children and youth. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 41(4), 432–452.
- Babinski, L. M., Amendum, S. J., Knotek, S. E., Sánchez, M., & Malone, P. (2018).** Improving young English learners' language and literacy skills through teacher professional development: A randomized controlled trial. *American Educational Research Journal*, 55(1), 117–143.
- Bejdo, M. (2024).** *Bridging the English literacy gap: Enhancing multilingual self-efficacy in teachers through structured co-planning and equity protocols.* (Publication No 30990089). [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Massachusetts Lowell]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Boykin, W. A., & Noguera, P. (2011).** *Creating the opportunity to learn: Moving*

from research to practice to close the achievement gap. ASCD.

- Brooks, K., & Thurston, L. P. (2010).** English language learner academic engagement and instructional grouping configurations part of the bilingual, multilingual, and multicultural education commons, and the educational assessment, evaluation, and research commons. *American Secondary Education*, 39(1). http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/coe_papers/137
- Bryk, A. S., Gomez, L. M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P. G. (2015).** *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Harvard Education Press
- Bryk, A. S. (2010).** Organizing schools for improvement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 91(7), 23–30.
- Coburn, C. E., & Woulfin, S. L. (2012).** Reading coaches and the relationship between policy and Practice. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 47(1), 5–30.
- Diamond, J. B., & Spillane, J. P. (2004).** High-stakes accountability in urban elementary schools: Challenging or reproducing inequality? *Teachers College Record*, 106(6), 1145–1176.
- Fillmore, Lily. W. (2000).** Loss of family languages- Should educators be concerned? *Theory Into Practice*, 39(4), 203–210. Fr, R. The role of schools in the English language learner achievement gap. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, June 2008.
- Goldstein, D. (2021).** Teachers and parents worry about measuring pandemic learning loss. *New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com>
- Haynes, E. (2010).** What is language loss? *Center for Applied Linguistics*.
- Hiebert, L., & Rojas, R. (2021).** A longitudinal study of Spanish language growth and loss in young Spanish-English bilingual children. *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 92.
- Hutchinson, M. (2013).** Bridging the gap: Preservice teachers and their knowledge of working with English Language Learners. *TESOL Journal*, 4(1), 25–54.
- Johnson, K. E. (1992).** The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices during literacy instruction for non-native speakers of English. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, XXIV (1), 83–108.
- Kamps, D., Abbott, M., Greenwood, C., Arreaga-Mayer, C., Wills, H., Longstaff, J., Culpepper, M., & Walton, C. (2007).** Use of evidence-based, small-group reading instruction for English language learners in elementary grades: Secondary-tier intervention. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 30(3), 153–168.
- LeClair, C., Doll, B., Osborn, A., & Jones, K. (2009).** English language learners' and non-English language learners' perceptions of the classroom environment. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(6), 568–577.
- Lee, O., & Buxton, C. A. (2013).** Teacher professional development to improve science and literacy achievement of English language learners. *Theory into*

Practice, 52(2), 110–117.

- Li, J. (2024).** *Increasing teacher self-efficacy in serving beginner emergent bilingual and multilingual students in mainstream classrooms through structured collaboration between mainstream and emergent bilingual and multilingual teachers.* (Publication No. 30990785) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Lowell]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Malen, B., & Rice, J. K. (2004).** A framework for assessing the impact of education reforms on school capacity: Insights from studies of high-stakes accountability initiatives. *Educational Policy*, 18(5), 631–660.
- Milner IV, H. R. (2013).** Rethinking achievement gap talk in urban education. *Urban Education*, 48(1), 3–8.
- Mintrop, H., & Sunderman, G. L. (2009).** Predictable failure of federal sanctions-driven accountability for school improvement-and why we may retain it anyway. *Educational Researcher*, 38(5), 353–364.
- Mintrop, R. (2018).** *Design-based school improvement: A practical guide for education leaders.* Harvard Education Press.
- Murphy, A. F., & Torff, B. (2019).** Teachers' beliefs about rigor of curriculum for English language learners. *Educational Forum*, 83(1), 90–101.
- Nelsestuen, K., & Smith, J. (2020).** Empathy interviews. *The Learning Professional*, 41(5), 59–62. www.learningforward.org
- Nieto, & Bode. (2012).** *Affirming diversity: the sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (6th ed.). Pearson.
- O'Leary, M. (2024).** *A case study on the effects of co-planning to develop teacher efficacy in supporting multilingual learners in literacy* (Publication No. 30993884) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts Lowell]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Rizzuto, Kerry. C. (2017).** Teachers' perceptions of ELL students: Do their attitudes shape their instruction? *Teacher Educator*, 52(3), 182–202.
- Rodriguez, D., Manner, J., & Darcy, S. (2010).** Evolution of teacher perceptions regarding effective instruction for English language learners. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 9(2), 130–144.
- Rosales, J., & Walker, T. (2021).** The racist beginnings of standardized testing: From grade school to college, students of color have suffered the effects of biased testing. *NEA Today*. <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/racist-beginnings-standardized-testing>
- Rothstein R. (2019).** The myth of de facto segregation. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(5), 35–38.
- Sensoy, Ö., & DiAngelo, R. (2017).** *Is everyone really equal? An introduction to key concepts in social justice education* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Soland, J., & Sandilos, L. E. (2020). English language learners, Self-efficacy, and the achievement gap: Understanding the relationship between academic and social-emotional growth. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 1–25.

Thoonen, E. E. J., Slegers, P. J. C., Oort, F. J., Peetsma, T. T. D., & Geijssel, F. P. (2011). How to improve teaching practices: The role of teacher motivation, organizational factors, and leadership practices. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 47(3), 496–536.

Zhang, J., Li, M., Yee, D., Park, B. J., Bohrnstedt, G., & Broer, M. (2020). *Reading motivation, reading achievement, and reading achievement gaps: Evidence from the NAEP 2015 Reading Assessment. AIR-NAEP Working Paper 2020-01.* American Institutes for Research.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jaimie Bin Li, Ed.D. is a multilingual learner teacher based in British Columbia, Canada. Dedicated to fostering collaboration with mainstream educators, Dr. Li empowers multilingual students to thrive in the educational landscape. Committed to equity and inclusion, her work bridges linguistic and cultural divides for a more supportive school environment.

Dr. Meredith G. O’Leary, Ed.D. is a literacy coach in Massachusetts, United States of America. As a coach, Dr. O’Leary supports teachers by offering professional development and opportunities for reflective practice to support the many learners they service.

Dr. Marjeta Bejdo, Ed.D. is a multilingual educator in Washington state. As an immigrant, she brings a vital perspective to her advocacy for equitable educational practices benefiting multilingual students. Her research interests currently include investigating teacher self-efficacy and how community partnerships can support multilingual student literacy.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Gold Sponsors matsol 2024 Conference 

 **FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY**  **LASELL UNIVERSITY**

 **flashlight learning**  **imagine learning**

Silver Sponsors matsol 2024 Conference 

 **ELEVATION**  **SupportEd**

 **ReachMyTeach and Lexikeet**
Communication & Language Services  **VISTA™**



imagine the future of learning

Collaborative. Innovative. Personalized. Equitable. Student-Centered.

Imagine Learning provides digital-first PreK–12 learning solutions for core instruction, supplemental and intervention, courseware, and virtual school services. Our mission is to ignite learning breakthroughs with forward-thinking solutions at the intersection of people, curricula, and technology. We serve 15 million students — partnering with more than half of districts nationwide.



[imaginelearning.com](https://www.imaginelearning.com)



Bringing the world to the classroom
and the classroom to life

ELTNGL.com

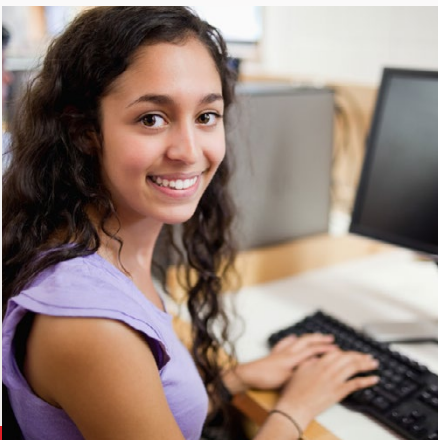


Learn more about our
English literacy solutions



SUPPORTING ALL K-12 MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

LANGUAGE • LITERACY • CULTURE



ELD AND ENGLISH LITERACY



Grades K-6



Grades 6-8



Grades 9-12

NEWCOMER PROGRAMS



Grade 1-6



Grades 6-12

PHONICS SOLUTIONS



Grades K-3

MULTI-LEVEL READERS



Grades K-6

Grades 6-12

ADAPTIVE ONLINE LITERACY



Grades K-8

EMPOWER YOUR TEACHING JOURNEY WITH LASELL GRADUATE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Unlock new teaching opportunities with our programs designed for current and aspiring educators. Gain skills that promote equity, ignite achievement, and advance your teaching career.

WHY CHOOSE LASELL?

- ▶ **DESE Approved**
- ▶ **Paid Internships** in Newton & Boston Public Schools
- ▶ **FreeMTEL** test preparation
- ▶ **Affordable** tuition
- ▶ **Small** class sizes
- ▶ **No GRE/GMAT** required
- ▶ **Scholarships** and grants available

CHOOSE YOUR PATH

- ▶ M.Ed. in Elementary Education (Grades 1-6)
- ▶ M.Ed. in Special Education in Moderate Disabilities (Pre-K-8)
- ▶ M.Ed. in Curriculum, Leadership, & Inclusion (Pre-K-8)
- ▶ Teaching Bilingual Learners with Disabilities Certificate

HAVE QUESTIONS? CONTACT US.

gradinfo@lasell.edu | 617-243-2400 | lasell.edu/gps
1844 Commonwealth Ave. | Newton, MA 02466

MASTER'S PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

HYBRID
FORMAT

24-MONTH
COMPLETION

FLEXIBLE
8-WEEK SESSIONS

FULL & PART TIME
AVAILABLE

36-39 CREDITS
DEPENDING
ON PROGRAM

LEARN
MORE



Evidence-Based Solutions for Multilingual Learners



Savvas.com
800-848-9500

Copyright © 2024 Savvas Learning Company LLC. All Rights Reserved. **Savvas**® and **Savvas Learning Company**® are the registered trademarks of Savvas Learning Company LLC in the US and in other countries.



Exceptional content and
courseware for **English**
language teachers

Try Ellii.com today!



COMMUNICATION FOR ALL

WITH



ReachMyTeach

&



LEXIKEET



On-Demand Interpreters

Instant language support ensures that no family is left out of important conversations. Through LexiKeet, live interpreters are available for critical meetings, ensuring clarity and understanding for all.

Parent-Teacher Conference Scheduling

Flexible scheduling options make it simple to coordinate meetings that work for every family. Automatic reminders and easy booking provide better engagement and support for student success.

INTERESTED IN A FREE PILOT?

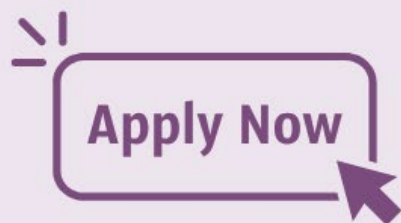
Email us! info@reachmyteach.com





The 2024–2025
Virtual Educator
application is open!

www.elprograms.org



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

**ENGLISH
LANGUAGE
PROGRAMS**

MATSOL BOARD AND STAFF

2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Chris Montecillo Leider, President
Molly Ross, Vice President & Clerk
Mary Hughes, Treasurer

AT-LARGE DIRECTORS

Michelle Boyle
Rachel Brainard
Silvia Fomin
Maira Greenson
Kelly Mowers
Anne Roberti
Yuiko Shimazu
Ivone Spencer
Lin Zhou

STAFF

Helen Solorzano, Executive Director
Chrissy Campos Howard, Director of Professional Learning
Jason Fei, Program & Member Engagement Coordinator
Emily Graham, Registration Coordinator
Teresa Kochis, Program Assistant

MATSOL CURRENTS

Johanna Tigert, Editor
Méritès Abelard, Associate Editor

REVIEWERS

Sharifa Djurabaeva
Amanda Goddard
Nghia Minh Nguyen
Rachel Wang

Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages
160 Alewife Brook Parkway #1201, Cambridge, MA 02138 · 617-820-5099 · www.matsol.org
Copyright © 2024 by Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.