Quick Reference Guide: State Level. Asset-Based Teaching and Learning
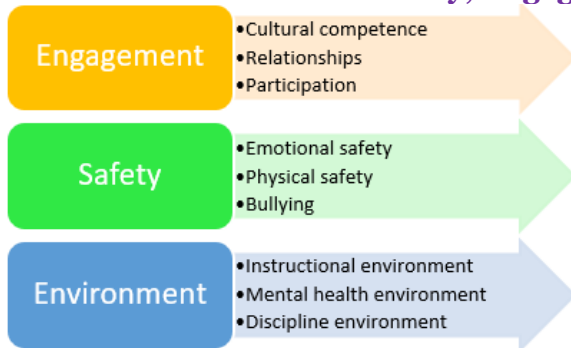
Data on School Climate: Safety, Engagement, and school Environment

Engagement
- Cultural competence
- Relationships
- Participation

Safety
- Emotional safety
- Physical safety
- Bullying

Environment
- Instructional environment
- Mental health environment
- Discipline environment

The Department provides data to districts on the school climate dimensions of safety, engagement, and school environment disaggregated for ELs to highlight areas of success and areas for growth.

The Department gathers data through the Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) annual survey, where students in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10 are asked to share their views on three dimensions and nine topics school climate. VOCAL data is then disaggregated for ELs to highlight areas of success and areas for growth. The Department provides this data to districts to inform district-level improvements. Ensuring that ELs are well represented, by providing surveys in languages other than English, is an important part of this data collection.

Policies that recognize Bilingualism and Biliteracy as Assets

The Department adopts policies that recognize bilingualism and biliteracy as assets (e.g., guidance and technical support for the State Seal of Biliteracy and the establishment of two-way immersion/dual language programs, training for leaders on bilingual education, grants to support new bilingual education programs).
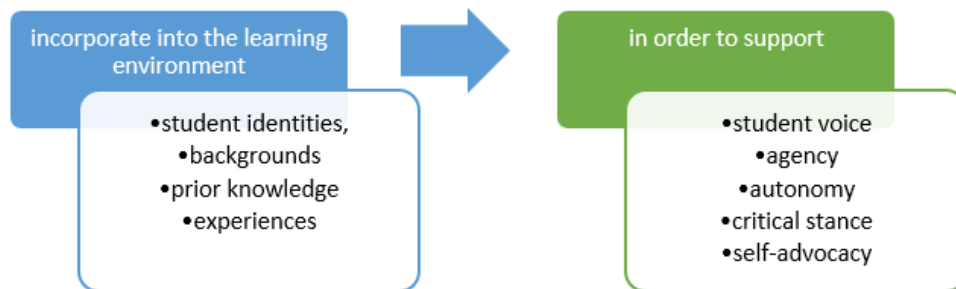
ELs bring a wealth of knowledge with them to school. The whole school benefits when educators and policymakers view EL languages, cultures, and prior experiences as assets that contribute to the enrichment of the learning environment for all. The Department's policy and guidance for ELs is asset-oriented and drives districts and schools to be aware of and responsive to students' strengths, needs, and identities. The Department's policy also highlights and celebrates the multidimensionality of EL populations.

Student's use of their full linguistic repertoire, including translanguaging practices, helps to enrich their language development and learning. The Department's initiatives increase awareness of the benefits of bilingualism and biliteracy, and invest in the development of bilingual programs (e.g., such as by procuring grants to support new and existing bilingual education programs). The Department strongly encourages districts to provide biliteracy pathways for students to begin or continue their quest for the State Seal of Biliteracy.

Supporting ELs' voice, active learning, and contributions to the community

The Department provides guidance supporting districts to prioritize empowering ELs to use their voice, be active learners, and contribute to the school and district communities.

Together with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, the Department's guidance promotes approaches to engage students actively in learning as critical thinkers who evaluate information and attitudes, make choices, and effect change in their personal lives and the community. As an essential strategy for learning about the needs of ELs and improving the learning environment, Department guidance encourages districts and schools to…

incorporate into the learning environment
- student identities,
- backgrounds
- prior knowledge
- experiences

in order to support
- student voice
- agency
- autonomy
- critical stance
- self-advocacy

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

EDUCATOR EFFECTIVENESS

🎬 Actions-at-a-Glance: Asset-Based Instruction

Asset-Based Instruction: What can educators at the state level do?

- Uses a conceptual framework that recognizes the connection between students, their languages, cultures, immigration, and home and community experiences as a way to position policy and learning environments
- Continuously promotes bilingual programming and the Seal of Biliteracy
- Explicitly and consistently communicate the message that maintenance of the home language is important for continued family relationships, which have indirect impacts on student achievement
- Multiple entry points and opportunities for students to study world languages and to pursue development of their home language in heritage language classes

Planning Resources

DESE Practical Tools and Resources

ESL Model Curriculum Units provide examples of culturally responsive, asset-based curriculum and instruction for ELs. The webpage also provides tools and resources for developing curriculum that promotes language learning and academic achievement simultaneously, like the Collaboration Tool and the Interactive Collaboration Tool Guide.

DESE Guidance

Guidance for Implementing the Massachusetts State Seal of Biliteracy provides information about how to develop and implement bilingual programs based on the Language Opportunity for Our Kids (LOOK) Act.

Massachusetts Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) Definition and Guidance provides information about the importance of asset-based approaches when teaching SLIFE (see Guiding Principles on p. 8).

Next Generation ESL Project: Curriculum Resource Guide provides recommendations from an asset-based perspective. It discusses considerations for EL instruction, including developing culturally responsive curriculum (Theory of Action on p. 11-12 and Attending to the Role of Critical Stance and Social Justice in ESL Curriculum Development on p. 158 - 161). It also provides guidelines and resources for effective professional learning (p. 170 – 175).

Summary of The Language Opportunities for Our Kids (LOOK Act) discusses the main implications of the LOOK Act, which aims to provide districts with more flexibility as to the language acquisition programs they choose to meet the needs of English learners, while maintaining accountability for timely and effective English language acquisition.

An Act Relative to Language Opportunity for Our Kids (The LOOK Act) presents the new law, which aims to provide districts with more flexibility as to the language acquisition programs they choose to meet the needs of ELs, while maintaining accountability for timely and effective English language acquisition.

Federal Resources

Getting It Right: Reference Guides for Registering Students with Non-English Names provides a general overview of naming practices in a given language (Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese). It also provide guidance on how to politely address parents.

Other Featured Resources

My Name, My Identity — A Declaration of Self presents an initiative that aims to bring awareness to the importance of respecting student's names and identity in schools (measured by the number of community members making a pledge to pronounce students' names correctly) and to build a respectful and caring culture in school communities that values diversity (measured by the number of *my name* stories posted on social media).

SEAL Bilingualism: Through the Eyes of Families highlights the benefits of bilingual and dual language education through the eyes of Spanish-speaking families.

Teaching Tolerance provides free resources emphasizing social justice and anti-bias perspectives for educators—teachers, administrators, counselors and other practitioners—who work with children from kindergarten through high school. Educators use the materials to supplement the curriculum, to inform their practices, and to create civil and inclusive school communities where children are respected, valued and welcome participants.

Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSIEB Guide for educators provides examples of and strategies for translanguaging that are useful for implementing asset-based instruction.

WIDA provides resources for asset-based approaches for teaching ELs, including the Focus Bulletin on SLIFE: Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education, Essential Actions Handbook, and Can-Do Philosophy (and related video).

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