



Quick Reference Guide: School Level Thriving in High School

Prioritizing Participation in School Life

School administrators prioritize ELs' participation in all aspects of school life and regularly communicate this priority to school staff.

High school prepares graduates to be contributing members in a global community through academic and non-academic learning opportunities that help students acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities to be successful in college and/or a career of choice. Participation in non-academic activities such as afterschool, summer learning, and other community-based programs has been associated with [improved academic achievement as well as language and social development of ELs](#). This requires ensuring ELs can participate in all aspects of school life they are interested in – all activities, programs, etc. available to students –and that contribute to their high school graduation and future plans. In practice this means ELs' status and language proficiency levels do not pose an undue barrier to their ability to participate and succeed in the range of opportunities available at the school they attend. It also means creating student- centered environments and a [culture of student engagement](#) and communicating this priority to school staff on a regular basis.



Sample Ways to Recognize and Value Student Contributions



Establish relationships with students, student groups, and youth organizations to listen to student voices



Ensure students are represented on school committees



Involve students in identifying needs and assessing opportunities for leadership development



Publicize the work of students and their ideas as a regular part of school newsletters and bulletin boards



Offer many different types of opportunities for students to give input about different educational issues



Create local funds to support student leadership activities

Adapted from [Promoting Student Leadership on Campus - Creating a Culture of Engagement](#) (Intercultural Development Research Association, 2003)

Removing Barriers to Full Participation

School leaders cultivate partnerships and organize resources to address linguistic, economic, and social barriers to ELs' participation in school life (e.g., provide support for extracurricular activities, transportation support, native language communications, assemblies on implicit bias).

ELs often encounter a variety of barriers that keep them from being able to fully participate in high school opportunities. Barriers to participation include lack of access to transportation, finances, language proficiency, bias, harassment and/or bullying because of EL or immigrant status, cultural challenges, among others. Another important barrier may be the belief

ELs may hold themselves that high school opportunities are not for them, or that they are not welcomed in certain aspects of school life. Schools who effectively engage ELs address this identity question directly, promoting an inclusive environment where all students feel valued and supported in taking advantage of all high school has to offer. School leaders can also develop strategic family, community, and student partnerships to provide a strong message of inclusion, as well as augment and improve existing opportunities.

Removing Barriers to EL Participation Through Partnerships



Actions-at-a-Glance: Thriving in High School

Thriving in High School: What can educators at the school level do?

- Regularly highlight the importance of EL engagement with staff, educators, ELs and their families
- Ensure educators and staff responsible for instruction, activities and programs know how to support ELs
- Monitor interactions with ELs and EL experiences to note what is working and what needs improvement
- Set goals and metrics related to EL participation and success in school improvement plans
- Align school processes (scheduling, transportation, services, etc.) and supports to facilitate EL participation and success
- Hold the school community accountable for promoting an environment that welcomes ELs into each aspect of the school's life
- Provide opportunities for ELs to speak into school life activities and process through involvement in school leadership teams
- Give ELs [opportunities to implement their own ideas](#) for making the school or program better
- Gathering input from ELs, their families, and previous EL graduates to expand and strengthen academic and non-academic activities to benefit the whole school community
- Partner with local organizations (including other high schools in the area, educational collaboratives, etc.) to offer extracurricular activities and opportunities to ELs
- Clarify and streamline the process for students to sign up for extracurricular activities and provide translated resources for ELs and their families

Planning Resources

DESE Practical Tools and Resources

[English Learners with Disabilities/Special Education](#) provides resources for learning more about ways to support and plan responsive curriculum, instruction, and assessment for ELs with disabilities.

DESE Guidance

[603 CMR 26.00: M.G.L. c. 76, § 5. {603 CMR 26.00: Access to Equal Educational Opportunity; 26.06: Extra-Curricular Activities}](#) describes legal requirements for ensuring equal opportunity and access to extra-curricular activities.

[English Learner Education Programs](#) provides information about different programs for ELs, including guidance for Sheltered English Immersion, Dual Language Education, and Transitional Bilingual Education.

[Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education \(SLIFE\)](#) provides definition, guidance and resources for supporting this population of ELs (see the [Interactive Guide](#)).

[Guidance for Supporting English Learners with Disabilities](#) provides information for supporting this population of ELs.

Federal Resources

[English Learner Toolkit Chapter 4](#) provides rationale and guidelines for federal expectations for ensuring ELs participate equitably and meaningfully in learning opportunities (p.1-4).

Other Featured Resources

[Schools to Learn From](#) showcases high schools where ELs are thriving and describes the way they are structured and the strategies used to support EL success.

[Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association](#) provides information on student involvement in sports and can help school leaders support EL involvement in athletics.

[The Importance of Extra-Curricular Activities for ELLs and Immigrant Students](#) presents interviews with teachers and ELs on the value of extra-curricular activities for ELs.

[English Learners in STEM Subjects: Transforming Classrooms, Schools, and Lives](#) examines the research on ELs' learning, teaching, and assessment in STEM subjects and provides guidance on how to improve learning outcomes in STEM for these students, including recommendations for providing greater access to rigorous instruction for EL success (p. 306-310).

[Supporting English Language Learners in School and in Afterschool and Summers](#) (Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project) describes characteristics of successful afterschool and summer learning programs and implications for serving ELs. It also includes a snapshot of these types of programs supporting ELs across the nation.

[Building a Pathway to the Future: Maximizing High School Guidance and Advisory Support](#) provides guidance about tasks and approaches to help students make the most of their high school years, including a model for collective responsibility, developing an individualized pathway to success, helping students navigate college selection and admissions, and the different roles that guidance counselors, educators, students, alumni and community members play in supporting this process.

[Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives](#) provides information about educational collaboratives in the state, which work together with districts and schools to implement direct educational services and programs to students and adults, develop programs and services to enhance school districts' operating efficiency, and provide high quality professional development and technical assistance.