



Quick Reference Guide: School Level Meaningful and Rigorous Learning Opportunities

Advocating for Equal Access

School leaders communicate to all staff, including guidance counselors, that students' status as English learners, or their English language proficiency levels, cannot be used as an excuse to deny them access to courses they desire, including advanced courses such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, early college, and dual enrollment courses. Ensuring ELs have equal access to meaningful and rigorous learning opportunities that build on their assets and help them develop language and content learning simultaneously is part of a school's culture, or the way in which a school operates. It is a practical application of other features of effective school cultures for ELs such as having high expectations for all learners regardless of background or language proficiency and sharing responsibility for EL success. School leaders play a key role in establishing and sustaining schools where ELs can participate and succeed in the range of programs, activities, and services available. This includes those that best fit ELs' individual needs and future goals, and advanced courses like Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), early college and dual enrollment courses that can help ELs be successful after high school.

Collaboratively Developed Learner-Centered Schedules

School administrators balance student schedules to make sure that English language development support, academic services, and programs provided to ELs cause minimal disruption to core content instruction. Schedules are essential for ensuring participating in meaningful, rigorous learning opportunities. They provide a roadmap for what activities and programs ELs will participate in and with whom, and whether ELs will have access to the supports and services they need to succeed. Effective schedules for ELs minimize disruptions to content area and ESL instruction, required components of English Learner Education programs in Massachusetts. They also maximize school resources and ELs' access to the full range of opportunities available to them. This requires a systemic, student-centered approach that takes into consideration ELs' academic, linguistic, and social and emotional strengths and needs when developing school and individual EL schedules. It also requires collaboration and coordination between educators and staff who work with ELs, along with student performance data, clear processes, and time for making scheduling decisions together.

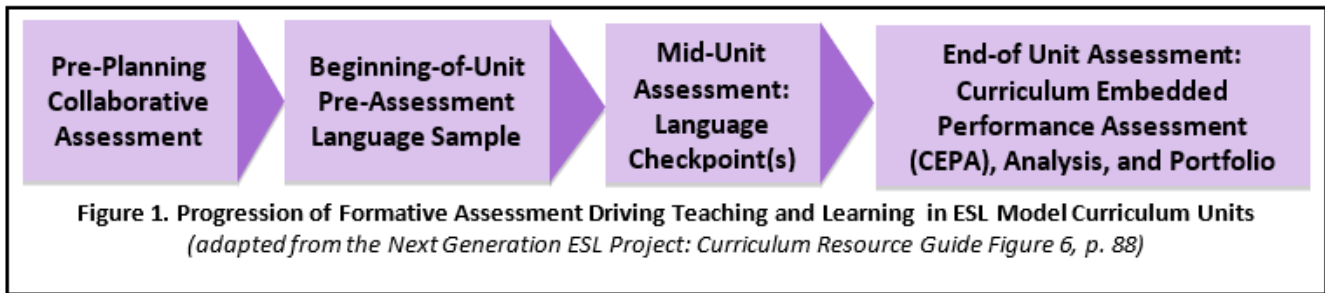
Effective Assessment

School leaders establish processes to ensure that educators use appropriate formative and summative assessments to provide rigorous learning experiences to ELs that accelerate their progress toward mastery of content standards and English language proficiency.

Assessment is an essential component of quality instruction for all students. For ELs, effective assessment provides fuel for making instructional decisions that support language and content learning in scaffolded ways. Good assessment for ELs draws on their assets, is responsive individual characteristics (e.g., language proficiency in first and second languages), and provides data for key processes such as establishing learning goals, selecting instructional practices, developing curriculum, determining supports, and making placement and scheduling decisions. This type of assessment is also built on evaluative criteria that are tightly aligned to content and focused language goals and provides for real-world independent application of learning. The figure below presents an example of how educators can use formative assessment at different points in a unit of study to evaluate student learning.

Sample EL Assessment Literacy Professional Learning Topics

- Designing assessments to evaluate EL language development and content learning
- Types of assessments for ELs, and when and how to use them
- Selecting and/or developing appropriate assessment scaffolds and supports based on EL characteristics
- Providing effective feedback to ELs
- Analyzing and using assessment results to inform instructional practice in different contexts (ESL, content area classrooms, bilingual education, etc.) and for different EL populations (long-term ELs, newcomers, students with interrupted formal education – SLIFE, etc.).



Actions-at-a-Glance: Meaningful and Rigorous Instruction

Meaningful and Rigorous Instruction: What can educators at the school level do?

- Promote a belief in ELs' ability to reach high expectations with appropriate supports and highlight the vital role of rigorous coursework in EL learning and success in staff meetings, school goals and improvement plan, and educator evaluation
- Communicate information about required and available programs and services for ELs to staff and educators so they can connect students to opportunities
- Ensure educators and staff who work with ELs know how to best support them in their specific area (guidance counseling, gifted and talented programs, extracurriculars, Advanced Placement courses, etc.)
- Provide professional learning opportunities for continuous improvement
- Ensure school processes and policies (referral, screening, entrance, and evaluation criteria for specific programs and activities, recruitment and scheduling of programs and services, EL placement, staffing decisions, work assignments, etc.) support meaningful access, and adjust them when needed
- Monitor interactions with ELs and EL outcomes (grades, participation rates, test results, etc.) to ensure opportunities are rigorous and meaningful, and that ELs are adequately supported
- Ensure there are enough resources (staffing, facilities, availability of programs and services for demand, etc.) for equal access
- Leverage district resources and community partnerships to support EL access to appropriate services and activities when needed
- Establish common planning times, protocols, and educator teams (such as Language Assessment Teams (LATs) and Student Support Teams to ensure EL placement and scheduling decisions provide meaningful access
- Promote the use of EL language development and content area learning data (from assessments, observations, analysis of student work, etc.), parent and family input, background information (individual EL assets, needs, interests and goals) and best practices for EL support (collaboration, tiered systems of support) into scheduling processes
- Provide professional learning opportunities focused on assessment literacy and related topics
- Establish common time and processes for collaborative development, selection, interpretation and use of assessment tools and practices across the school (promotes alignment and coherence)
- Monitor EL and non-EL outcomes in different assessments to ensure equity of implementation
- Incorporate EL assessment-related goals into school improvement and educator evaluation plans

Planning Resources

DESE Practical Tools and Resources

[ESL Model Curriculum Units](#) provide exemplars of different types of assessments for ELs (formative, summative, curriculum embedded performance assessments, etc.) that are aligned to content and focused language goals.

[Master Schedule Review](#) provides administrators and school-based leadership teams can use this tool to review master schedules for alignment with best practices for inclusion.

[Advanced Placement \(AP\) and International Baccalaureate \(IB\) Exam Fee Subsidy Program](#) provides guidelines and resources for supporting students in taking AP and IB exams.

DESE Guidance

[ELE Program Compliance Criteria](#) provides information about program expectations for ELs, including components and assessment requirements.

[Guidance for Sheltered English Immersion \(SEI\) Programs](#) provides information about SEI programs, including collaboration examples (Appendix E) and scenarios showcasing scheduling strategies (Scenarios 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7).

[Identification, Assessment, Placement, & Reclassification of ELs](#) offers guidance for building and sustaining successful programs for ELs, including assessment considerations for ELs and how these can

guide placement, monitoring and reclassification of ELs and how school-based Language Assessment Teams (LATs) can support monitoring EL progress and making reclassification decisions.

[Next Generation ESL Project: Curriculum Resource Guide](#) provides information about EL assessment, including the ESL MCU assessment framework outlining how to develop evaluative criteria aligned to content and language goals, how to develop curriculum embedded performance assessments, types of assessments, and examples of effective assessments for ELs by assessment type (p. 88-101). It also discusses ways to promote shared responsibility through educator collaboration (p. 41-59) and guidelines for effective professional learning (p. 169-175).

[The Board of Education Advisory Councils Gifted and Talented Education Advisory Council](#) provides resources for gifted and talented education, including links to the annual report that includes recommendations for identifying and motivating gifted students.

[Massachusetts High Quality College and Career Pathways Initiative](#) describes early college initiatives in Massachusetts, including criteria for establishing high-quality early college programs.

Federal Resources

[Dear Colleague English Learner Letter](#) provides guidance about federal expectations for ELs, including information about basic requirements for language programs, staffing, scheduling, and meeting the needs of ELs who opt out of language programs (see p. 12-32).

[English Learner Tool Kit](#) provides information about federal expectations for effective programs and services for ELs, including information about meaningful access (Chapter 4: [Meaningful Access to Core Curricular, Extra Curricular Programs](#)) and scheduling (Chapter 5: [Creating an Inclusive Environment and Avoiding Unnecessary Segregation](#) – see Tool #3 for a sample self-monitoring aid that can help schools monitor the extent to which ELs are segregated in order to address any potential issues).

[Exploratory Study on the Identification of English Learners for Gifted and Talented Programs](#) this resource can help educators ensure ELs have equitable access to gifted and talented programs (see Executive Summary p. ix – x).

Other Featured Resources

[Beyond the Bell: Options for Increased Learning Time](#) and [Issue in Brief: Increased Learning Time Summary](#) contains extended school day research and resources.

[Data Wise Initiative](#) provides guidelines and resources for structuring data analysis, conversations, and related actions.

[Elementary School Scheduling: Enhancing Instruction for Student Achievement](#) presents strategies and options for designing elementary school schedules.

[Finding Time for Collaborative Planning](#) provides detailed descriptions and examples of six strategies for scheduling collaboration time.

[Focusing Formative Assessment on the Needs of English Language Learners](#) discusses how formative assessment can enhance EL teaching and learning, how summative assessments can inform formative assessment practices, and opportunities and challenges inherent in integrating formative assessment into instruction for ELs.

[School Scheduling Tools](#) provides recommendations and tools for school teams to make the most of their time and build a strategic schedule.

[Schools to Learn From](#) showcases six high schools with strong college and career outcomes for ELs, including examples of shared values guiding daily actions and decision-making, school design elements, and instructional practices that set up an environment where ELs can thrive (see Executive Summary p. 2-5).

[Supporting Multilingual Students with WIDA and International Baccalaureate Resources](#) illustrates how educators in featured International Baccalaureate schools are integrating WIDA resources as they design lessons for multilingual learners.

[Focus on ELLs with Disabilities: Providing Access to Complex Language](#) provides strategies for providing ELs with disabilities access to meaningful, rigorous instruction.

[Supporting ELs with Formative Assessments](#) discusses what formative assessments are and strategies for implementing them to support EL success.

[Performance Assessments for English language learners](#) explains why performance assessment are helpful for ELs (p. 6- 12), how they can be used to improve teacher quality (p. 12-16), and ideas for making performance assessments most valued for ELs (p. 17-21).

[UDL Progression Rubric](#) presents indicators for teacher progress along each Universal Design for Learning guideline and checkpoint.