



Quick Reference Guide: State Level. Educators with High Standards for English Learners

High Expectations for All Students

The Department relentlessly communicates the importance of holding ELs to the same high expectations as their non-EL peers and invites regular conversation with stakeholders to advance instruction for ELs.



Through clear and consistent communications, the Department sets the expectation that all students, including ELs, have access to an excellent education. The Department also relentlessly communicates that all educators maintain [high standards](#) for all learners and plan rigorous, grade-appropriate curriculum, [instruction](#), and [assessments](#) to ensure that ELs gain the skills, knowledge, and habits of mind needed for future success.

The Department also invites regular conversations with stakeholders to advance instruction for ELs. Central topics include discussion and application of rigorous instruction that includes appropriate scaffolds and supports, and is aligned with the [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](#) and the [WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework](#). All educators are responsible for the language development and academic achievement of ELs.



To be academically successful, ELs need to *simultaneously* develop sophisticated uses of English language *and* grade-level conceptual understandings of academic content and analytical practices. The [Collaboration Tool](#), [Interactive Collaboration Tool Guide](#) and coursework developed by the state supports educators in merging these necessary instructional components into their [standards-based planning](#) with the integration of WIDA standards with grade-level content and practices inherent in the MA Frameworks. The structure of programs serving ELs in Massachusetts acknowledges that ELs acquire language while interacting in all classrooms. ELs can engage in rigorous academic learning even when they do not manifest “native-like” control of the English language.

Scaffolding for ELs Cultivating Complex Academic Discourse

The Department shares examples of supports and scaffolds for ELs that cultivate their academic and social language through regular, complex academic discourse



A critical component of EL instruction is [scaffolding](#) practices that provide students with opportunities to engage in rigorous grade-level content and more advanced academic uses of English. Scaffolding provides ELs with the support to accomplish high-challenge learning tasks that they cannot yet do independently. The skilled practice of scaffolding is responsive to the strengths and needs of students who are learning new academic content through a new language. To engage in such rigorous work, dynamic supports should be added or withdrawn based on students’ thinking and language use. Rather than watering down the curriculum, through a continuous balance between challenge and support, the practice of scaffolding can respond to ELs’ learning and help students progress toward rigorous, grade-level academic demands and complex academic language.

To support dynamic and responsive scaffolding practices and to support ELs’ engagement in rigorous curriculum, the Department shares examples of supports and scaffolding for ELs that cultivate their academic and social language through regular, complex academic discourse. The Department also publishes [guidance](#), convenes forums, and offers EL-focused professional learning opportunities to continue professional development of deep knowledge in academic content, pedagogy, and understanding of ELs.

Actions-at-a-Glance : Educators with High Standards for ELs

High Standards: What can educators at the state level do?

- Provide [professional learning opportunities](#) for district and school leaders and all EL educators focusing on best practices for design and delivery of curriculum and instruction for ELs that reflect high expectations
- Guide districts to develop and fund professional learning opportunities focusing on high standards and support for ELs
- Hold [networks](#) and forums focusing on promising practices and high expectations and supports for ELs

- Share models and examples of high expectations, support, and scaffolding practices through [focus bulletins](#), [network](#) themes, and [learning modules](#)
- Review research and exemplars of scaffolding ELs to high standards

Planning Resources

DESE Practical Tools and Resources

[Next Generation ESL: Model Curriculum Units](#) These curricular units and videos illustrate the use of high standards and expectations that are grade-level appropriate for students in the ESL classroom. Many units provide videos showcasing lessons in action in classrooms across the state.

[Academic Vision](#) Read the State's academic vision for all learners and visit links to videos showcasing standards-based learning.

[The Collaboration Tool](#) This is a practical tool to guide content and language teachers in collaborative planning discussions. It draws on the expertise of each teacher and provides prompts for shared responsibility in planning rigorous, grade and level appropriate curriculum, instruction and assessment for their common English learners.

[The Interactive Collaboration Tool Guide](#) This interactive guide will walk you through how to use the Collaboration Tool in curriculum development, starting with the creation of Focus Language Goals.

DESE Guidance

[Standards of Effective Teaching Practice](#) (2017). Standards 1 and 2 provide educators with guidance around what effective instructional practices look like.

[Next Generation ESL Curriculum Project: Curriculum Resource Guide](#) This resource guide provides support for developing NGESL Curriculum that is rigorous, authentic, and highlights language development within the contextualized practice of academic learning. See the NGESL's Theory of Action and Key Characteristics on p. 10-12, Definition of the Focus of ESL Instruction on p. 17-19, and the discussion of the Collaboration Tool and its Focus Language Goals on p. 41-70.

[Guidance for Sheltered English Immersion \(SEI\) Programs](#). Here you will find guidance for district and school leaders to strengthen SEI programs and improve education for ELs. The goal is to increase capacity, program quality, and systematic, sustained excellence in SEI programs. This guidance compels and supports equity and continuous improvements for ELs to match the academic success of all Massachusetts students.

[Guidance on Accelerating Students Who Are Behind Grade Level](#) This guidance document provides suggestions and examples of how educators can support students who may be behind grade level to ensure they meet grade level standards.

Federal Resources

[Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures](#) This book (free PDF download) examines how evidence-based research relevant to the development of ELs from birth to age 21 can inform education and health policies and related practices that can result in better educational outcomes. This report makes recommendations for policy, practice, and research and data collection focused on addressing the challenges in caring for and educating ELs from birth to grade 12.

[Teaching academic content and literacy to English learners in elementary and middle school](#) (National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance,). Provides educators with evidence-based recommendations including examples for teaching English learners while supporting content and language acquisition.

[Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades: A Practice Guide](#). This practice guide provides educators with evidence-based recommendations including examples for teaching ELs in Elementary grades while supporting content and language acquisition.

Other Featured Resources

[Attending to Language, Engaging in Practice: Scaffolding English Language Learners' Apprenticeship into the Common Core English Language Arts Standards](#) This article explains and exemplifies three levels of scaffolding educators use with ELs.

[WIDA Focus Bulletin: Scaffolding Learning for Multilingual Students in Math](#) This bulletin provides examples of specific macro-scaffolding and micro-scaffolding practices in action in a math classroom and includes guidance for developing these scaffolding practices over time.

[A framework for raising expectations and instructional rigor for English language learners](#) This report provides educators with suggestions for instructional models as well as guidance on selecting high-quality, rigorous, and grade and level appropriate instructional materials that promote language development.