



Quick Reference Guide: District Level Shared Responsibility

District Commitment to Resourcing English Learner Programming

The district has English language education programs that meet the varied needs of its EL population. District leaders and the school committee ensure that each program is sufficiently resourced (e.g., all staff have proper language development training, administration hires a sufficient number of ESL teachers).

Effective programming for English Learners (ELs) begins with appropriate staffing and resources for the effective and accurate [identification and placement of ELs](#). Once a student is identified as an EL, the student is placed into an ELE program with [ESL](#) and rigorous grade-level appropriate content instruction that each EL needs to master the content frameworks and language standards. Staffing policies and structures must provide for the common planning time necessary for content and language educators who jointly provide the instructional components of the EL program. EL supports should be dynamic and fluctuate with changes in the EL population and the needs of individual students. This means districts need to pay close attention to the EL populations they serve to establish programming and staffing goals that addresses their specific needs. For example, if a district enrolls ELs who have never attended school, programming for [Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education](#) may be necessary. Districts serving students at lower English proficiency levels/newcomers may need more ESL instruction than those students that have a higher proficiency level. Effective district leaders are knowledgeable about and follow EL educator licensure and qualification requirements, such as the [Sheltered English Instruction Endorsement](#) and the [Bilingual Education Endorsement](#). They also consider EL student performance to determine whether program changes are needed. They use state guidelines such as the [benchmarks for attaining English Proficiency](#) to measure progress and use data about the number of ELs who meet benchmarks to set English Language Education (ELE) program improvement goals and strategies. In addition, they periodically and systematically review ELE program achievement and enrollment data with the school committee to determine, allocate, and approve funding for EL programming and support. This process ensures appropriate staffing, professional development, and other resources to meet ELs' needs, and informs planning for evolving new program capacities. Finally, district leaders consistently communicate and support the range of programming options for ELs in their context, highlighting a shared responsibility for EL student success across schools.

Districts Prioritize Systematic Teacher Collaboration to Support English Learners

The district clearly communicates that collaborative planning time for general education, bilingual education, ESL, and, where appropriate, special education teachers is a district-wide priority and provides district-wide opportunities for shared learning.

District leaders regularly discuss the importance of collaborative planning time for educators who serve ELs. They understand and talk about how content educators need time to examine the academic language in the standards they are teaching to understand what language could be challenging for ELs and design effective instruction and scaffolds. They regularly highlight how ESL educators need time to examine content expectations at each grade level to identify the embedded academic language for EL students' success in reaching content standards and to understand content practices and expectations as the context for language instruction. District leaders support effective collaboration by planning and funding it. For example, they support shared planning time efforts at the school level and create opportunities for district-wide cross-disciplinary [inquiry](#) with a focus on academic language for district-wide learning. They also promote district-wide strategies and [tools for collaboration](#) to encourage conversations about content and language. These conversations allow educators with different roles and areas of expertise to learn from each other and share what works and modify what does not.

District Leaders Drive Shared Responsibility for English Learner Success

District administrators regularly consult with school administrators and educators to understand what they need to fulfill their responsibilities to ELs. District leaders and school committees message a clear "no excuses" mentality for adults when it comes to the success of ELs.

District leaders commit to prioritizing success for ELs by setting clear goals or targets for student success through [strategic planning and continuous improvement processes](#). They set EL specific targets in alignment with state expectations (such as the benchmarks for attaining English Proficiency) and review EL performance data to determine whether ELE programming meets the criteria in [Castañeda's Three-Pronged Test](#), Massachusetts' standard for ELE program development and review. District leaders discuss these expectations and data collection mechanisms with school administrators to ensure targets and

strategies are implemented across classrooms. They explain and highlight program expectations and EL benchmarks with educators and staff across the district, along with mechanisms used to hold them accountable for EL performance in ways that are appropriate to the EL population served and programs at each school. District leaders develop criteria and processes for addressing programs in need of improvement, including what administrators and educators are expected to do to improve EL outcomes. They also provide resources to support improvement plans at the school and classroom levels and share EL student performance data across the district appropriately to highlight successes and fuel improvement when needed. This type of regular district program progress monitoring and intentional support and supervision of administrators and educators who serve ELs prioritizes student success on the minds of district staff and community members.

Actions-at-a-Glance: Shared Responsibility

Shared Responsibility: What can educators at the district level do?

- Hire enough educators and staff with varied expertise to meet the diverse needs of ELs and ELE program needs in the district
- Engage in collaborative data and inquiry processes support ELE program planning across the district
- Prioritize procedures and scheduling of common planning time for educators who work with ELs to better understand their shared responsibility and collaborate towards EL success
- Collaborate with school leaders to develop school improvement plan goals and targets that embed benchmarks for English proficiency
- Develop district improvement plan goals aligned to benchmarks for English proficiency
- Establish internal ELE program evaluations to ensure they meet expected outcomes
- Develop processes for determining ELE programs meeting expectations and those who do not; establish accountability mechanisms for improvement at the school and district levels
- Establish regular mechanism for communicating EL performance (success, needs for improvement) with all key district stakeholders, along with plans for addressing improvement needs and future targets or goals

Planning Resources

DESE Practical Tools and Resources

[Planning for Success in Massachusetts for Districts](#) provides strategic planning and continuous improvement resources (see District Planning and School Planning guides).

[The Collaboration Tool](#) is a resource educators of ELs can use to plan instruction for ELs collaboratively.

[Interactive Guide to the Collaboration Tool](#) provides guidelines for helping educators of ELs use the Collaboration Tool effectively.

[District School and Accountability; District Data Team Toolkit](#) provides a collection of resources for establishing, growing, and maintaining a culture of inquiry and data use to inform decisions that impact teaching and learning, and ultimately improve the achievement of all students (see Module 2: Inquiry, Module 3: Information, and Module 6: Results).

[Integration of Castañeda's Three-Pronged Test into ELE Program Development and Review Process](#) provides an explanation the criteria used to evaluate the quality of ELE programs in Massachusetts (see p. 1).

DESE Guidance

[Identification, Assessment, Placement, & Reclassification of ELs](#) provides guidelines for identifying, placing and monitoring the progress of ELs.

[Rethinking Equity in the Teaching of English Language Learners \(RETELL\)](#) provides guidance and resources related to licensure requirements and professional development for the Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Endorsement, a requirement for educators who work with ELs in Massachusetts.

[EL Program Development and Evaluation](#) provides information about what district leaders should consider when creating new ELE programs or evaluating an existing one (see p. 2-3).

[Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education](#) provides guidance regarding programs for this population of EL, including program expectations for shared responsibility (see ELD Happens all Day p. 11-12)

[Sheltered English Instruction Endorsement](#) provides information about the licensure and endorsement requirements for educators of ELs.

[Guidelines for the Use of Benchmarks Toward Attaining English Proficiency](#) outlines Massachusetts expectations for ELs attaining English language proficiency, what benchmarks are and how they are set and monitored, and related legal

obligations and resources for supporting EL success (see Proficiency Benchmarks on p. 5-6, Resources p. 8-11, and Appendix A: Student Success Template).

Federal Resources

[English Learner Toolkit](#) provides guidance and resources for districts in meeting their legal responsibilities to ELs (see Chapter 1: Tools and Resources for Identifying All English Learner Students, Chapter 2: Tools and Resources for Providing English Learners with a Language Assistance Program, Chapter 3: Tools and Resources for Staffing and Supporting an English Learner Program, and Chapter 9: Tools and Resources for Evaluating the Effectiveness of a District's EL Program). [Ensuring English Learner Students Can Participate Meaningfully and Equally in Educational Programs](#) provides an overview of legal obligations of districts to ensure ELs have equal, meaningful access to education opportunities (see p. 3-6).