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# Introduction

 As the number of English learners (ELs) continues to grow across the country, states are working to provide teachers with support for delivering effective ESL instruction and creating an inclusive environment for all students of varying proficiency levels, developmental levels, backgrounds, and needs.

To build upon existing state-developed tools and resources for ESL educators, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) contracted the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) to conduct research on ESL practices in Massachusetts and other states. The purpose of this study was to determine next steps for creating an effective, state ESL framework to support improvements in ESL instruction. Comprised of three major activities, the study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What are current trends and best practices in ESL services and frameworks around the nation?
2. What common and divergent themes exist in the ESL services and frameworks currently implemented in states outside of Massachusetts?
3. What is the status of ESL services in Massachusetts districts that serve ELs? What programs are districts using and what does instruction look like?

To address the first research question, CAL conducted a literature review that examined widely used English Language Development (ELD)/English Language Proficiency (ELP) frameworks and standards; best practices in English Learner Education (ELE) program models, ESL teaching models, and ESL instruction; and current trends in professional development offerings for ESL educators. To address the second research question, ESL services and frameworks in ten states were analyzed and compared to determine current trends in ESL instruction nationwide. Finally, the third research question was addressed through an online survey of Massachusetts ESL educators focusing on current practices and needs within this community.

The findings of each activity are presented in this report, which is organized into the following sections: (1) review of the literature; (2) comparative analysis; and (3) survey. The report concludes with a series of recommendations for DESE on how to best meet the needs of ESL teachers, school/district leaders, and students, followed by a list of references.

# Review of Literature

This section of the report examines widely used ELD/ELP standards and frameworks in the United States with a focus on their contents, effectiveness, and implementation. We also investigate research-based best practices in ELE program models and ESL teaching models, including a brief overview of effective instructional strategies. Finally, we discuss recommendations from the literature for ESL educator professional development and training.

## Frameworks and Standards for English Learners

Over the past few decades, shifts in U.S. demographics and major educational policy changes have led to significant transformations to the instruction and assessment of English learners (ELs). Reaching 4.9 million in 2016 (U.S. Department of Education, 2019), the number of ELs enrolled in public school has increased exponentially in recent years, resulting in increased attention to this population within federal policies. This was notable in No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB, 2002-2015) and later in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), both of which have driven standards-based education reform.

Various ELD/ELP standards have been developed in response to the call for standards-based education and the need for guidance on best practices in instruction and assessment for English learners. The *TESOL Pre-K–12 English Language Proficiency Standards Framework* (TESOL, 2006) is recognized as a pioneer in promoting a standards-based understanding of English language development (Karlsson, 2015). Originally published in 1997, this initial set of standards provided an abstract framework for measuring language acquisition, allowing ample room for interpretation based on school and district-level needs (Bailey & Huang, 2011). Updated over time, the TESOL standards primarily served as a resource for teacher development, rather than a tool for guidance on what students should be able to do with language for social and academic purposes (Bailey & Huang, 2011). The 2006 version of the TESOL standards is an augmentation of the WIDA standards (2012) and includes a number of sample performance indicators designed to complement WIDA’s comprehensive set of ELP standards (TESOL, 2006).

The development of the WIDA standards, first published in 2006, indicated a marked shift in the structure and focus of ELD/ELP standards (Lee, 2018). Often described as the most comprehensive set of ELD/ELP standards, the WIDA standards reflect an understanding of the developmental nature of learning ESL while simultaneously connecting language and content to meet the increasing academic demands of state standards (Karlsson, 2015). The initial standards were followed by an amplified version in 2012 featuring connections to state content standards, including the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). According to its website (<https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards/eld/2020>), WIDA is currently working on a 2020 amplified version of the standards, which will incorporate educator feedback and current trends in research and practice. As of 2020, 35 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico use the WIDA Standards Framework and are part of the WIDA Consortium, making it the most widely used ELD framework in the United States.

The *English Language Proficiency Standards* (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014) are used by states belonging to the English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21) consortium and represent language use in terms of integrated skill development. First published in 2012, the ELPA21 standards were updated in 2014 with an emphasis on academic language use for improved content-area learning, and a crosswalk between the ELP standards and the Common Core State Standards is included to facilitate effective standards implementation across disciplines. As of 2020, nine states use the ELPA21 standards and eight are part of the ELPA21 Consortium (note: Connecticut is not part of the consortium but uses the same standards).

Reviews of the WIDA and ELPA21 standards have noted that these standards alone are insufficient to guide ESL teaching and learning. The standards require additional support and guidance for their successful implementation. For example, in a comparison of the WIDA and ELPA21 standards, Lee (2018) argues that both frameworks do not reflect comprehensive language demands of academic content areas, thus causing some degree of misalignment with content standards. Lee also argues that both sets of standards expect students with higher language levels to engage in more complex cognitive processes, which may not always be an appropriate assumption and may reduce cognitive demands for lower proficiency students. Standards implementation may thus require additional guidance about content-area language demands and student cognitive development.

Both the WIDA and ELPA21 standards documents ground their recommendations for best practices in language instruction in theoretical frameworks, including an emphasis on communicative competence, the use of academic language in different content areas, and inclusive, student-centered teaching that values what students can do instead of what they can’t do with the language (Littlewood, 2014; Muñiz, 2019; Ranney, 2012). Grounded in research and widely recognized by educators and researchers, these standards provide teachers with common benchmarks to monitor student progress while focusing on content and language integration in the classroom.

There are, however, a number of issues involved in standards implementation due to the diversity of needs and resources at the state, district, and school level. One challenge in standards implementation is aligning ELD/ELP standards with other state academic standards. Although states that have adopted the Common Core State Standards can more easily ensure alignment between the language and content standards used in instruction, it is recommended that each state carefully select their ELD standards based on their specific context, needs, and other academic standards (Bailey & Carroll, 2015; Bailey & Huang, 2011; Kuhlman & Knezevic, 2013). In support of this effort, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) created the English Language Proficiency Development (ELPD) Framework (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2012) as a resource for states to better understand the expectations of the CCSS and NGSS as they relate to ELD/ELP standards. This document serves as a guide for states during the development or evaluation of their standards, helping stakeholders ensure that their selected ELD/ELP standards are in alignment with state content standards. In addition, several states have monitoring protocols or rubrics that are used to assess the implementation of ELD/ELP standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2015) and these measures often include an evaluation of a district’s approach to standards-based education, the extent of alignment between content and ELP standards, and the rigor of ESL curriculum. It is recommended that states follow this practice to determine the use and effectiveness of their selected set of standards.

Another barrier to effective application of ELD standards is the need for supplementary materials to support standards use in the classroom. Bailey and Huang (2011) argue that many prominent sets of standards, including WIDA, lack the specificity needed for the development of curriculum and lessons based on the standards alone. The authors contend that standards implementation is a complex process that requires additional supports and resources beyond these documents. They recommend that specific student demographics and the perspective of multiple stakeholders be taken into consideration in this process, given the varied needs of every school, district, and state. Some states, including Colorado, Indiana, New Jersey, and Tennessee, have elected to develop frameworks, implementation guides and/or supporting resources to guide ESL teachers in using their ELD standards, resulting in a consistent and unified state-wide approach to understanding expectations for students’ language use (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2019; Geier, Davidson, & Williamson, 2015; Kuhlman & Knezevic, 2013).

In addition to state-developed implementation supports, both WIDA and ELPA21 have responded to this need by creating several resources and professional development opportunities to complement their sets of standards. The WIDA standards, for example, were amplified in 2012 to provide educators with more examples of academic language use, guidance on connecting ELP standards and content standards, and expanded performance definitions for all four domains of language. According to its website, WIDA also provides numerous opportunities for teacher training, including a series of self-paced and facilitated online courses and state-sponsored, in-person workshops. Topics range from purposeful lesson planning and differentiation using the WIDA standards to developing collaborative partnerships to effectively support multilingual learners. While ELPA21 has been updated since its original publication to provide additional guidance on connecting ELP standards and content standards, it does not offer quite an extensive suite of additional resources for standards implementation. There are currently three online learning modules available on the ELPA21 website with a focus on understanding and using the ELP standards for monitoring students’ language development.

Although minimal research has been conducted specifically on the effectiveness of state-developed ELD/ELP standards, six states have developed their own set of standards and guidelines to inform ESL teaching and learning: Arizona (2019), California (2012), Kansas (2018), Mississippi (2019), New York (2012), and Texas (2007). A 2019 report from the Council of Chief State School Officers spotlights New York and California for developing blueprints for English learner success that link policy and instructional practices. In addition, Carnock (2016) praises New York’s multi-faceted and robust approach to guiding ESL instruction and services, and California’s approach includes an expanded vision of ESL education articulated in their English Learner Roadmap (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/rm/>). Resources from both states emphasize the importance of multilingualism, diversity, and cultural awareness, reflecting current trends in research and practice for ESL teaching and learning.

## Program Models, Teaching Models, and Instruction

Another trend in ESL instruction is the growth of various program and instructional models to best meet the needs of the English learner population. According to the Biennial Report on Title III State Formula Grants (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), there are a number of recognized program models, including those developing two languages (dual language, two-way immersion (TWI), transitional bilingual (TBE), developmental bilingual (DBE), and heritage language) and those developing one language (structured English immersion (SEI), sheltered English instruction, specially designed academic instruction delivered in English (SDAIE), content-based ESL, and ESL pull-out).

In the 2015-2016 school year, 38 states offered programs of both types (dual language and English-focused), and 10 states (Alabama, Hawaii, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia) only offered programs focused on English language development. Dual language was the most common bilingual program model, and SEI was the most common monolingual model used by these states (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Given the wide range of program offerings across states, districts, and schools (Valentino & Reardon, 2015), the effectiveness of these various approaches to ESL instruction has served as a point of much debate over the years (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011; Goldenberg, 2013; MacSwan, Thompson, Rolstad, McAlister, & Lobo, 2017; Robinson-Cimpian, Thompson, & Umansky, 2016; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005; Valentino & Reardon, 2015) with a primary focus on the language of instruction and its impact on student growth and achievement.

Many researchers emphasize the efficacy of bilingual approaches compared to English-only approaches in ESL instruction (Dixon, et al., 2012; Jochum, 2011; Kim, Hutchison, & Winsler, 2015; MacSwan et al., 2017; Moughamian, Rivera, & Francis, 2009; Ortiz & Fránquiz, 2019; Robinson-Cimpian et al., 2016; Rolstad et al., 2005; Steele, et al., 2017; Sugarman, 2018), and a number of studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of different program models within these two overarching categories. Based on a meta-analysis of 17 studies on program effectiveness for ELs, Rolstad et al. (2005) found that bilingual education led to better student outcomes than English-only education, and that long-term DBE programs are a better option than short-term TBE programs.

Alvear (2019) reports on another study of program effectiveness, in which the researcher examined the long-term effects of four different program models (TBE, DBE, TWI, and SEI) on the reading achievement of Latino ELL students in a large urban school district in Texas. Students’ reading levels were tracked over a five-year period and findings showed that those in TWI programs performed better than students in other programs, followed by DBE, TBE, and SEI. Given these findings, Alvear argues in favor of additive bilingualism (as demonstrated in the dual language model of instruction), as it not only leads to higher levels of academic achievement, but also promotes cultural values, increases self-esteem, and positively influences a number of cognitive and behavioral characteristics. In a longitudinal study of ELs enrolled in dual language programs, Steele et al. (2017) reviewed the standardized test scores of 1,625 randomized students participating in an immersion program from kindergarten onward. Findings indicate that the reading scores for ELs and native English speakers receiving immersion education greatly surpass those of their peers in other programs. The researchers also highlight the impact of a strong foundation in the native language on English language development, as students whose home language was the same as the partner language of instruction were less likely to be classified as an EL beyond fifth or sixth grade.

Although a growing body of research suggests that the bilingual approach is most effective, many researchers argue that more empirical research is needed in order to make this claim. Valentino and Reardon (2015), for example, highlight current gaps in the literature due to a lack of rigor among existing research, instructional inconsistencies across studies, and minimal longitudinal data on student outcomes. Further research is needed to determine the long-term effects of these many program types, especially with regard to differences in partner language, content area, and instructional time. Researchers have argued, however, for using students’ home languages in ESL instruction regardless of program model in order to create a safe space for students to grow, validate students’ backgrounds and differences, and positively contribute to student performances (Calderón et al., 2011; López & Iribarren, 2014; Ortiz & Fránquiz, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). It is recommended that educators integrate the home language into instruction with a variety of scaffolding techniques, including lesson previews and explanations of key content in both languages, as this can be especially useful for monolingual programs focused on both content-area knowledge and language acquisition (Goldenberg, 2013; López & Iribarren, 2014).

While making use of students’ linguistic backgrounds has proven to be an influential factor in their academic success, recent findings indicate that the quality of instructional practices, lessons, and curriculum is just as important as the language of instruction (Dixon, et al., 2012; Goldenberg, 2013; Moughamian et al., 2009; Slavin, Madden, Calderón, Chamberlain, & Hennessy, 2011; Tong, Lara-Alecio, Irby, Mathes, & Kwok, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Slavin et al. (2011) report on a multiyear study comparing the English and Spanish standardized test scores of ELs in TBE or SEI programs. The researchers tracked the reading performances of multiple cohorts of students as they progressed in grade level from kindergarten to fifth grade, and findings indicate that despite significant differences in the early grades, students enrolled in both program types achieved similar scores by fourth grade. The results of this study support the notion that the language of instruction is only one contributing factor when it comes to working with English learners. Highly effective instructional strategies, therefore, should be utilized when working with English learners, starting with an understanding of students’ specific needs, characteristics, and goals (Gupta, 2019; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; Ortiz & Fránquiz, 2019; Tong et al., 2008).

In terms of effective instructional strategies for English learners, a focus on both oral language development and the advancement of literacy skills is essential, most notably when integrating language and content into instruction that aims to promote academic growth in both areas (López & Iribarren, 2014; Moughamian et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In addition, ESL educators should provide students with differentiated tasks, scaffolding and support through modeling and the use of multiple modalities, opportunities for small group instruction and project-based, cooperative learning, and targeted feedback for continued growth and development (Bell & Baecher, 2012; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2003; Hanover Research, 2015; Lucas et al., 2008; Moughamian et al., 2009; Ortiz & Fránquiz, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). A welcoming and inclusive school environment is yet another important component of successful support of English learners (Bell & Baecher, 2012; Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010; Gupta, 2019 ; Hanover Research, 2015; López & Iribarren, 2014; Lucas et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2012), and should not be overshadowed by other pedagogical considerations.

Extensive research has been conducted on best practices for the delivery of ESL instruction, including the effectiveness of different teaching models, and most studies focus on co-teaching, pull-out or push-in services. Inclusive ESL instruction (i.e., co-teaching and push-in services) arguably allows students to better connect with the mainstream classroom learning experience, leading to a better understanding of content, stronger connections with peers, and improved student performance (Bell & Baecher, 2012; López & Iribarren, 2014; Whiting, 2017). This approach, however, can create some degree of discomfort and embarrassment for students (Whiting, 2017) and lead to professional difficulties for ESL teachers, including a lack of control over curriculum and instruction, insufficient support and respect from co-teachers, and collaborative struggles due to limited time for joint lesson planning (Bell & Baecher, 2012; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Martin‐Beltrán & Peercy, 2012; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). Although research supports co-teaching and collaboration, these challenges are widely recognized and there is an emphasis on the importance of high quality partnerships between content teachers and ESL teachers for increased program effectiveness (Bell & Baecher, 2012; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; Graziano & Navarrete, 2012; Lyster, 2011; Whiting, 2017).

Although separate ESL instruction (i.e., pull-out services) provides a safe, non-threatening environment in which students can receive targeted instruction that best meets their needs, (Bell & Baecher, 2012; Whiting, 2017), arguments have been made that it is not conducive to learning, leads to marginalization from peers, and provides fewer opportunities to connect with the rigorous curriculum of the mainstream classroom, resulting in negative impacts on student growth and achievement (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010; López & Iribarren, 2014; Robinson-Cimpian et al., 2016). Research has shown a disconnect between classroom teachers and ESL instructors working outside of the classroom, which may cause students to miss out on core content and receive unbalanced instruction that is not in line with curricular goals (Martin‐Beltrán & Peercy, 2012).

Given the language demands of new ELD/ELP and academic content standards (Bailey & Carroll, 2015; Boals, et al., 2015; Santos, Darling-Hammond, & Cheuk, 2012), current trends indicate a preference for more inclusive and integrated models of instruction that allow students to access grade-level academic content while simultaneously developing English language proficiency (Bell & Baecher, 2012; McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; Sugarman, 2018). It is therefore recommended that mainstream and ESL educators be provided with opportunities for collaborative planning time, a common curricular framework, and sufficient training to best implement these teaching models in their practice.

## Professional Development for ESL Educators

In reviewing the literature for best practices in the professional development (PD) of ESL educators, there is a consensus that teachers need increased access to information, tools, and resources that provide them with a better understanding of English learners and their needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In addition, researchers recommend providing continuous PD opportunities embedded in daily teaching practice (U.S. Department of Education, 2012) including interactive, performance-based workshops (McClure & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010) focused on collaborative teaching methods (Bell & Baecher, 2012), understanding the specific linguistic and content demands of increasingly rigorous standards (Santos et al., 2012), and designing and implementing effective classroom assessment (Bailey & Carroll, 2015; Boals, et al., 2015).

Schools and districts can also benefit from strategically-designed professional learning communities that engage educators working across disciplines in community-building activities and open dialogue about students’ needs and best practices in ESL instruction (Doker, 2010; Graziano & Navarrete, 2012; Penner-Williams, Díaz, & Worthen, 2017; Santos et al., 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2012). These communities of practice are significant in the development of teachers’ identities, an emerging area of focus in ESL teacher training (Canagarajah, 2016). As attention to multicultural sensitivity (Johnson & Wells, 2017) and teacher beliefs and ideologies (Canagarajah, 2016) continues to grow, collaborative spaces allowing educators to construct these values are needed. Given the increasing demand for effective ESL educators, further research is needed on best practices at the school, district, and state levels to determine how best to prepare teachers to work with English learners.

# Annotated Bibliography

The following annotated bibliography presents a synopsis of selected articles and reports that address (1) frameworks and standards for English learners; (2) program models, teaching models, and instruction; and (3) professional development for ESL educators.

## Frameworks and Standards for English Learners

**Bailey, A. L., & Huang, B. H. (2011). Do current English language development/proficiency standards reflect the English needed for success in school?. *Language Testing*, *28*(3), 343-365.**

This article examines the current state of ELD/ELP standards across the country with a focus on how these sets of standards define and integrate academic English. The researchers discuss the history of standards development and the conceptualization of academic English, followed by a review of California’s ELD/ELP standards with recommendations for improvement.

**Council of Chief State School Officers. (2019). *Practical guide for state education agencies to promote success of English learners pre-K-grade 3.* Washington, DC: CCSSO.**

This guide presents research-based recommendations for the development of effective policies and systems for supporting dual language learners and English language learners. Structured around three broad principles, the guide walks through the process of establishing (1) a statement of philosophy; (2) an appropriate assessment plan; (3) suitable teacher qualifications; (4) effective instructional practices; and (5) successful family engagement strategies. Examples of high quality federal and state level resources are also discussed, including frameworks, toolkits, and materials for curriculum development.

**Lee, O. (2018). English language proficiency standards aligned with content standards. *Educational Researcher*, *47*(5), 317-327.**

This article examines efforts to align ELP standards with content standards in response to national standards-based education reform. The author presents a critique of the WIDA and ELPA21 standards with a focus on their alignment to content-specific language and their assumptions about the cognitive processing of learners at different proficiency levels. Findings indicate that both sets of standards leave room for improvement, and recommendations for further research and development of ELP standards are provided.

## Program Models, Teaching Models, and Instruction

**Bell, A. B., & Baecher, L. (2012). Points on a continuum: ESL teachers reporting on collaboration. *TESOL Journal*, *3*(3), 488-515.**

This article explores 72 K-12 ESL teachers’ beliefs about and experience with different teaching models used in ESL instruction. The results show that most of the participants provide pull-out ESL services and prefer this model of teaching as opposed to push-in instruction or co-teaching in the general education classroom. Participants also describe informal collaboration with content-area teachers, with the majority expressing a lack of time, support, or value for collaboration as a school-wide, systemic issue. Given the benefits of collaborative partnerships between teachers and the rise of co-teaching as an instructional model for English learners, the researchers provide recommendations to promote this type of teamwork.

**López, F., & Iribarren, J. (2014). Creating and sustaining inclusive instructional settings for English language learners: Why, what, and how. *Theory Into Practice*, *53*(2), 106-114.**

This article presents an empirically-based framework for transitioning to an inclusive learning approach for English learners. Three essentials to inclusivity are discussed, including (1) providing access to program models that utilize and value students’ home languages; (2) developing high quality, rigorous curriculum for language and content-area instruction; and (3) promoting a culturally responsive learning environment. The researchers point out educational diversity and inclusion efforts made by the state of Wisconsin to serve as a model for other states, districts, and schools.

**Ortiz, A. A., & Fránquiz, M. E. (2019). Co-editors’ introduction: Challenges to the success of English learners in the context of language instruction educational programs. *Bilingual Research Journal, 42*(1), 1-5.**

This article summarizes a number of academic challenges faced by English learners due to disempowering teaching methods, inadequate classroom instruction, and a lack of teacher leadership and preparedness. The authors also highlight the contents of this journal issue with a focus on how these challenges can be addressed through a series of recommendations for improvement.

## Professional Development for ESL Educators

**Canagarajah, S. (2016). TESOL as a professional community: A half‐century of pedagogy, research, and theory. *TESOL Quarterly*, *50*(1), 7-41.**

This article examines major shifts in both the research and practice of teaching English to speakers of other languages from the past 50 years. Following a historical review of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of ESL teaching and learning, the author discusses trends in target language use, instructional methods, and professional development. Findings show an increasingly inclusive, global approach to ESL instruction that requires educators to respond to the evolving demands of the field.

**U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service. (2012). *Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs): A Review of the Foundational Literature*.**

This report provides an overview of research-based best practices in language instruction educational programs (LIEPs), including those following the bilingual approach and the ESL approach. Findings demonstrate the importance of (1) providing a variety of program models to best meet the needs of all students; (2) using high quality instructional practices; (3) implementing rigorous content and curriculum; (4) integrating academic, content-area language across disciplines; (5) focusing on both literacy and oral language development; (6) improving teacher training; and (7) creating an inclusive culture and school community. A detailed list of references is provided by type and topic along with a summary of the literature reviewed.

# Comparative Analysis

This section of the report presents overall findings from a comparative analysis examining current trends in ESL services and frameworks that could inform Massachusetts’ future decisions about how to best meet the needs of ESL teachers and English learners. The analysis consisted of a web search for state-level documents related to ESL education from five WIDA states: Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, and New Mexico, and five non-WIDA states: California, New York, Oregon, Texas, and Washington. Documents and general information collected from the states’ Department of Education websites were analyzed to determine existing themes in state-level ESL frameworks, ELD/ELP standards, ELE program models, ESL teaching models, and additional resources for educators.

## ESL Frameworks

Five states in our analysis (CA, IL, NM, NY, and OR) have developed some type of ESL framework to guide instruction and assessment for English learners. As the terminology used to refer to these documents varies (e.g. framework, toolkit, guide, etc.), the term framework will be used to describe these various resources for the purposes of this report. The dates of the current version of state ESL frameworks range from 2014-2019, and each framework differs in both content and structure. Table 1 shows common components of state frameworks and indicates the year each state framework was developed.

Table 1. Components of ESL frameworks

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Component | California (2014) | Illinois (2016) | New Mexico (2019) | New York(2014) | Oregon (2019) |
| Vision and/or mission statement | x | x | x | x | x |
| Assessment | x | x | x | x | x |
| Access and equity | x | x | x | x | x |
| Compliance and requirements |  | x | x | x | x |
| Curriculum and instruction | x | x | x | x |  |
| Culturally responsive teaching | x |  | x | x | x |
| Academic language and content-area learning | x | x | x | x |  |
| Bilingualism and biliteracy | x |  | x | x | x |
| Overview of ELD standards | x | x | x |  |  |
| Program and/or teaching models | x | x |  |  | x |
| Professional learning and leadership | x | x |  | x |  |
| Sample lesson plans, materials, and/or resources | x |  | x |  |  |
| Guidance on standards implementation | x |  | x |  |  |
| Family engagement |  | x |  | x |  |

While each framework references a number of these areas of focus, the level of detail and specificity provided varies by state. For example, New York’s document includes a simple overview of its eight guiding principles for working with English learners and multilingual learners, which includes many of the above components, but does not provide concrete guidance for teachers. Emphasizing the importance of bilingualism and biliteracy, this framework provides educators with high-level, shared expectations for all teachers in the state, rather than just those specifically working with English learners. Beyond these principles, additional resources are available on the state’s website and will be discussed in further sections of this report. Oregon’s framework primarily focuses on program requirements, including identification of ELs, allocation of funds, and developing a school-wide plan. Accepted program models are outlined with descriptions of content and instructional delivery, and there is a large section on assessment accommodations for special populations of ELs. Like New York, the state also provides several resources separate from their main ESL framework document.

Although Illinois’ framework also has some limitations, it provides a more thorough explanation of the necessary steps for effective instruction when working with English learners. It contains a list of recommendations for creating accessible learning environments, including collaboration between ESL teachers and content teachers, targeted use of the home language, and the presence of culturally and linguistically responsive staff members. In addition, accepted program models are explained in detail according to objectives, content, and instructional delivery. Differentiation and accommodations for assessment are further broken down by program model, and it is recommended that home language support be provided when assessing content-area knowledge taught in English. The framework closes with a comprehensive certification matrix that defines the types of endorsements required for teachers working with ELs at all grade levels.

 Developed by a taskforce of ELD educators over the course of a year, New Mexico’s framework (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2019) is addressed to all educators and highlights a series of recommendations for teachers and administrators alike. As shown in Figure 1, it is structured around four areas of focus: instructional supports, teachers’ roles, instructional delivery methods, and student outcomes.



Figure 1. Organization of New Mexico's ELD Framework (p. 14)

The framework encourages teachers to respect home language use, value every culture in the classroom, and identify any personal biases that may impede effective instruction. In addition to providing sample lesson plans and materials, this document also highlights the need for differentiation. The WIDA Can Do Descriptors Key Uses Edition (Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, 2016) which is organized around four essential language functions (recount, explain, argue, and discuss), is recommended for delivering individualized instruction that meets the needs of all learners. Aside from educator guidance, the New Mexico framework contains the following recommendations for statewide English learner education improvements (New Mexico Public Education Department, 2019, pp. 8-9):

1. Using the framework in teacher preparation programs
2. Creating a guide for supporting EL students with disabilities
3. Providing specific professional development on the framework for administrators, superintendents, and school boards
4. Providing teacher training on:
	1. Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching
	2. Creating language objectives, implementing content-area instruction, and supporting academic language development
	3. Working with students with interrupted formal education (SIFE)
	4. Providing rigorous instruction for ELs of various proficiency levels
5. Adopting ELD-specific instructional materials at the state level

By far the most extensive framework of these five, California’s 1,084-page document (California Department of Education, 2015) guides ELA and ELD instruction for K-12 students across the state. Described as a road map for curriculum and instruction with an emphasis on English learners, this document is a useful tool for all educators and reflects the significance of supporting all students from different backgrounds. Figure 2 shows California’s overall vision for effective instruction in the areas of ELA and ELD based on five major principles: meaning making, language development, effective expression, content knowledge, and foundational skills.



Figure 2. California's "Circles of Implementation of ELA/Literacy and ELD Instruction" (p. 23)

The framework provides an in-depth view of the state-designed ELD standards (further discussed in the ELD/ELP Standards section) followed by a detailed outline of ELA content and pedagogy by grade level. Each grade-level section presents targeted information for ELD instruction with sample lesson plans and ways to implement content and language standards in the classroom.

Table 2 summarizes the recommended areas of focus at each grade level:

Table 2. Summary of California’s ELD activities by grade level

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Grade | Recommendations for ELD instruction |
| K-1 | * Targeted development of oral language skills and vocabulary through teacher read alouds, shared reading activities, singing songs, acting and role-playing

(pp. 129-281) |
| 2-3 | * Expansion of language use across all four domains through activities involving interactive experiences with a variety of texts (pp. 283-390)
 |
| 4-5 | * Expansion of language use across all four domains through activities involving interactive experiences with a variety of texts
* Increased attention to developing student’s awareness of the language

(pp. 391-502) |
| 6-12 | * Focus on developing academic English, content-area knowledge, and student’s awareness of the language
* Emphasis on the need for scaffolding and differentiation due to varying proficiency levels (pp. 503-817)
 |

In the California framework, formative, summative and standardized assessment for English learners is discussed at length, and rubrics, forms for taking observation notes in the classroom, and example assessments for progress monitoring are provided. Another chapter of the framework focuses on ensuring equitable access for ELs and native English speakers from a number of special populations, including speakers of African American English and Chicano/Chicana English, students who are Deaf or hard of hearing, students living in poverty, migrants, LGBTQ students, students with disabilities, and advanced learners. In addition, a comprehensive guide for selecting appropriate instructional materials is included to support schools and districts in determining how to best serve students at a variety of proficiency and grade levels. The final pages of the document contain links to a number of external resources related to English learner education, universal design, and state instructional supports and courses.

## ELD/ELP Standards

 Of the ten states analyzed, five states (FL, IL, MI, MN, and NM) use the WIDA standards, two states (OR and WA) use the ELPA21 standards, and three states (CA, NY, and TX) use independent, state-designed standards to guide the language development of English learners. While the five WIDA ELD standards focus on social and instructional language and the language of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, the ten ELPA21 ELP standards are more broadly structured as shown in Figure 3 (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2014). Both sets of standards are broken down into grade clusters (outlined in Table 3) and the number of proficiency levels is comparable, with WIDA defining six levels and ELPA21 using five levels to describe students’ language use.



Figure 3. ELPA21 ELP Standards (p. 4)

Like standards used by larger consortiums of states, independent state standards vary in content and structure. The 2012 California English Language Development Standards were developed in response to legislation requiring an updated and revised version of the standards to ensure alignment with the state’s English Language Arts standards. According to the standards document, the update process was completed in one year and involved a number of focus groups, review panels, and feedback from educators and community members. The standards are broken down into three parts and six sub-groups, and each sub-group has a set of “critical principles” or standards. The standards focus on meaningful interaction through the three communicative modes, understanding and using a variety of grammatical structures, and developing foundational literacy skills.

Developed with alignment to the CCSS, the 2014 New York Bilingual Common Core Progressions are the result of a three-year initiative to create new ESL and Native Language Arts standards with a connection to state content standards. The standards development process involved a steering committee, a writing team, and a national advisory group. The Progressions are broken down into two sections: Home Language Arts Progressions and New Language Arts Progressions (formerly known as the ESL Learning Standards). Each standard contains an academic demand, a linguistic demand, and examples of content-specific activities for targeted instruction in English or a partner language.

The 2007 Texas English Language Proficiency Standards, on the other hand, provide broad, non-grade-specific guidance on what ELs should be able to do within the domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The standards development process is not described on the Texas Education Agency’s website, and although there is an overall statement regarding the need for standards implementation across disciplines, the standards do not explicitly define any connections between the ELP standards and state content standards.

 Table 3 provides an overview of the number of standards, proficiency levels and grade-level clusters in each set of standards referenced in this section.

Table 3. Overview of ELD/ELP standards

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Number of standards | Number of proficiency levels | Grade levels and grade-level clusters |
| WIDA ELD Standards | 5 | 6  | K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9-10, 11-12 |
| ELPA21 ELP Standards | 10 | 5 | K, 1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-12 |
| California ELD Standards | 19 | 3 | K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9-10, 11-12 |
| New York Bilingual Common Core Progressions | 11 | 5 | PreK, K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9-10, 11-12 |
| Texas ELP Standards | 4 | 4 | S/L: K-12R/W: K-1, 2-12 |

Aside from guidance embedded within standards documents or state ESL frameworks, some states have developed or adopted supplementary resources to support standards use and instruction. Table 4 provides an overview of these documents by state.

Table 4. State resources for standards implementation

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| State | Standards | Resources |
| California | Independent | High-level guidance on successful school-wide implementation over the course of multiple years; resources on integrating the ELD standards into math and science instruction; list of curricular materials; and two professional learning modules on ELD in the content areas |
| Florida | WIDA | Online learning series with a self-paced module on standards implementation |
| Minnesota | WIDA | Guide designed for district leaders covering essential steps for standards implementation, including conducting needs assessments, planning for professional development, curriculum mapping, and instructional coaching |
| New York  | Independent | Implementation guide with examples of differentiation by program model; lesson exemplars by grade level; resource guides for standards use in ELA and math; bilingual glossaries for testing accommodations; translated math modules; and instructional protocols for PreK emergent multilinguals |
| Oregon | ELPA21 | List of state-level adopted ELP materials by grade level; sample ESL teacher and administrator goal setting forms; and the CCSO framework for determining alignment between CCSS, NGSS, and ELP standards |
| Texas | Independent | A standards implementation guide with scaffolding recommendations and examples of performance-based activities; guides and online courses on embedding the standards into content-area instruction for ELA, math, science, and social studies; and checklists, sentence frames, and a list of suggested teacher behaviors to support ELs at each proficiency level outlined in the standards |

## ELE Program Models

 Although several program types are accepted and implemented across states, different states provide requirements for choosing a program based on classroom demographics, available personnel, or the state’s overall emphasis on bilingual versus English-focused education. Table 5 summarizes each state’s policies or recommendations regarding ELE program types:

Table 5. State policies or recommendations for program models

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| State | Policy or recommendation |
| California | Schools and districts must offer (at a minimum) structured English immersion programs |
| Florida | Action plans must be developed for schools/districts that are unable to offer one of the appropriate program options for ELs  |
| Illinois | Language education programs should encourage multilingualism, Transitional Bilingual Education programs must be offered if 20 or more students speak the same home language, and a Transitional Program of Instruction must be provided if 19 or fewer students speak the same home language |
| Michigan | English language development instruction should be supplemented by sheltered content-area instruction and primary language support as needed |
| Minnesota | Schools and districts are encouraged to teach literacy in the home language and English simultaneously for students with low literacy skills |
| New Mexico | Bilingual and multicultural education programs are highly preferred, and English learners enrolled in these programs must also be provided with a block of instruction dedicated to academic English development |
| New York | Bilingual education programs are required for schools with 20 or more ELs within the same grade level with the same home language, and this must include an English as a New Language component |
| Oregon | Schools and districts can choose the services and programs that best meet their EL population’s needs |
| Texas | Bilingual education programs are required from Pre-K-5/6 grade for schools with 20 or more ELs within the same grade level with the same home language |
| Washington | Schools and districts must provide transitional bilingual instructional programs to all eligible students |

Although some program models are preferred over others in specific states, each state allows multiple approaches and has published information on the program options recognized and approved for teaching English learners. The most commonly listed programs include (1) dual language education; (2) transitional bilingual education; (3) developmental bilingual education; (4) sheltered English immersion; (5) newcomer ESL education; (6) heritage language education; and (7) English-only education. Table 6 shows the number of states that allow each of these models.

Table 6. Program models by state

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | DLE | TBE | DBE | SEI | Newcomer | Heritage | English-only |
| California | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Florida | x |  | x | x | x |  | x |
| Illinois | x | x | x | x | x | x |  |
| Michigan | x | x | x | x | x | x |  |
| Minnesota | x |  | x |  |  |  |  |
| New Mexico | x | x | x |  |  | x |  |
| New York | x | x |  |  |  |  |  |
| Oregon | x | x | x | x | x | x |  |
| Texas | x | x | x |  |  |  |  |
| Washington | x | x | x | x | x |  |  |
| Total | **10** | **8** | **9** | **6** | **6** | **5** | **2** |

Terminology varies across states, especially when classifying programs as SEI or English-only. Descriptions for these programs can be found in the corresponding sections of this report and data presented in Table 6 reflects the language used in each state to describe their program models, which may differ slightly from the program definitions used in Massachusetts.

### Dual Language Education (DLE)

As shown in Table 6, all ten states analyzed include some form of dual language education among their educational program options for supporting English learners. Two-way DLE programs are explicitly mentioned on all states’ websites except New Mexico, which does not specify if dual language instruction should be two-way or one-way. Many states provide a detailed description of the two-way DLE approach, including the time allocated to each language, recommended classroom demographics, and academic goals or expected outcomes. It is often described as an immersion setting in which native English speakers and ELs receive instruction in both English and a partner language in order to develop academic skills, literacy skills, and proficiency in both languages. Michigan, Oregon, and Washington emphasize the importance of developing content-area knowledge in both languages in this model, and bilingualism and biliteracy are cited by several states as core goals for this type of instruction.

In addition to students’ educational growth and achievement, cross-cultural understanding and/or proficiency is highlighted as a goal of two-way DLE in California, New Mexico, and Oregon. Due to the heterogeneous grouping of students from different backgrounds, this program type creates an environment conducive to learning about other cultures, and some states provide specific guidance around student representation in the classroom. Illinois and Michigan, for example, recommend that classes be evenly divided between ELs and native English speakers, while Oregon asserts that neither group of students should make up more than two-thirds of the classroom.

The recommended amount of instructional time allocated to each language is fairly consistent across states, with an emphasis on gradually moving from 90% of instruction in the partner language and 10% of instruction in English to 50% of instruction in each language. Most programs in New York and Washington follow the 50/50 model, and instruction gradually decreases to 50/50 by fourth or fifth grade in Michigan. This, however, differs from California’s approach, in which students may start a two-way DLE program with the 90/10 or 50/50 model in kindergarten with the goal of reaching 20% of instruction in the partner language and 80% of instruction in English by fifth grade. The California Department of Education’s website also makes note of two-way DLE programs at the secondary level, which involve some degree of academic content and coursework in the student’s home language, but does not specify the learning structure or ultimate goal for language of instruction at this level.

Although most of these states do not provide explicit guidance on the appropriateness of two-way DLE for different grade levels, those that do mention entry and exit points suggest that there isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach to determining if and when students should transition out of this program. In California, two-way DLE programs can be offered at all grade levels, and in Oregon, programs are available through elementary school at a minimum with many extending through high school. Based on the variation in state policies and overarching goals of language instruction education programs, however, this type of program is not always offered beyond a certain grade. For example, ELs enrolled in two-way DLE programs in Texas must transition to English-only instruction after six to seven years, indicating a state focus on English language development rather than lifelong bilingualism.

One-way DLE, which involves a homogenous group of students simultaneously learning both English and a partner language, is rarely mentioned within states’ websites, and the suggested student population for receiving this type of instruction varies. While California recommends this approach for non-speakers of the partner language (i.e., native English speakers), Texas states that this program is only an option for English learners. This distinction is not made in New York, which describes one-way DLE as a program available to a group of students from the same home language (i.e., native or non-native English speakers).

### Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE)

 Found in eight of the ten states analyzed, transitional bilingual education (TBE) is another frequently mentioned program model for English learner education. TBE is often defined by its focus on using both the home language and English with the goal of gradually transitioning to a mainstream, English-only classroom. As academic concepts are taught through the home language with increasing opportunities for English language use, students can attain both mastery of grade-level content and English proficiency simultaneously.

 The majority of states analyzed indicate that while instructional time in the home language varies, the amount of English used in the classroom gradually increases with a full transition to English by mid-elementary school (OR), within two to five years (TX), within three to four years (CA and WA), or within three to five years (MI). According to California, TBE programs are typically offered from kindergarten to third grade, though they may continue beyond this level depending on the entry point of instruction. Given the transitional nature of this program and its presence in the early grades, TBE is referred to as an “early exit” approach by Michigan and Washington.

 Although TBE programs are growing in popularity and offered in most states, there are few regulations around their implementation. Illinois is the only state to provide specific requirements for when TBE must be offered (if 20 or more students speak the same home language), as well as when a Transitional Program of Instruction (TPI) must be provided (if 19 or fewer students speak the same home language). The state recommends that students be placed into a part-time or full-time program, which may be offered in a self-contained classroom. Students receive content-area instruction in the home language, along with instruction in ESL and acculturation, and programs vary based on students’ individual needs.

### Developmental Bilingual Education (DBE)

Sometimes referred to as “late exit transitional bilingual” or “maintenance bilingual,” developmental bilingual education (DBE) is implemented in nine states and shares several characteristics with TBE. Instruction primarily begins in the home language with a gradual increase in English over time in order to develop both academic and language skills. This approach provides more opportunities to develop the home language than TBE programs, and although most states (CA, MI, TX, WA) emphasize English proficiency as the program’s desired outcome, other states (IL, NM, NY) underscore the importance of bilingualism, home language maintenance, and the transfer of skills between languages. Unlike the TBE approach, DBE programs are offered for an extended period of time, and the following state recommendations are made regarding grade levels and the duration of instruction:

1. California: programs offered in K-8
2. New York: programs offered in K-6 and preferably through high school
3. Texas: students can continue for 6-7 years after enrollment
4. Washington: programs offered in K-6

### Sheltered English Immersion (SEI)

The sheltered English immersion (SEI) approach, commonly known as English-only instruction designed for English learners, provides an opportunity for ELs to acquire both language and content in a learning environment that best meets their needs. A total of six states offer some type of program that falls under this approach, and some states offer more than one option according to the primary area of focus (i.e., academic content or language development).

The terminology used to describe SEI programs varies by state. Although sheltered English instruction is the most commonly used term, there are inconsistencies across states as to whether this refers to a specific program model or an overarching instructional approach recommended for all program types. Four states (FL, IL, OR, and WA) explicitly define sheltered English instruction as a unique program type, although Oregon states that classes using this approach may be designed for both ELs and mixed groups of students. In addition, three states (CA, IL, and MI) refer to structured English immersion programs and two states (FL and WA) mention separate sheltered instructional models designed for content learning in order to meet core credit requirements.

Illinois is the only state to provide guidance on the different ways SEI should be offered. The state differentiates between structured English immersion programs and sheltered English instruction programs, outlining specific recommendations for each approach. For structured English immersion, the state recommends enrolling more than 20 ELs from a similar language background and providing this approach in elementary school for students in self-contained classrooms. Bilingual or ESL teachers are a key component, and there is mention of minimal home language use to support English learners in this type of learning environment. Sheltered English immersion, on the other hand, can be implemented in classrooms with students from different language backgrounds and can be effective regardless of the number of students enrolled.

### Newcomer

Six states reference the use of newcomer programs. The majority of states describe this type of program as a short-term offering at the secondary level designed to provide students with ESL and content-area instruction, as well as acculturation. Three states (IL, MI and WA) note how these programs are particularly useful for students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), given that this population requires more specialized and individualized services to best meet their needs.

### Heritage Language

 While the primary goal of heritage language education is not to develop English language proficiency, this program is classified as a possible form of English learner education in five states: California, Illinois, Michigan, New Mexico, and Oregon. Offered throughout grades K-12 (CA and MI), this type of instruction is designed for ELs with limited literacy skills in their home language, and all five states mention its applicability to working with speakers of endangered minority languages and/or indigenous languages.

### English-only

 Mainstream English-only programs are mentioned in California and Florida, and both states describe some degree of specialized instruction as a component of these programs. For example, students enrolled in mainstream programs in California receive targeted ELD support for part of the day. This type of instruction is referred to as “designated ELD” and only takes place for a specific period of time each day. Florida, however, does not specify the extent to which students are provided with ELD support in mainstream programs. The state offers mainstream and inclusion options for both English and core/basic subjects, and students are enrolled in mixed classrooms with both ELs and native English speakers.

## ESL Teaching Models

Although all ten states provide ESL instruction as a component of ELE programming, only eight of the ten states analyzed specified which teaching models are used and recognized for this purpose. There are several different teaching models mentioned, including pull-out, push-in, self-contained (i.e., when ESL instruction is provided as a class built into the schedule), co-teaching (i.e., when ESL and content teachers provide instruction to the entire class), and embedded (i.e., when ELD is integrated in content classrooms). Table 7 shows which states use each of these instructional approaches.

Table 7. Traditional ESL teaching models

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Pull-out | Push-in | Self-contained | Co-teaching | Embedded |
| California | x | x | x | x | x |
| Illinois | x | x | x | x | x |
| Michigan |  |  |  | x | x |
| New Mexico | x |  |  | x | x |
| New York |  |  | x | x | x |
| Oregon | x | x | x |  | x |
| Texas | x |  |  | x | x |
| Washington | x | x |  |  | x |

Push-in instruction is typically provided on an individual basis or within small groups (CA, IL, WA) and often includes support from an ESL or bilingual specialist in the classroom. Pull-out instruction, however, varies from state to state. In Illinois, students can receive a number of different services from certified teachers, including individual language support, content-based ESL, or home language content instruction. Texas, on the other hand, requires pull-out services to exclusively focus on ELA and be provided by a part-time, certified ESL teacher. Although the content of instruction is not specified, California does not allow students to be removed from core content classes or physical education for pull-out services, and this type of instruction must be scheduled at other times during the school day.

While states provide little guidance for self-contained instruction or co-teaching, content-embedded instruction is described as a component of many different program types and involves ESL instruction incorporated into content instruction. While some states refer to this as “content-based ESL,” the following terms are found among the states analyzed for this report: (1) integrated ELD; (2) integrated English as a New Language (ENL); (3) sheltered-core/basic subjects; (4) newcomer – core content instruction; and (5) content-based instruction. Most states describe this approach as a way to improve English language development through academic content instruction, indicating that ELD standards should be incorporated across disciplines and content areas when working with ELs. Content-based instruction is mentioned in many program model descriptions, and content is clearly addressed through nearly all program types that do not have a singular focus on English language development.

## Resources

 Providing effective and high-quality services to all English learners is a key consideration for state departments of education, and some states have developed supplementary resources for educators working with special populations of ELs. All ten states analyzed provide guidance for working with dually identified students, and California and Michigan have created in-depth handbooks for serving ELs with disabilities. Few state-level resources were available for newcomers and students with limited or interrupted formal education (SIFE/SLIFE), but five states provide links to the U.S. Department of Education Newcomer Toolkit (U.S. Department of Education, 2016) to support these students.

In Minnesota, educators are provided with a series of SLIFE learning modules, an identification checklist, and general guidance around supporting this population, and New York has created the most extensive set of SLIFE-specific resources of the states analyzed. These documents include an educator manual, screeners for identification, and several webinars on curriculum development and assessment. Additional resources designed to support student retention are available in New York, including an ELL/MLL Dropout Toolkit to improve graduation rates that covers dropout predictors and indicators, creating individual graduation plans, and supporting newcomers and long-term ELs who are often negatively affected by the achievement gap.

 Most states also provide numerous links to external resources that may support ESL teachers and administrators, which often include resource websites (e.g. Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, Center for Applied Linguistics, Colorin Colorado, etc.), research articles on instructional best practices and curriculum development, and state or federal guidance on migrant education issues. One emerging area of interest associated with ESL education is the Seal of Biliteracy (<https://sealofbiliteracy.org/>), and state-specific information regarding its implementation and requirements can be found across multiple states’ websites. Finally, opportunities for professional learning and training are referenced in seven states with topics ranging from bilingual education to effective ELE leadership.

# Survey

This section of the report presents the results of an online survey designed to seek feedback from Massachusetts K-12 ESL teachers and ELE leaders about the current state of ELE programming throughout the state and educators’ experiences using tools and resources designed to support ESL instruction. The survey consisted of 35 multiple-choice questions and open-response items and was administered via SurveyMonkey.

Survey responses were collected through email recruitment. The Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages (MATSOL) sent a recruitment email with the survey link to 1,449 members subscribed to their mailing list on February 24, 2020. MATSOL followed up with subsequent reminder emails and posted the survey link to their ebulletin. The recruitment email was also circulated to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) distribution lists, including the ELE Networks. The survey closed on March 6, 2020.

Responses from participants who completed 50% or more of the survey questions were included in the data analysis. Of the total 794 responses, 556 (70.0%) responses met these criteria; data from respondents who completed less than 50% of the survey are not included in this report. Some survey questions were optional, and others allowed for multiple responses. This accounts for differences in the total number of responses in the survey results by question. Data were downloaded, cleaned, and analyzed in Microsoft Excel. Open-ended questions were coded into thematic categories to systematically analyze responses.

Results are organized into the following sections: (1) Respondent Background Information; (2) The WIDA Standards Framework; (3) The Next Generation ESL Curriculum Resource Guide; (4) ELE Program and Teaching Models; (5) ESL Curriculum and Materials; (6) Professional Development; and (7) Needs. This organization follows the structure of the survey.

## Respondent Background Information

Survey respondents first provided information about their roles and experience. Table 8 summarizes respondents’ primary role in the education of English learners, years of teaching experience, and grade levels taught.

Table 8. Survey respondents’ roles and experience

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Primary role**  | *n* | % |
| ESL teacher | 423 | 76.0% |
| ELE coach  | 27 | 4.9% |
| ELE school/district leader | 106 | 19.1% |
| **Years of teaching experience**  | *n* | % |
| Less than 1 year | 16 | 2.9% |
| 1-5 years | 156 | 28.1% |
| 6-10 years | 155 | 27.9% |
| 11 years or more | 226 | 40.6% |
| Not applicable | 3 | 0.5% |
| **Grade levels taught\*** | *n* | % |
| Pre-K | 26 | 4.7% |
| Kindergarten | 148 | 26.6% |
| Lower elementary school | 194 | 34.9% |
| Upper elementary school | 217 | 39.0% |
| Middle school | 122 | 21.9% |
| High school | 119 | 21.4% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

As shown in Table 8, most respondents (76.0%) indicated that they work as ESL teachers, followed by ELE school/district leaders (19.1%) and ELE coaches (4.9%). Responses indicate that most respondents were experienced educators with at least one year of ESL teaching experience, and 40.6% of respondents had 11 or more years of ESL teaching experience. All grade-levels were represented in the survey data, and most respondents have taught upper elementary school (39%) and/or lower elementary school (34.9%). Participants could select multiple responses to the question about grade levels taught, and the percentages presented in Table 8 are relative to the total number (*N=*556) of respondents.

For the 27 respondents who reported service as an ELE coach, Table 9 and Table 10 show their years of experience and grade levels supported.

Table 9. Years of ELE coaching experience

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Years** | *n* | % |
| Less than 1 year | 7 | 25.9% |
| 1-5 years | 13 | 48.2% |
| 6-10 years | 4 | 14.8% |
| 11 years or more | 3 | 11.1% |
| Total | 27 | 100% |

Table 10. Grade level(s) supported as a coach\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade levels** | *n* | % |
| Pre-K | 4 | 14.8% |
| Kindergarten | 14 | 51.9% |
| Lower elementary school | 16 | 59.3% |
| Upper elementary school | 18 | 66.7% |
| Middle school | 10 | 37.0% |
| High school | 9 | 33.3% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

Responses indicate that most respondents were experienced educators with at least one year of ELE coaching experience, and 48.2% of respondents had between one and five years of ELE coaching experience. All grade-levels were represented in the survey data, and most respondents have supported upper elementary school (66.7%) and/or lower elementary school (51.9%). Participants could select multiple responses to the question about grade levels supported, and the percentages presented in Table 10 are relative to the total number (*n*=27) of respondents who reported service as an ELE coach.

 For the 106 respondents who reported service as an ELE school/district leader, Table 11 and Table 12 show their years of experience and grade levels overseen.

Table 11. Years of ELE administrative experience

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Years** | *n* | % |
| Less than 1 year | 14 | 13.2% |
| 1-5 years | 51 | 48.1% |
| 6-10 years | 31 | 29.3% |
| 11 years or more | 10 | 9.4% |
| Total | 106 | 100% |

Table 12. Grade level(s) overseen as a school/district leader\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Grades** | *n* | % |
| Pre-K | 65 | 61.3% |
| Kindergarten | 84 | 79.2% |
| Lower elementary school | 85 | 80.2% |
| Upper elementary school | 89 | 84.0% |
| Middle school | 82 | 77.4% |
| High school | 85 | 80.2% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

Responses indicate that most respondents were experienced educators with at least one year of ELE administrative experience, and 48.1% of respondents had between one and five years of ELE administrative experience. All grade-levels were represented in the survey data, and most respondents have overseen upper elementary school (84%), lower elementary school (80.2%), and/or high school (80.2%). Participants could select multiple responses to the question about grade levels overseen, and the percentages presented in Table 12 are relative to the total number (*n*=106) of respondents who reported service as an ELE school/district leader.

All respondents were asked to indicate the type of school or district in which they work with English learners, and Table 13 shows how many respondents work in public schools, public charter schools, vocational technical schools, and collaborative schools.

Table 13. Type of school or district\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type** | *n* | % |
| Public school district | 499 | 89.8% |
| Public charter school | 38 | 6.8% |
| Vocational technical school | 14 | 2.5% |
| Collaborative | 6 | 1.1% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

The majority of respondents (89.7%) indicated that they work in public schools. One respondent selected multiple responses to this question, and the percentages presented in Table 13 are relative to the total number (*N*=556) of respondents.

Of the 475 responses to the optional question regarding respondents’ school districts, nearly 30% indicated that they work in a district located in Middlesex county. Figure 4 shows the number of responses received by county.

Figure 4. Number of survey responses by county of school district

**

Figure 4. Number of survey responses by county of school district

## The WIDA Standards Framework

In section two of the survey, respondents were asked to evaluate a number of WIDA resources for developing ESL lessons and/or curriculum. These resources were selected for inclusion in the survey by CAL and DESE. Table 14 shows the extent to which respondents found each of these resources helpful for developing ESL lessons and/or curriculum. The number of respondents who rated each resource is listed in Table 14, and percentages are based on the number of respondents who rated that resource.

Table 14. Evaluation of WIDA resources for developing ESL lessons and/or curriculum\*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **WIDA Resource** | Not at all helpful | Slightly helpful | Fairly helpful | Extremely helpful | Aware, but not used | Not aware |
| English Language Development (ELD) Standards (*n*=554) | 38 (6.9%) | 102 (18.4%) | 209 (37.7%) | 181 (32.7%) | 20 (3.6%) | 4 (0.7%) |
| Can Do Descriptors (*n*=552) | 6 (1.1%) | 57 10.3% | 170 (30.8%) | 314 (56.9%) | 4 (0.7%) | 1 (0.2%) |
| Guiding Principles of Language Development (*n*=553) | 19 (3.4%) | 90(16.3%) | 178 (32.2%) | 157 (28.4%) | 43 (7.8%) | 66 (11.9%) |
| Features of Academic Language in Sociocultural Contexts (*n*=556) | 17 (3.1%) | 82 (14.7%) | 185 (33.4%) | 152 (27.3%) | 38 (6.8%) | 82 (14.7%) |
| Performance Definitions: Listening and Reading (L/R) (*n*=554) | 7 (1.3%) | 68 (12.3%) | 180 (32.5%) | 246 (44.4%) | 27 (4.9%) | 26 (4.7%) |
| Performance Definitions: Speaking and Writing (S/W) (*n*=555) | 7 (1.3%) | 68 12.3%) | 178 (32.1%) | 253 (45.6%) | 25 (4.5%) | 24 (4.3%) |
| Model Performance Indicators (MPIs) (*n*=555*)* | 26 (4.7%) | 96 (17.3%) | 185 (33.3%) | 176 (31.7%) | 48 (8.6%) | 24 (4.3%) |

\*The total number of responses varies for each resource as some respondents did not rate all resources.

Across all resources, 60% or more of respondents indicated that these resources are fairly helpful or extremely helpful for their classroom context. The WIDA resource most frequently described as extremely helpful was the Can Do Descriptors (56.9%), followed by the Performance Definitions for Speaking and Writing (45.6%) and Performance Definitions for Listening and Reading (44.4%). Figure 5 represents the information in Table 14 visually.

Figure 5. Evaluation of WIDA resources for developing ESL lessons and/or curriculum

This question also allowed respondents to provide additional comments to supplement their selected responses. These comments were coded and categorized by theme, and many comments indicated that educators would find these resources even more useful if they were consolidated and simplified, particularly for content-area ESL instruction. Illustrative comments include:

*“I feel like there are so many resources that it is hard to quickly teach teachers which ones to use and why. If there was a way to combine them all into one document, I feel like that would be best for content teachers.” (ELE school/district leader)*

*“The Can-Dos are helpful, but I often find myself wishing I had "Teacher Dos," especially when consulting with content area teachers. It's wonderful to see what students are capable of at each level, but in some ways it would be more helpful to have specific strategies that teachers could draw from to meet student needs at each level and help them progress to the next level.”(High school ESL teacher)*

*“Lots of great thinking in this, but it's too jargon-y, complicated and redundant. Do there really need to be Can Dos and MPIs, for example? To respect teachers' time and increase our productivity, please strive to use plain English, streamline and simplify.” (P-12 ESL teacher)*

As shown in Table 15, respondents were asked to select the most helpful WIDA resource and describe why they find this specific resource most helpful for ESL lesson and/or curriculum development.

Table 15. Most helpful WIDA resource

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **WIDA Resource** | *n* | % |
| English Language Development Standards  | 70 | 12.6% |
| Can Do Descriptors  | 356 | 64.0% |
| Guiding Principles of Language Development  | 11 | 2.0% |
| Features of Academic Language in Sociocultural Contexts | 16 | 2.9% |
| Performance Definitions: Listening and Reading | 15 | 2.7% |
| Performance Definitions: Speaking and Writing | 50 | 9.0% |
| Model Performance Indicators | 38 | 6.8% |
| Total | 556 | 100.0% |

Results show that 64.0% of respondents selected the Can Do Descriptors as the most helpful resource, followed by the ELD standards (12.6%) and the Performance Definitions for Speaking and Writing (9.0%).

Open-ended responses explaining resource helpfulness were coded into thematic categories. Of the 279 responses received, the most frequently mentioned reasons for selecting the Can Do Descriptors as the most helpful WIDA resource are presented in Table 16.

Table 16. Most frequently mentioned reasons for selecting the WIDA Can Do Descriptors

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason** | *n* | % |
| Easy for stakeholders to use and understand  | 95 | 34.0% |
| Helpful for instructional planning  | 62 | 22.2% |
| Helpful for determining what students should be able to do | 58 | 20.8% |

In general, respondents commented that they find the Can Do Descriptors to be clear and easy for all stakeholders (e.g., teachers, leaders, parents, etc.) to use and understand as a common framework for expected student outcomes. The Can Do Descriptors were also viewed as comprehensive, accessible, helpful for collaborating with classroom teachers, and useful for determining what students should be able to do with the language at different proficiency and grade levels over time. Illustrative comments include:

*“It helps me to advocate with classroom teachers who have a deficit-based mindset about what our students CANNOT do. I like having an official document to point to in order to provide evidence that there are, in fact, MANY things that our students are capable of doing.” (Elementary school ESL teacher)*

*“The Can Do Descriptors provide specific guidelines for setting expectations for ELs. They can be used across content areas. I share these each September with all content teachers who have ELs, using the Can-Do Name Chart. The Can Do Descriptors are an effective tool for communicating to content teachers what should be expected of an EL at each level of English language proficiency.” (Middle school ESL teacher)*

*“This is a resource used always at PD sessions, learning walks, data analysis, etc. for all educators and administrators to understand and to plan for instruction as well as to explain to parents and others the level of language development of each EL and what they can do. It also helps educators to support English learners and take them to the next level.” (ELE school/district leader)*

## The Next Generation ESL Curriculum Resource Guide

In the third section of the survey, respondents were asked to describe how helpful they find each component of the Next Generation ESL Curriculum Resource Guide for developing ESL lessons and/or curriculum. Table 17 shows the extent to which respondents found each of these resources helpful for developing ESL lessons and/or curriculum. The number of respondents who rated each resource is listed in Table 17, and percentages are based on the number of respondents who rated that resource.

Table 17. Evaluation of NGESL resources for developing ESL lessons and/or curriculum\*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NGESL Resource** | Not at all helpful | Slightly helpful | Fairly helpful | Extremely helpful | Aware, but not used | Not aware |
| Collaboration Tool (*n*=516) | 18 (3.5%) | 52 (10.1%) | 110 (21.3%) | 171 (33.1%) | 85 (16.5%) | 80 (15.5%) |
| ESL MCU Development at the Unit Level (*n*=544) | 23 (4.2%) | 81 (14.9%) | 149 (27.4%) | 107 (19.7%) | 91(16.7%) | 93(17.1%) |
| ESL MCU Development at the Lesson Level (*n*=544) | 26 (4.8%) | 76(14.0%) | 137(25.2%) | 116 (21.3%) | 89(16.4%) | 100 (18.4%) |
| Focus Topics in Next Generation ESL (*n*=546) | 19(3.5%) | 64 (11.7%) | 131(24.0%) | 71(13.0%) | 103(18.9%) | 158(28.9%) |
| NGESL Additional Resources (*n*=536) | 20(3.7%) | 48(9.0%) | 93(17.4%) | 56(10.4%) | 98(18.3%) | 221(41.2%) |
| ESL Model Curriculum Units (MCUs) (*n*=551) | 33(6.0%) | 73(13.2%) | 140(25.4%) | 172(31.2%) | 79(14.3%) | 54(9.8%) |

\*The total number of responses varies for each resource as some respondents did not to rate all resources.

The resource most frequently described as extremely helpful is the Collaboration Tool (33.1%), followed by the Model Curriculum Units (31.2%) and ESL MCU Development at the Lesson Level (21.3%).

While results indicate that most respondents who have used these resources find them to be generally helpful, many respondents reported that they were either unaware of these resources or have not used them. This is particularly evident for the Additional Resources (combined 59.5%) and Focus Topics (combined 47.8%) sections of the NGESL guide. Figure 6 represents the information in Table 17 visually.

Figure 6. Evaluation of NGESL resources for developing ESL lessons and/or curriculum

This question also allowed respondents to provide additional comments to supplement their selected responses. These comments were coded and categorized by theme, and most comments indicated that while the NGESL resources provide some supplementary support and guidance for implementing the MA ELD standards, they are not always useful in practice due to the density of materials, lack of examples, and unrealistic expectations of what can be accomplished within a single lesson. Illustrative comments include:

*“These resources are cumbersome and rather than streamlining or facilitating the process of creating units and lessons, they tend to make the process more complicated and time-consuming.” (Elementary school ESL teacher)*

*“MCUs are not well-organized for lesson plans, are way too minutely detailed to be comprehensible, and are difficult to actually use because of the vast amounts of unnecessary information in them that most experienced ESL teachers already know and incorporate into their daily lessons. They are way too top-heavy and cumbersome to be used as actual lesson plans in an ESL classroom.” (High school ESL teacher)*

*“Once again, I find the model curricular to be unrealistic. They typically involve complicated, redundant templates that are unreasonable to expect teachers to replicate. In fact, the fine print often reveals that these curricula are pilot projects developed by idealistic teams of people over an extended period, presumably with secretarial support.” (High school ESL teacher)*

Respondents also expressed a need to adapt these resources for different teaching models (e.g., push-in, embedded, self-contained, etc.), student needs (e.g., proficiency levels, special populations, etc.), and content areas. Illustrative comments include:

*“As I work with students who have experienced significant trauma and whose ability to learn has been notably impacted, the sophistication of materials from these resources are either above the students’ level or move faster than such children are capable of doing.” (Middle school and high school ESL teacher)*

*“The ESL Model Curriculum Units are more geared to large ESL classrooms and less relevant for low-incidence districts that don't have a large group of ELs at one time. Also, the lessons are too long for the time I have with students so involve major reworking.” (K-12 ESL teacher)*

*“Every ESL class is composed of different, unique students. It would be helpful to have more PD around how teachers can adapt resources to their current class size/ make lessons age appropriate and aligned with the standards each student will be tested in for each grade.” (High school ESL teacher)*

As shown in Table 18, respondents were asked to select the most helpful NGESL resource and describe why they find this specific resource most helpful for ESL lesson and/or curriculum development.

Table 18. Most helpful NGESL resource

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **NGESL Resource** | *n* | % |
| Collaboration Tool  | 249 | 44.8% |
| ESL MCU Development at the Unit Level  | 26 | 4.7% |
| ESL MCU Development at the Lesson Level | 39 | 7.0% |
| Focus Topics in Next Generation ESL | 39 | 7.0% |
| NGESL Additional Resources | 10 | 1.8% |
| ESL Model Curriculum Units | 193 | 34.7% |
| Total | 556 | 100.0% |

Results show that 44.8% of respondents selected the Collaboration Tool as the most helpful resource, followed by the ESL Model Curriculum Units (34.7%).

Open-ended responses explaining resource helpfulness were coded into categories. Of the 249 responses received, the most frequently mentioned reasons for selecting the Collaboration Tool as the most helpful NGESL resource are presented in Table 19.

Table 19. Most frequently mentioned reasons for selecting the Collaboration Tool

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason** | *n* | % |
| Provides guidance for planning lessons/units/objectives  | 55 | 22.1% |
| Supports collaboration for effective instruction  | 23 | 9.2% |
| Provides consolidated information  | 20 | 8.0% |

Respondents commented that this resource provides guidance for the development of lessons, units and objectives, supports collaborative partnerships among teachers, and presents a wealth of information in a clear, consolidated way. Illustrative comments include:

*“I love love love this tool. It’s the perfect way to build a language target, that includes content, language support and a clear guideline for a unit/lesson.” (Middle school ESL teacher)*

 *“The Collaboration Tool has been a game changer for our district. It has strengthened professional bonds between our EL teachers and classroom/content teachers. It has been an invaluable resource during guided lesson planning sessions and has helped our teachers to develop strong language objectives connected to their content objectives.” (ELE school/district leader)*

*“I find the collaboration tool the most helpful because it houses so many aspects of language planning on one page. It is our go to resource for planning curriculum units and making unit focus language goals, but it has also been a very helpful resource for ESL and SEI teachers in regards to writing language objectives because so many language functions and links to the academic forms and features are right there.” (ELE school/district leader)*

## ELE Program and Teaching Models

 In the fourth section of the survey, respondents were asked to report on ELE program models and teachings models used in their school(s) and/or district(s). Respondents were provided with the following DESE program model definitions:

1. Dual Language Education (DLE): Students receive instruction in two languages throughout the program. The goal is to promote bilingualism and biliteracy by developing and maintaining both English and students’ home languages.
2. Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE): Students initially receive instruction primarily in their home language followed by an increasing use of English. The goal is to achieve long-term success through English instruction in general education classrooms.
3. Sheltered English Immersion (SEI): Students receive instruction only in English with the curriculum and presentation designed for children who are learning the language. The goal is to achieve proficiency and literacy in English.

Table 20 shows the extent to which these program models are used in respondents’ school(s) and/or district(s).

Table 20. ELE program models used in district/school(s)\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Program Model** | *n* | % |
| Dual Language Education (DLE) | 92 | 16.5% |
| Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) | 44 | 7.9% |
| Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) | 550 | 98.9% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

Nearly all respondents (98.9%) indicated that SEI programs are offered in their teaching context. Participants could select multiple responses to this question, and the percentages presented in Table 20 are relative to the total number (556) of respondents.

For the next question, respondents were provided with the following DESE teaching model definitions:

1. Push-in: An ESL teacher comes into the general education classroom to provide language instruction.
2. Pull-out: An ESL teacher removes students from another class to deliver ESL instruction.
3. Hybrid: Some combination of push-in and pull-out services are provided.
4. Self-contained: ESL instruction is built within a school’s regular or master schedule like any other class.
5. Embedded: English language development happens in an integrated way in all content classrooms.
6. Co-teaching: There is a collaborative teaching arrangement in which ESL teachers provide language instruction to the whole class.

Table 21 shows the extent to which these teaching models are used in respondents’ school(s) and/or district(s).

Table 21. ESL teaching models used in district/school(s)\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Teaching Model** | *n* | % |
| Push-in | 281 | 50.5% |
| Pull-out | 318 | 57.2% |
| Hybrid | 313 | 56.3% |
| Self-contained  | 258 | 46.4% |
| Embedded | 127 | 22.8% |
| Co-teaching | 179 | 32.2% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

More than half of respondents indicated that push-in, pull-out, and hybrid teaching models are used in their teaching context. Participants could select multiple responses to this question, and the percentages presented in Table 21 are relative to the total number (556) of respondents.

Respondents were next asked to rate the effectiveness of each of the teaching models used in their school(s) and/or district(s), and results are presented in Table 22. For those respondents that did not have experience using one or more of these teaching models, the option of selecting “not applicable” was provided. The number of respondents who rated each teaching model is listed in Table 22, and percentages are based on the number of respondents who rated that model.

Table 22. Effectiveness of ESL teaching models\*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Teaching Model** | Not effective | Slightly effective | Fairly effective | Extremely effective | Not Applicable |
| Push-in(*n*=491) | 53(10.8%) | 121(24.6%) | 170(34.6%) | 69(14.1%) | 78(15.9%) |
| Pull-out(*n*=497) | 5(1.0%) | 22(4.4%) | 141(28.4%) | 259(52.1%) | 70(14.1%) |
| Hybrid(*n*=438) | 4(0.9%) | 48(11.0%) | 145(33.1%) | 126(28.8%) | 115(26.3%) |
| Self-contained (*n*=429) | 7(1.6%) | 27(6.3%) | 99(23.1%) | 155(36.1%) | 141(32.9%) |
| Embedded(*n*=372) | 15(4.0%) | 38(10.2%) | 81(21.8%) | 53(14.2%) | 185(49.7%) |
| Co-teaching(*n*=414) | 16(3.9%) | 53(12.8%) | 91(22.0%) | 89(21.5%) | 165(39.9%) |

\*The total number of responses varies for each teaching model as some respondents chose not to rate all teaching models.

As seen in Table 22, the teaching model most frequently described as extremely effective is pull-out instruction (52.1%), followed by self-contained instruction (36.1%) and hybrid instruction (28.8%).

## ESL Curriculum and Materials

 The following section of the survey asked about educators’ ESL curriculum use, including the type of curriculum used, the extent of alignment between curricula and the Massachusetts ELD and content standards, and additional resources used to provide guidance for ESL lesson and/or curriculum development. Table 23 shows how many respondents selected each type of curriculum used in their teaching context.

Table 23. ESL curriculum use\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Curriculum type** | *n* | % |
| Teacher-designed ESL curriculum | 362 | 65.1% |
| School-designed ESL curriculum | 52 | 9.4% |
| District-designed ESL curriculum | 136 | 24.5% |
| Content curricula | 161 | 29.0% |
| English learner component of the content curricula | 84 | 15.1% |
| Commercially available curriculum | 254 | 45.7% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

 More than half of respondents expressed using a teacher-designed ESL curriculum and 45.7% of respondents expressed using commercially available curriculum for the instruction of English learners. Participants could select multiple responses to this question, and the percentages presented in Table 23 are relative to the total number (556) of respondents.

Table 24 shows the most frequently mentioned combination of curriculum types for those respondents that selected more than one type of ESL curriculum used in the previous question.

Table 24. Most frequently mentioned combination of curriculum types

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Curriculum combination** | *n* | % |
| Teacher-designed ESL curriculum and commercially available curriculum | 77 | 26.8% |
| Teacher-designed ESL curriculum, content curricula, and commercially available curriculum | 32 | 11.1% |
| Teacher-designed ESL curriculum and content curricula | 26 | 9.1% |

 Of the 287 respondents that selected more than one type of ESL curriculum used, 26.8% expressed using a teacher-designed ESL curriculum in combination with a commercially available curriculum.

 Respondents that selected more than one curriculum type were next asked to explain why they use multiple curricula for ESL instruction. Of the 192 responses received, many comments indicate that different curricula are needed for different content areas, program models and individual student needs, as one single curriculum does not address all these issues. In addition, school-wide or district-wide curriculum use is described as inconsistent, and teachers often individually select the most appropriate option for their classroom context. Illustrative comments include:

*“We are working as a team to coordinate design of an overall ESL curriculum. Within that curriculum, individual teachers may design their own curriculum, use pieces of purchased curricula, or use the English learner components of the content curricula as seems helpful or as time allows.” (Elementary school ESL teacher)*

*“I use all above. I work with various grade levels and ELL levels. Some of my groups I work with, I am told to teach the content and therefore use the "manuals" that include ESL accommodations/differentiation. Other groups I design the curricula according to their goals. And another group I use the MCU. It depends on the student level, test scores, and input from content teachers.” (Elementary ESL teacher)*

*“We use a combination of ESL curriculum to deliver a most effective program that fits teaching styles and student EL levels.” (Elementary ESL teacher)*

If respondents selected teacher-designed ESL curriculum from the previous question, they were then asked to comment on why they use this type of curriculum. This question included both selected response options and an open-ended response option, from which responses were coded into different categories accordingly. Table 25 shows the most frequently mentioned reasons for using a teacher-designed curriculum.

Table 25. Most frequently mentioned reasons for using teacher-designed ESL curriculum\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason** | *n* | % |
| Other options are not appropriate for my students | 102 | 28.9% |
| Other options are too expensive | 84 | 23.8% |
| Other options are not appropriate for my program model | 76 | 21.5% |
| Other options are not appropriate for my teaching model | 71 | 20.1% |
| A school/district curriculum is not provided | 41 | 11.6% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

 Most respondents (28.9%) indicated that they use a teacher-designed ESL curriculum because other curriculum options are not appropriate for their students. Participants could select multiple responses to this question, and the percentages presented in Table 25 are relative to the total number (353) of respondents.

 Respondents were next asked about alignment between their ESL curricula and the MA ELD and content standards. Table 26 shows the extent to which respondents’ ESL curricula are aligned with the MA ELD standards.

Table 26. ESL curricula alignment with MA ELD standards

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Degree of alignment** | *n* | % |
| All are aligned | 334 | 63.0% |
| Some are aligned | 117 | 22.1% |
| None are aligned | 8 | 1.5% |
| Not sure | 71 | 13.4% |
| Total | 530 | 100% |

Of the 530 responses received, most respondents (63.0%) indicated that all the ESL curricula used are aligned with the MA ELD standards and 22.1% indicated that some are aligned.

 Respondents who selected “none are aligned” or “some are aligned” were asked to further explain their selection. Comments indicate that while some curricula may be aligned, the way in which teachers implement their chosen curriculum varies and this may affect the true extent of alignment with the ELD standards. In addition, many school(s) and/or district(s) are currently in the process of updating or designing their ESL curriculum and therefore the degree of alignment cannot yet be determined.

Table 27 shows the extent to which respondents’ ESL curricula are aligned with the MA content standards.

Table 27. ESL curricula alignment with MA content standards

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Degree of alignment** | *n* | % |
| All are aligned | 324 | 61.1% |
| Some are aligned | 134 | 25.3% |
| None are aligned | 11 | 2.1% |
| Not sure | 61 | 11.5% |
| Total | 530 | 100% |

Of the 530 responses received, most respondents (61.1%) indicated that all the ESL curricula used are aligned with the MA content standards and 25.3% indicated that some are aligned.

Respondents who selected “none are aligned” or “some are aligned” were asked to further explain their selection. Like the previous question regarding alignment with the MA ELD standards, many respondents indicated that their ESL curricula are constantly in development and their schools are working toward ensuring alignment with the content standards. In addition, responses show that alignment is inconsistent depending on the topic or content area, and teachers do their best to align their curriculum whenever possible.

The next survey questions focused on respondents’ use of commercially available resources. Table 28 shows how many respondents use commercially available resources to support ESL instruction.

Table 28. Use of commercially available resources

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Response** | *n* | % |
| Yes | 434 | 81.9% |
| No | 96 | 18.1% |
| Total | 530 | 100% |

Of the 530 responses received, nearly all respondents (81.9%) use such resources to support English learners.

 Respondents who indicated the use of commercially available resources were next asked an open-ended question about which specific resources they use to support ESL instruction, and Table 29 shows the most frequently mentioned commercially available resources used.

Table 29. Most frequently mentioned commercially available resources used\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Resource** | *n* | % |
| National Geographic | 177 | 50.7% |
| Learning A-Z | 61 | 17.5% |
| Pearson | 30 | 8.6% |
| Teachers Pay Teachers | 29 | 8.3% |
| BrainPOP | 25 | 7.2% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

 Most of the 349 respondents that answered this question indicated that they use the National Geographic series of resources in their classrooms, followed by Learning A-Z, Pearson, Teachers Pay Teachers, and BrainPOP. Other frequently mentioned resources include Ballard and Tighe, Fountas and Pinnell, Imagine Learning, Newsela, Scholastic, and Wilson Language Training.

 The following two open-ended questions asked respondents to explain what they like and dislike about these commercially available resources. Responses were coded into different categories, and Table 30 shows the most liked features of the commercially available resources used.

Table 30. Most liked features of commercially available resources\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Feature** | *n* | % |
| Appropriate for different levels and needs | 98 | 30.7% |
| Range and variety of content | 60 | 18.8% |
| Engaging for students | 54 | 16.9% |
| Easy to use and implement in the classroom | 44 | 13.8% |
| Aligned with curriculum and/or standards | 35 | 11.0% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

 Of the 319 responses received, comments show that most respondents value resources that can be used to support students with a variety of proficiency levels and backgrounds, as ESL instruction so often must be tailored and individualized to best meet students’ needs. In addition, respondents frequently mentioned liking resources that provide a range and variety of content that covers multiple language domains and content areas. Illustrative comments include:

*“Differentiation options, topics students can connect with, materials can be manipulated and adapted to fit individual needs easily.” (High school ESL teacher commenting on Teachers Pay Teachers, National Geographic, and Colorin Colorado)*

*“These resources cover grade level science and social studies content and all four WIDA domains of English language development (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). They also have a component to use with new entering students who don't speak any English. The curriculum also includes material that immigrants can really connect with.” (Middle school ESL teacher commenting on National Geographic)*

*“There is a variety on many topics, and with ESL (especially beginner levels) you need a lot of realia, pictures, etc. You need to pull from many different resources in order to get the right materials for the kids in front of you, because they come from so many different language levels and experiences.” (Elementary school ESL teacher commenting on YouTube, Lakeshore, and Teachers Pay Teachers)*

Table 31 shows the most disliked features of the commercially available resources used.

Table 31. Most disliked features of commercially available resources\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Feature** | *n* | % |
| Not comprehensive enough | 56 | 21.0% |
| Not appropriate for different levels and needs | 44 | 16.5% |
| Too expensive | 31 | 11.6% |
| Not engaging | 22 | 8.2% |
| Not aligned with curriculum and/or standards | 18 | 6.7% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

 In terms of the most disliked features, many of the 267 respondents mentioned that individual resources are not comprehensive enough on their own and therefore must be supplemented with other commercially available resources to cover all areas of instruction. Illustrative comments include:

*“I usually modify them to fit my needs or use a combination of resources to accomplish one thing by picking and choosing the parts of each that I like.” (Middle school ESL teacher commenting on Teachers Pay Teachers)*

*“In order to use it as curriculum, we would need the district to purchase the rest of the resources such as the extended library.” (High school ESL teacher commenting on National Geographic)*

*“I don't like how everything feels piecemeal and I don't have a streamlined curriculum.” (Elementary school ESL teacher commenting on Learning A-Z, Scholastic, and Wilson Language Training)*

Respondents who indicated that they do not use commercially available resources (18.1% as shown in Table 28) were next asked to select why they choose not to use them. Table 32 shows the most frequently mentioned reasons for not using commercially available resources.

Table 32. Most frequently mentioned reasons for not using commercially available resources\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Reason** | *n* | % |
| Too expensive | 45 | 47.4% |
| Not appropriate for program model | 20 | 21.1% |
| Not appropriate for students | 14 | 14.7% |
| Not appropriate for teaching model | 15 | 15.8% |
| Not appropriate for content area in which ESL is provided | 11 | 11.6% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

 Nearly half of the 95 respondents that answered this question expressed that commercially available resources are too expensive to use in their teaching context.

The following open-ended question asked all respondents to list up to three of the most helpful resources they used to develop ESL lessons and/or curriculum. Table 33 shows the most frequently mentioned helpful resources for ESL lesson and/or curriculum development.

Table 33. Most frequently mentioned helpful resources for developing ESL lessons and/or curriculum\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Resource** | *n* | % |
| NGESL resources | 57 | 34.5% |
| WIDA resources | 50 | 30.3% |
| National Geographic  | 33 | 20.0% |
| Learning A-Z | 28 | 17.0% |
| Teachers Pay Teachers | 25 | 15.2% |

\* Participants could select multiple responses to this question.

Of the 165 responses to this optional question, the most frequently mentioned resources were the NGESL (34.5%) and WIDA resources (30.3%). Respondents were asked to explain how they use each of these resources and how these resources could be improved. Results show that respondents use these resources to (1) create a common language among stakeholders; (2) develop learning objectives and goals; (3) align curriculum with grade level and content standards; and (4) differentiate instruction based on students’ proficiency levels and needs.

Respondents also suggested that resources could be improved by (1) providing more examples for lesson planning and expected student outcomes; (2) simplifying and condensing information; (3) including more guidance and training for classroom use; and (4) making access to ESL-specific components part of the overall resource package.

## Professional Development

 The next section of the survey asked respondents about their participation in professional development offerings in ESL instruction during the past two years. Table 34 shows how many respondents participated in each type of PD offering by organization.

Table 34. Participation in professional development in the past two years

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Professional Development Activity**  | Yes (%) | No (%)  |
| WIDA PD | 47.2% | 52.8% |
| DESE-sponsored PD in ESL instruction | 34.2% | 65.8% |
| District-sponsored PD in ESL instruction | 61.3% | 38.7% |
| PD offerings from other organizations | 76.1% | 23.9% |

Results show that PD offerings from other organizations (76.1%) and district-sponsored PD in ESL instruction (61.3%) are the most highly accessed types of professional development as described by the 447 respondents that answered this question.

 Respondents who answered “yes” to the previous question were required to describe which PD they had participated in. Table 35 shows the most frequently mentioned professional development opportunities that respondents participated in during the past two years for each of the above mentioned organizations. The percentages presented are relative to the total number of “yes” responses received for each question as shown in Table 34.

Table 35. Most frequently mentioned types of PD

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **WIDA PD**  | *n* | % |
| ACCESS training | 59 | 28.1% |
| Conference sessions | 48 | 22.9% |
| Curriculum and instruction  | 34 | 16.2% |
| Student-specific training | 11 | 5.2% |
| Online courses and webinars | 24 | 11.4% |
| **DESE-sponsored PD** | *n* | % |
| NGESL training | 39 | 27.9% |
| Program-specific training | 28 | 20.0% |
| Conference sessions | 22 | 15.7% |
| Collaboration and/or co-teaching | 18 | 12.9% |
| Student-specific training | 9 | 6.4% |
| **District-sponsored PD** | *n* | % |
| Curriculum and instruction | 74 | 27.2% |
| Student-specific training | 44 | 16.2% |
| Resource-specific training | 44 | 16.2% |
| Collaboration and/or co-teaching | 17 | 6.3% |
| WIDA training | 31 | 11.4% |
| **Outside Organizations** | *n* | % |
| MATSOL | 278 | 82.0% |
| Universities | 21 | 6.2% |
| TESOL | 19 | 5.6% |
| MABE | 19 | 5.6% |
| Collaborative for Educational Services | 9 | 2.7% |
| EDCO  | 9 | 2.7% |

 The most participated in WIDA training in the past two years was ACCESS training. At the district and state levels, the most participated in district-sponsored PD was on curriculum and instruction, and the most participated in DESE-sponsored PD was NGESL training. In response to the question about PD offerings by outside organizations, nearly all respondents (82%) expressed participating in MATSOL training,

This section of the survey also contained an open-ended question about what topics respondents would like to see covered in future PD offerings on ESL instruction. Table 36 presents the most frequently mentioned topics of interest.

Table 36. Most frequently mentioned topics of interest for future PD offerings\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic** | *n* | % |
| Student-specific training | 110 | 36.1% |
| Curriculum and instruction | 98 | 32.1% |
| Collaboration and/or co-teaching | 86 | 28.2% |
| Program-specific training | 52 | 17.0% |
| WIDA training | 36 | 11.8% |

\* Participants could enter multiple responses to this question.

Results show that most of the 305 respondents who answered this question are interested in receiving student-specific training. Some areas of focus included equity, cultural sensitivity, and best practices for working with special populations of ELs, including ELSWD, SLIFE, newcomers, and students with trauma.

## Needs

 The final section of the survey asked respondents about their needs as ESL educators, including their biggest challenges in delivering effective instruction. Responses to this open-ended question could be coded into multiple categories, and the percentages in Table 37 are calculated based on the total number of respondents to this survey question (*n*=427).

Table 37. Most frequently mentioned challenges to delivering effective ESL instruction\*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Challenge** | *n* | % |
| Scheduling and time for collaborative planning | 229 | 53.6% |
| Funding for staff and resources | 174 | 40.7% |
| Support and advocacy | 93 | 21.8% |
| Number of students | 53 | 12.4% |
| Supporting special populations of ELs | 40 | 9.4% |

\* Participant responses could be coded into multiple categories.

More than half of the 427 respondents who answered this question reported issues with scheduling, including time for instruction, lesson planning, and collaboration with content teachers. Respondents expressed concerns related to these problems and their effects on both teachers and students. Illustrative comments include:

*“The schedule makes it impossible to access the students in a sensible manner and does not account for students who are both ESL/SPED. ESL is always added to the schedule last, at which point it is impossible to schedule equitably.” (Middle school ESL teacher)*

*“Co-teaching is a challenge. It's difficult for teachers to find time to truly collaborate. Often times it's difficult to balance content and language instruction. ESL teachers sometimes fall into doing more scaffolding of content than explicit language teaching.” (Middle school ESL teacher)*

*“I do not service students anywhere near the recommended ELL service times that the state gives.” (P-8 ESL teacher)*

Respondents were finally asked whether it would be helpful to (1) develop a DESE-created ESL framework that complements the MA ELD standards; (2) update the Massachusetts English Language Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes; and (3) expand and update the Next Generation ESL Curriculum Resource Guide. Table 38 shows how helpful respondents would find each of these resources.

Table 38. Resources for implementing the MA ELD standards/delivering effective instruction

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Resource** | Not helpful for my context | I’d find it helpful |
| DESE-created ESL framework | 56 | 368 |
| Updated ELPBO | 92 | 317 |
| Expanded and updated NGESL guide | 92 | 329 |

Most respondents stated that all these resources would be helpful for better implementing the MA ELD standards to deliver effective ESL instruction.

 When asked for additional comments, 183 respondents provided input on how DESE can further support improvements in ESL education. Comments indicate that respondents would like more support and advocacy from school, district and state leaders, including increased significance for ESL education; required training for content teachers working with ELs; additional funding for staff and resources; and opportunities to collaborate within the Massachusetts ESL teaching community. Illustrative comments include:

*“Strongly encourage more general educators to take ownership of the ELLs in their classrooms; ESL teachers can't do it all. RETELL was a good first step, but many teachers do not use the strategies, even after taking the course, and still consider ESL teachers as primarily responsible for these students' outcomes.” (Middle school ESL teacher)*

*“I believe that we provide effective instruction at my school, but I am lucky that I have a manageable caseload. Many teachers across the state have too many students, and I hear them talk about how ineffective they feel, so I guess I would say that we need more ESL teachers.” (Elementary school and middle school ESL teacher)*

*“Monitor more closely what is happening in districts by giving established (required?) guidelines. Some districts are known for having outstanding EL programs. It would be helpful for those districts to share their successes so that other districts can replicate them to best service ALL Massachusetts ELs. Provide PD opportunities for teachers to visit those districts that are models and similar to their own districts.” (Elementary school and middle school ESL teacher)*

# Recommendations

Recommendations for the state of Massachusetts to consider are based on the literature review, comparative analysis of state frameworks and standards, and survey results from Massachusetts educators:

## Develop a DESE-created ESL framework

In order to best meet the needs of ESL teachers and directors in Massachusetts, it is recommended that DESE build on its existing tools and resources by developing an ESL framework with the following components:

* Vision and/or mission statement for English learner education that encourages multilingualism, diversity, and cross-cultural learning
* Revised and updated statewide ESL-related definitions, roles, and responsibilities
* Overview of the WIDA ELD standards and implementation guidance for various ESL instructional models
* Best practices for curriculum and instruction by ESL instructional models, proficiency and/or developmental levels
* Strategies for social and academic language development by ESL proficiency and/or developmental levels
* Lesson and unit planning guides that are clear, concise, and applicable to different by ESL instructional models, proficiency and/or developmental levels
* Guidance for effective classroom assessment, including how to create an assessment plan, how to develop/adapt different assessment tools, and how to monitor progress towards English language proficiency and use data to inform instructional planning

## Develop robust resources to support ESL framework implementation

It is recommended that DESE create a robust set of resources to support effective implementation of the ESL framework by educators. Possible educator resources include sample unit planning guides, recommended SEI strategies, guidance for teacher-designed ESL curricula, and examples of classroom assessment plans and tools.

Instructional guidance and resources should reflect the following best practices of ESL instruction:

* Ensure a welcoming and inclusive school and classroom environment that celebrates students’ home languages and cultures s
* Focus on both oral language development and the advancement of literacy skills within and across content areas
* Use students’ home languages in ESL instruction regardless of program model to support language growth, to validate students’ background and individual resources, and to positively contribute to student performances
* Implement targeted, individualized feedback in the classroom for continued growth and development
* Use differentiated tasks, scaffolding, and support through modeling and the use of multiple modalities
* Create opportunities for small group instruction and project-based, cooperative learning and deeper learning

## Provide rich and sustained professional development opportunities

Rich and sustained professional development opportunities will support improvements in ESL instruction across content areas. Offering online, self-paced courses will allow educators to participate in DESE-sponsored professional development offerings and can support consistency throughout the state as well as sustained engagement at the district or program level. Recommended training topics include:

* Understanding and implementing the ESL framework
* Implementation guidance for various ESL instructional models
* Best practices for culturally relevant teaching and supporting racial and cultural equity in classrooms and schools
* Best instructional practices for different proficiencies, developmental levels, and EL special populations, including ELSWD, SLIFE and Newcomers
* Developing teacher-designed ESL curricula, including support for oral language and literacy development across content areas
* Developing standards-based classroom assessments aligned with instructional goals
* Deeper learning and interactive, performance-based teaching practices

In addition, it is recommended that DESE develop and support strategically designed professional learning communities for ESL educators. These communities can (1) support the design of collaborative learning opportunities built into daily teaching practice; (2) provide a space for ESL teachers to share strategies and teaching methods; and (3) facilitate communication between ESL educators and content teachers.

The recommendations provided in this report reflect the needs of Massachusetts educators, identified through survey results, as well as current practices across states. A state-developed ESL framework supported with instructional resources and rich professional opportunities will provide programs and educators with practical supports for effectively serving the needs of English Learners and ensuring their success.

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