



Quick Reference Guide: District Level Academic and Linguistic Supports

Support Tiered System of Support Implementation for English Learners

District leaders provide training and planning support to schools for implementing the Massachusetts Tiered System of Support and monitor the provision of tiered instruction and supports to ELs.

The Massachusetts [Tiered System of Support](#) (MTSS) outlines a system of supports responsive to the academic and non-academic needs of all students. District leaders can leverage this system as a framework for providing academic, linguistic and [social and emotional](#) supports to help English Learners (ELs) succeed. They can do so by establishing expectations that the system will address for EL-specific needs across the board.

In practice this may mean:

- ensuring core instruction first and foremost includes sufficient ESL instruction and incorporates strategies that support EL achievement in Tier 1
- providing intensive supports that address deeper issues ELs bring to school in Tiers 2 and 3
- leveraging the MTSS for EL success by engaging leaders and educators in planning how the system will be set up and monitored
- ensuring school leaders and educators who are implementing the system are knowledgeable about the way the system works, the strengths and needs of ELs
- monitoring the implementation supports to ensure ELs have equal access to the range of interventions provided in the district

Specific examples may include:

- ensuring ELs can participate in specialized reading instruction or supplemental math classes without losing access to ESL classes or other language services or other linguistic supports.
- monitoring implementation of tiered systems by collecting data on EL performance in core instruction, EL-specific strategies utilized and data on EL referrals for tier 2 and 3 interventions.
- reviewing data about the quality and volume of the supports offered to ELs and developing criteria for evaluating the success of these supports in promoting EL student success.
- tracking EL involvement and success in MTSS can demonstrate equitable access and identify areas of improvement to strengthen the tiered system for ELs and all students.

Coordinate Resources to Support English Learners' Varied Needs

District leaders align and coordinate fiscal and human resources to ensure that ELs (including SLIFE, ELs with disabilities, and newcomers) receive ESL, native language instructional supports, and services tailored to their unique academic and linguistic needs.

District leaders support EL success by

- ensuring fiscal and human resources are used strategically to meet the varied needs of all ELs served by the district.
- establishing ongoing planning and evaluation processes to determine adequate resource allocation to provide academic, linguistic, and other tailored supports.

In practice this implies district leaders practice the following:

- gathering and reviewing EL numbers, performance data, and information about the specific needs by EL population on an annual basis to determine staffing or financial implications.
- evaluating the size and effectiveness of specialized EL programming (such newcomer programs and programs for students with limited or interrupted formal education), interventions, and instructional practices to inform budgetary and staffing decisions.



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- adjusting resource allocations to respond to changes in EL student needs such as a large increase in newcomers or ELs with refugee status.

To do so effectively district leaders must collaborate with school leaders and educators in identifying EL and program needs on a regular basis. They may establish Language Acquisition teams made up of a variety of EL educators (ESL, content area, bilingual, special education) and school and district leaders (guidance counselors, principals, curriculum coordinators) who review program and EL information and provide recommendations for resource allocation. Because ELs' needs are varied and multi-faceted, district leaders also ensure adequate funding is provided to properly implement identified strategies and programs at each school. They regularly review whether these supports are effective in promoting EL academic and language growth and monitor the way in which services and supports are provided to ensure ELs have adequate access to both ESL and core content language instruction.

Monitoring English Learner Success

District leaders monitor ELs' achievement in the content areas and progress in acquiring English by reviewing data and establishing policies and procedures to improve outcomes for ELs.



Monitoring ELs' achievement allows district leaders to track progress towards EL success goals and evaluate effectiveness of English Language Education (ELE) programs. District leaders allocate time and provide training on data retrieval, review, and analysis to empower school-based and district teams to monitor EL success in their buildings. In practice this may mean:

- Providing regular time for educator teams to meet and review EL language proficiency data, literacy and mathematics outcomes
- Developing a set of EL success data points for regular review, and establishing data collection mechanisms and district-level review teams to engage with data and provide recommendations for improvement
- Using tools such as [District Analysis Review Tool Data](#), reports from standardized testing (ACCESS for ELLs, Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System – MCAS), district-based formative and summative assessment information to evaluate EL student growth across the district and by EL subgroup (ELs with disabilities, long-term ELs, etc.)
- Reviewing [early warning indicator](#) data (e.g., attendance, behavior issues, and tardiness) to help identify ELs in need of non-academic interventions as a way to support future language and academic achievement
- Establishing EL improvement goals at the beginning of each school year, monitoring progress towards goals based on common metrics and relevant data, and communicating both goals and progress to educators and leaders across the district
- Connecting data review recommendations to program decision-making to ensure suggestions for improvement are implemented

Actions-at-a-Glance: Academic and Linguistic Supports

Academic and Linguistic Supports: What can educators at the district level do?

- Train leaders and educators on ways to tailor the chosen tiered system of support to meet EL needs
- Review data to identify EL students who need existing supports and evaluate whether new supports and interventions are needed
- Redistribute resources to meet needs of EL students when appropriate
- Evaluate and shift programming to meet the needs of ELs served; develop mechanisms for gathering timely information about EL needs to inform budget planning and resource allocation
- Provide resources (time, training, staffing, etc.) for monitoring EL outcomes using a variety of data points
- Assess the efficacy of interventions and programming by monitoring EL progress and achievement

Planning Resources

DESE Practical Tools and Resources

[MTSS Self-Assessment](#) provides a rubric for assessing the status of district efforts to develop robust, effective tiered systems of academic (instructional) and non-academic (behavioral) supports across multiple school sites.

[Early Warning Indicator System](#) provides tools for identifying students who are at risk of not meeting important academic goals that can be used to help students get back on track.

[SLIFE Interactive Tool](#) explains how to identify and plan for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE).

DESE Guidance

[Sheltered English Immersion \(SEI\) Guidance](#) outlines the importance of integrating academic content and language development in EL instruction, maintaining an asset-based approach that builds on the strengths ELs bring to their school experience, and having all leaders and educators across the system share accountability for EL success.

[Social and Emotional Learning](#) outlines the role of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in the classroom and larger school community.

[Guidelines for the Use of Benchmarks toward Attaining English Proficiency](#) defines expectations and systems to determine, measure, and monitor ELs' English language proficiency levels and growth.

[Massachusetts Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education \(SLIFE\) Definition and Guidance](#) provides guidance for supporting SLIFE students.

[Guidance on the Placement, Progress Monitoring, and Reclassification Procedures of English Learners](#) offers regulations and guidance to assist district personnel in building and sustaining successful programs for ELs, including assessment considerations for ELs and how these can guide placement, monitoring and reclassification of ELs (p. 24-25) and how school-based Language Assessment Teams (LATs) can support monitoring EL progress and making reclassification decisions (p. 26 – 28).

Federal Resources

[English Learner Toolkit Chapter 6: Addressing English Learners with Disabilities](#) provides guidance regarding expectations for addressing the needs of ELs with disabilities and sample strategies for doing so (see Tool #3 - Developing an IEP for an English Learner with a Disability, which provides a list of questions to consider for ELs during the IEP-writing process and Tool #5 - Selecting Appropriate Accommodations for Students with Disabilities, which offers a list of “dos” and “don’ts” related to choosing accommodations for students with disabilities.

Other Featured Resources

[Providing ELLs with Disabilities with Access to Complex Language](#) provides suggestions for ensuring ELs have access to and participate in complex language.