**District-Level Needs Assessment:**

**Building a Supportive Infrastructure for Newcomer Students & Families**

*This needs assessment has been developed based on the U.S. Department of Education’s* [*Newcomer Toolkit*](https://ncela.ed.gov/educator-support/toolkits/newcomer-toolkit) *(June 2023) and MA DESE’s Office of Language Acquisition’s* [*Guidance*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/guidance/default.html) *and* [*Instructional Resources*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/esl-toolkit/default.html)*.*

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| **Welcoming Newcomers to a Safe and Inclusive School Environment[[1]](#footnote-2)** |
| **Legal Requirements** |
| * All children, regardless of their citizenship or residency status, are entitled to equal access to a free public education.
* Schools cannot ask for documentation that would prohibit or unlawfully discourage a student from enrolling in or attending school.
* Schools must ensure meaningful communication with limited English proficient parents – in a language they understand – of information about any program, service, or activity that is called to the attention of parents who are proficient in English.
* Schools must identify EL students who need services to learn English and provide these services to any student who is eligible.
* Schools must notify parents of their child’s eligibility for EL services, and parents have the right to opt-out of these services.
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| **Implementation Questions** | **Additional Resources/Tools** |
| **Establish Two-Way Communication with Newcomer Families in Their Preferred Language*** Does your district have a system to quickly identify family’s preferred language?
* Does your district have an active interpretation system (either vendor or in-house) in the identified languages?
* Does your district have an active translation system to ensure that important school documents translated into their preferred language?
 | [DESE Guidance on Language Access Services for Families](https://www.doe.mass.edu/language-access/interpreters/default.html) |
| **Develop an Orientation for Newcomer Students and Families*** Does your district provide an orientation to newcomer students and families? (e.g., through an in-person meeting at the school, a home visit, or via a welcoming video in the family’s home language or in English accompanied by translated subtitles)
* Does this orientation address school policies (e.g., homework/grading, attendance, discipline), logistics (e.g., lunch options, transportation), and programs, such as school clubs, sports, gifted education, and special education?
 | [Welcoming and Orienting Newcomer Students to U.S. Schools – BRYCS](https://brycs.org/schools/welcoming-and-orienting-newcomer-students-to-u-s-schools/) |
| **Plan and Implement a Uniform Intake Process for Newcomers*** Does your district have a system for administering a home language survey (HLS) to all newly enrolling students?
* Does your district implement a more robust intake interview to learn about prior schooling, lived experiences, and their journey to your district?
* Does your district have a system in place to implement the WIDA screener to evaluate the English proficiency of a student when the answer to any of the questions on the HLS is a language other than English?
* Does your district determine whether the student is an EL using screening test results and other data, and use this to make an initial placement decision?
* Does your district notify parents and/or legal guardians of screening test results and initial placement decision (using an approved parent notification letter)?
 | [Guidance on English Learner Services and Programming (DESE)](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fele%2Fguidance%2Fservices-programming.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) (pp. 5-17)[Sample SLIFE intake interview](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/slife/Sample-SLIFE-Interview.docx) (DESE)[Home Language Survey (HLS) templates and Parent Notification templates in 30 languages](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/resources/communications.html) (DESE) |
| **Create a Welcoming and Safe Environment for Students and Families that Fosters a Sense of Belonging*** Does your district have existing relationships with community organizations that can provide additional resources and/or serve as cultural and linguistic brokers to support families (e.g., arts or cultural organizations, mental health centers, religious organizations, refugee resettlement agencies, postsecondary education institutions, etc.)?
* Does your district ensure that registration, intake, and front office staff create a warm welcoming environment and have the linguistic resources they need to welcome new families without disruption or hesitation and prepare them to start school (consider training for these staff on culturally and linguistically responsive practices)?
* Do your district and school buildings visibly foster inclusivity and a welcoming environment through culturally and linguistically inclusive visual displays (e.g., flags of home countries, signage in multiple languages, etc.)?
 | [Working with Community Organizations to Support ELL Students](https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/working-community-organizations-support-ell-students) Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) [database of community organizations that can support new arrivals, with contact info](https://airtable.com/appwpyjovHf15gRR7/shrNKoWjfTsn3qRo2/tblmepmxVEQ2XAGQh/viw2nFUcPkRRFpACn?blocks=hide) |
| **Reflection Questions** |
| **What is your district already doing well under this bucket?** |
| **What are areas of growth for your district under this bucket?** |
| **What are immediate next steps you can identify?** |
| **What additional resources and supports do you need to implement these next steps?** |

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| **Providing High-Quality Instruction for Newcomer English Learners[[2]](#footnote-3)** |
| **Legal Requirements** |
| * School districts must take affirmative steps to ensure that students who are not proficient in English can participate meaningfully in their educational programs and services (Lau v. Nichols).
* Public schools must take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by their students in instructional programs (Equal Educational Opportunities Act, EEOA).
* Programs for ELs must be based on sound educational theory, resourced effectively, and succeed in producing results to help students overcome language barriers within a reasonable timeframe (Castañeda v. Pickard).
* All ELs in Massachusetts must be educated through sheltered English immersion (SEI) or an approved alternative instructional program, such as transitional bilingual education or dual language education. All programs for ELs must include access to subject matter content and systematic and explicit English language acquisition (ESL/ELD). ([G.L. c. 71A)](https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71A/Section2)
 |
| **Implementation Questions** | **Additional Resources/Tools** |
| **Build Systems and Structures That Allow for Robust English Learner Programming*** Does your district currently have model(s) of English learner education (ELE) designed to meet the academic and language development needs of ELs, including **systematic, explicit, and sustained ESL instruction**, and **meaningful participation in the district’s general education program?**
* Does your district ensure that ELs have opportunities to integrate with non-EL peers? *(Even if there may be educational justifications for newcomers in their first year to receive some degree of separate academic instruction, such as specific newcomer programming, districts should take care to avoid unnecessary segregation and work toward full integration as soon as possible)*
* Does your district ensure that ELs have access in their schedules to Tier 1 grade-level curricula with appropriate scaffolds, special education services (if needed), extracurricular activities, and courses that will prepare them for college and career?
 | [Guidance on English Learner Services and Programming (DESE)](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fele%2Fguidance%2Fservices-programming.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK) |
| **Provide High-Quality Instruction that Supports Language Development and Access to Academic Content*** Do schools provide all ELs with ESL services appropriate for their English proficiency level (as measured by ACCESS 2.0 composite score or WIDA screener composite score)? *Districts may choose the ESL instructional delivery approach(es) that are most suitable for their context and student needs (push-in, pull-out, self-contained, co-teaching, or embedded) but should use a clear, well-articulated ESL curriculum aligned to WIDA standards to guide instruction.*
* While facilitating Tier 1 grade-level, standards-aligned instruction, do teachers provide access by scaffolding high-quality instructional materials and ensuring that students are simultaneously engaging in content-specific learning (aligned to MA Frameworks) and related language practices (aligned to WIDA ELD Framework)?
* Do schools use evidence-based practices to enhance grade-level high-quality curriculum and instructional resources for newcomers, including:
	+ Engage ELs in **productive interactions with peers and authentic communication** about their learning?
	+ Provide **direct and explicit instruction** focusing on key aspects of **literacy** (reading and writing)?
	+ Provide ELs with opportunities to build content knowledge and language competence in tandem through **real-world, relevant, and purposeful learning tasks?**
	+ **Leverage ELs’ home language(s)**, **prior knowledge, and cultural assets**, and help students identify similarities and differences between their home language and English?
* Do schools utilize a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) model to monitor student progress and provide additional, targeted supports as needed and ensure that methods of assessment and progress-monitoring are culturally and linguistically responsive?
 | [Guidance on English Learner Services and Programming (DESE)](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.doe.mass.edu%2Fele%2Fguidance%2Fservices-programming.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)* Recommended ESL services (p. 20)

[ESL Instructional Support](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/instruction/default.html) (DESE)* [Features of High-Quality ESL Instruction](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/esl-toolkit/fundamentals/hq-esl-features.html)
* [ESL Instructional Delivery Approaches](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/esl-toolkit/fundamentals/delivery-approach/default.html)
* [Next Generation ESL Tools & Resources](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/esl-toolkit/tools-resources/default.html) (curriculum review and development tool, unit & lesson plan templates, model curriculum units)
 |
| **Build Educators’ Capacity to Support Newcomer Students and Share Responsibility for Their Success*** Are all educators who work with ELs appropriately licensed/endorsed?[[3]](#footnote-4)
	+ Do all ESL teachers have an ESL license (or an approved ESL waiver)?
	+ Are all core content and CTE teachers of ELs SEI endorsed, in addition to their content license?
	+ Are administrators SEI endorsed?
* Do schedules include opportunities for all teachers of ELs, especially teachers of newcomers, to collaborate (including content/SEI teachers, ESL teachers, and special educators if applicable)?
* Do the district and/or schools provide professional learning for teachers to help them:
	+ Understand the needs, assets, and background of newcomer students?
	+ Learn and plan to implement evidence-based instructional practices?
	+ Build a shared understanding of trauma-informed practices?
	+ Engage in continuous improvement cycles and ongoing efforts to align practices, policies, and procedures around the needs of newcomers?
 | [MA DESE Office of Licensure](https://www.doe.mass.edu/licensure/)[Information about the RETELL Initiative and Obtaining and SEI Endorsement](https://www.doe.mass.edu/retell/) |
| **Reflection Questions** |
| **What is your district already doing well under this bucket?** |
| **What are areas of growth for your district under this bucket?** |
| **What are immediate next steps you can identify?** |
| **What additional resources and supports do you need to implement these next steps?** |

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| **Synthesize and Prioritize** |
| ***List all the action steps you identified above and with your planning team, organize them in order of priority and timing. Bold your priority action steps.***  |
| **Action Steps from Bucket 1** | **Action Steps from Bucket 2** |
| **Short-term** | **Short-term** |
| **Medium-term** | **Medium-term** |
| **Long-term** | **Long-term** |

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| **Planning Worksheet: English Learner Education Program Resources & Capacity** |
| ***Use the prompts below to map out your district’s current need and capacity for English learner education services. This will help the DESE team understand areas of strength and need to prioritize during technical assistance.*** |
| **Student information** |
| * How many ELs are currently enrolled in your district? How many of these are newcomers this year?
* What is the breakdown of ELP levels?
* *Recommendation: Break this data down by school for more meaningful analysis.*
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| **School Name** | **Total ELs** | **Level 1s** | **Level 2s** | **Level 3s** | **Level 4s** | **Newcomers this year** |
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| **School & program information** |
| * What do English learner programming and services look like in your district right now?
* Please include information about staffing, instructional delivery models, etc.

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| **School Name** | **ELE Program Model (SEI, TBE, DLE)** | **# ESL teachers** | **Are all core teachers serving ELs SEI endorsed?**  | **ESL instructional delivery model** (pull-out, push-in, standalone, co-teaching, embedded) |
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1. See U.S. Department of Education’s [Newcomer Toolkit](https://ncela.ed.gov/educator-support/toolkits/newcomer-toolkit), “Chapter 2: Welcoming Newcomers to a Safe, Inclusive, and Thriving School Environment” for more information, resources, and professional learning activities you can do with your faculty. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See U.S. Department of Education’s [Newcomer Toolkit](https://ncela.ed.gov/educator-support/toolkits/newcomer-toolkit), “Chapter 4: Providing High-Quality Instruction for Newcomers” for more information, resources, and professional learning activities you can do with your faculty. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. If your district has a bilingual program, all teachers who teach in a bilingual program in a partner language (language other than English) must hold a Bilingual Endorsement in addition to their content license. If you do not have a bilingual program but are interested in starting one in the future, see [Program Development & Evaluation Resources](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/resources/program-dev-eval.html) for more information about the process. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)