**Overview**

All teachers who are assigned English learners share ownership and responsibility for their students’ cognitive, linguistic, and social emotional development. We must commit to creating educational opportunities for English learners that guarantee full access to grade-level standards with appropriate accommodations, scaffolds and supports so they, too, can obtain academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. To accomplish this goal, teachers must work together formally and informally, inside and outside the classroom, during instructional time as well as professional learning time. Sustained teacher collaboration[[1]](#footnote-1) is a pathway to build schoolwide capacity for (a) creating rigorous, culturally, and historically relevant curriculum that is fully inclusive of English learners, (b) implementing an asset-based, learner-centered, integrated instruction and equitable assessment practices for English learners and for all students. Teacher collaboration further strengthens student-teacher-family-community interactions through ongoing partnerships and collaborative practices that reach beyond the walls of the classroom or the school building.

**What is Teacher Collaboration?**

Collaboration includes learning from errors, seeking feedback about progress, and exploring what is not known with a partner.

Creative collaboration involves bringing together two or more ideas that seem unrelated. This requires a safe and trusting environment where educators can explore ideas, make and learn from errors, and lean on each other’s expertise to maximize learning.

*Source: Adapted from* [*Hattie, 2015*](https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/corporate/global/pearson-dot-com/files/hattie/150526_ExpertiseWEB_V1.pdf)

Teacher collaboration focused on English learners’ success can support:

* An integrated content curriculum with language and literacy development goals,
* Daily instruction that intentionally builds on students’ prior knowledge and embraces a constructivist approach to language and literacy development across all content areas, supporting academic and language proficiency,
* Support services that are fully integrated into the regular school schedule with all educators embracing a shared sense of responsibility and capability,
* Educators who plan, deliver, and assess instruction in collaboration with each other while holding an affirming attitude about all ELs’ regardless of proficiency levels or prior schooling experiences,
* A school culture where all students have a strong sense of belonging in an inclusive class and community where their academic and cultural identities are affirmed, and
* A collaborative learning environment that supports diversity, cultural responsiveness, inclusion, and equity.

|  |
| --- |
| **Educator Collaboration Challenges and Opportunities** |
| **Strengths*** Long-standing professional practice of educator isolation and individual teacher autonomy
* Lack of, or limited, job-embedded teacher collaboration time
* Lack of, or limited administrative support for joint professional endeavors around ELs’ needs
* Building equitable teacher partnerships with shared goals and clear roles and responsibilities for ELs’ language, literacy, content, and social-emotional development
 | **Challenges*** Building relational trust among educators
* Sharing teacher expertise (curriculum, pedagogy, student-teacher-family-community interactions, knowledge of students’ social, economic, linguistic, and cultural realities, etc.)
* Establishing a common goal of supporting A-L-L students’ academic language learning coupled with an integrated content, literacy, and social-emotional goal
* Participating in supportive, interdisciplinary endeavors that help educators find multiple creative solutions to contemporary challenges
* Maintaining high academic standards and rigorous instruction while providing the right kind and amount of supports and scaffolds for all
 |

For more information about how educators can create inclusive learning environments and educator collaboration tips, see the Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success Pillar 1 [Building Block 1: Shared Responsibility for English Learner Success](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/dashboard.html)

**Strategies and Best Practices**

Effective schools, those educators and students are successful, provide working conditions[[2]](#footnote-2) where teachers:

* Engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice.
* Are frequently observed and provided with useful critiques of their teaching.
* Plan, design, evaluate, and prepare teaching materials together.
* Teach each other the practice of teaching.



These four key ideas supporting greater collegiality can also be thought as a framework where *collaborative* serves as a defining adjective and is followed by a key dimension of teacher collaboration (the Four C’s)[[3]](#footnote-3):

* 1. **Collaborative Conversations**: Enhanced communication among all teachers
	2. **Collaborative Coaching**: A climate that allows for critical feedback
	3. **Collaborative Curriculum:** Curriculum and materials alignment
	4. **Collaborative Craftsmanship**: Continuous improvement of the craft of teaching, while coordinating time, resources, and support for each other

The table below presents specific collaborative focus within these four dimensions of collaboration in linguistically and culturally diverse school contexts:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Collaborative Conversations***Talk about:** Students’ needs
* Students’ lives
* Student outcomes and actions
* Curriculum and Instruction
* Teachers’ own challenges and processes to overcome them
* Teachers’ own successes
* Teacher actions and dispositions
 | **Collaborative Coaching***Engage in peer coaching to improve:** Lesson planning and delivery
* Lesson and unit design
* Use of core supplementary materials
* Adaptation or modification of content
* Adaptation or modification of instructional practices
* Formative and summative assessment practices
 |
| **Collaborative Curriculum***Align:** Lesson objectives (language objectives and content objectives) to a rigorous, culturally and historically relevant core curriculum
* Unit goals
* Curriculum maps
* Multimodal and multilingual resources
* Adapted texts and materials
 | **Collaborative Craftsmanship***Explore:** ELs’ background knowledge
* ELs’ prior learning
* Planning instruction collaboratively or in the context of co-teaching
* Effective methods for aligning core content curriculum and instruction to ELs’ needs
* Using time more effectively and making the most of collaborative efforts
* Developing a shared critical consciousness, an antiracist pedagogy, and a strong advocacy stance
 |

Educators can also implement collaborative practices aligned to various ESL instructional delivery approaches as suggested below:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Co-Teaching ESL** | **Embedded ESL** | **Push-in ESL** | **Pull-out ESL** | **Self-Contained ESL** |
| * Implement varied co-teaching models to support student interaction with the content, the co-teachers, and peers
* Determine grouping configurations and specific roles and responsibilities each teacher takes to differentiate instruction and create a cohesive, integrated lesson delivery (learn more [here](http://www.readysetcoteach.com/)).
 | Plan and implement instruction that supports student learning across the three [dimensions of language use](https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/standards/eld) (discourse, sentence, and word/phrase levels) and modes of communication (listening, speaking, writing, reading, representing, and viewing). | * Co-develop small group instructional practices that offer “just-in-time” in-class support
* Scaffold instruction and encourage multiple modes of representations
 | * Align content and language goals that parallel instruction in the grade level/content area classroom
* Collaboratively plan to determine what aspects of the core curriculum ESL instruction can consistently and meaningfully connect to
 | * Coordinate English language development and special education goals
* Infuse key elements of [Universal Design for Learning](https://udlguidelines.cast.org/)and evidence-based instructional practices to support English learners’ language and literacy development
 |

**Suggestions for Low, Middle and High-Incidence Districts**

**All educators who serve English learners can:**

• Incorporate collaborative process outlined in the four C’s framework. The table below presents potential goals and outcomes educators can aim for to effectively collaboration on behalf of English learners:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Collaborative Practices  | Goals | Outcomes |
| Collaborative Planning  | * Establish attainable yet rigorous learning targets
* Share instructional routines and strategies
* Align instructional content
* Design appropriate formative and summative assessment measures
 | Short- and long- term plans (daily lesson plans or unit plans) that include:* Language and content objectives
* Strategically selected instructional accommodations and accelerations
* Differentiated instruction according to students’ academic and linguistic needs
 |
| Collaborative Teaching | Within co-teaching delivery approaches:* Co-deliver instruction through differentiated instruction
* Use various models of instruction to establish equity between co-teaching partners and students

In other instructional delivery approaches: Align core content and language goals Coordinate instructional and assessment practices  | Co-equal partnershipsShared ownership of the teaching-learning cyclesEngagement in the entire collaborative instructional cycleInstructional consistency Curricular continuity  |
| Collaborative Assessment  | Jointly examine ELs’ language and academic performanceMonitor Analyze student data and identify areas that need improvement or targeted interventionUse student data to inform instruction  | Shared formative and summative assessment measuresCo-developed assessment tasksJoint goal setting for ELs using assessment data and evidence of student progress  |
| Collaborative Reflection  | Reflect on the teaching-learning process that took place Set short-term and long-term goals for improvement Celebrate student and teacher successes | Sustained teacher learning On-going opportunities for self-reflection and collaborative goal setting in support for ELs’ academic and linguistic achievement  |

• Consider key factors such as students’ English language proficiency levels, their performance on language assessments, and individual learning plans. This key information helps educators strategically select instructional accommodations and accelerations to guide differentiated instruction according to students’ academic and linguistic readiness levels and needs.

**Educators in low incidence districts can:[[4]](#footnote-4)** Cluster English learners with one grade level/content teacher who has an ESL license or successful experience teaching English learners rather than sprinkling students across numerous teachers.

**Educators in districts in mid-incidence districts can:[[5]](#footnote-5)** Cluster English learners together with 2 or 3 teachers, who have either ESL licenses or successful experience teaching English learners.

**Educators in districts in high-incidence districts can:[[6]](#footnote-6)** Hire grade-level teachers who hold an ESL license (elementary) and content teachers with both ESL and content area licenses (secondary).

**Actions-at-a-Glance**

|  |
| --- |
| **Actions for Classroom Educators** |
| * Co-develop a culture of collaboration by focusing on academic language, literacy practices and rigorous content *simultaneously* while also building on and expanding English learners’ multiliteracies.
* Co-construct a collaborative learning space where English learners interact with English-learning and English-fluent peers to co-construct meaning and engage in authentic, inquiry-based critical content exploration.
* Co-create a text-rich environment where a variety of text formats available including digital video and audio recordings, print, nonprint, and web-based reading materials.
* Co-develop multiple meaningful opportunities for close reading, authentic writing, and purposeful interactions that promote speaking and comprehension skills.
 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Actions for School and District Leaders** |
| * Offer all teachers sustained professional learning opportunities to enhance their instructional strategies, collaboration, and co-teaching practices and culturally responsive and sustaining schooling
* Strategically partner teachers for collaboration and co-teaching and place students in classes/courses to maximize teacher impact on English learners’ language development and academic achievement.
* Engage in collaborative curriculum planning and alignment work that ensures collaborating teachers mutual understanding of the content-based and language development goals English learners must meet.
* Design a master schedule that allows for ample weekly collaborative planning time for grade-level teams, or subject matter teams, as well as individual co-planning time for co-teaching partners.
* Establish clear expectations and set short-term and long–term goals for developing, implementing, and sustaining a collaborative approach to serving English learners across program models
* Offer training in and secure technology resources for collaborating teachers to co-plan using technology platforms.
* Provide teachers with instructional, facilitative, and/or collaborative coaching support.
 |

**Instructional Planning Resources**

## **DESE Practical Tools and Resources**

Classroom Teacher Rubric includes educator collaboration as a specific component of effective teacher practice.

English Learner Collaboration Tool guides content and language teachers in collaborative planning discussions and provides prompts for shared responsibility in planning of curriculum, instruction, and assessment for ELs.

Interactive Collaboration Tool Guide provides videos, links to resources, and an overview of how to use the English Learner Collaboration Tool in curriculum development.

[ESL Model Curriculum Units: Family Stories](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/instruction/mcu/) showcases a Massachusetts district's initiatives to purposefully share roles and responsibilities in planning and co-teaching English learners.

ESL Tools and Resources provides guidance for support effective ESL instruction including the Unit and Lesson Planning Thinking Processes and Templates.

[Massachusetts Vision for English Learner Education and Blueprint for English Learner Success](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/) outlines shared responsibility expectations and the need for collaboration to support English learners (see [Pillar 1: School Culture](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/blueprint/dashboard.html), for example).

## **DESE Guidance**

ESL Best Practices Quick Reference Guides provides guidance on a variety of key topics (formative assessment, racial equity and social justice, early literacy, etc.) as well as English learner student groups (students designated as long-term English learners, English learners with disabilities, etc.).

## [Sheltered English Immersion Guidance](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/guidance/?section=sei) highlights the importance of collaboration between grade level/content area and ESL teachers and shared responsibility for this language program model (see the Importance of Collaboration on p. 4, English Language Development Happens All Day on p. 11-12, and Spotlight for Collaboration and Co-teaching Resources on p. 10).

## [Defining and Implementing Two Way Immersion Programs](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/guidance/) highlights collaborative instructional practices as a key component of this language program model (see p. 11).

## [Guidance for Defining and Implementing Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Programs](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/guidance/) highlights collaborative instructional practices as a key component of this language program model (see p. 12).

Next Generation ESL Curriculum Resource Guide provides support for collaborative ESL curriculum development, including collaborative tools, processes, protocols, and resources used in the development of ESL MCUs.

## **Federal Resources**

[Dear Colleague Letter](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf) offers overall guidance on equitable program design, instructional and assessment practices for English learners. Important highlights are Providing Meaningful Access to All Curricular and Extracurricular Programs (p. 17) and Avoiding Unnecessary Segregation of EL Students (p. 22), both of which require substantial teacher collaboration.

[English Learner Toolkit](https://ncela.ed.gov/files/english_learner_toolkit/OELA_2017_ELsToolkit_508C.pdf) elaborates on the Dear Colleague Letter and offers additional tools and resources to implement the recommendations. Important highlights are Chapter 4: Tools and Resources for Providing Meaningful Access to All Curricular and Extracurricular Programs, and Chapter 5: Tools and Resources for Creating and Inclusive Environment For and Avoiding Unnecessary Segregation of EL Students, both of which require substantial teacher collaboration.

**Other Featured Resources**

[Standards Collaboration Comic](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Standards-Collaboration-Comic.pdf) presents a case where a science teacher and an ESL teacher work together on their English earners' language development and meaningful engagement with the content of a science unit. This step-by-step example can be used in tandem with Section 4 of the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 edition, which presents a more detailed look at the collaborative planning process.

[Collaboration: Working Together to Serve Multilingual Learners](https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/FocusBulletin-Collaboration.pdf)introduces educator collaboration that supports English learners as a teaching and learning cycle that includes co-planning, co-teaching, co-assessing, and co-reflecting. It also explores how WIDA resources can support educators working collaboratively in each phase of this cycle, offers first steps for initiating collaborative practices, and next steps for deepening collaboration to serve both student learning and teacher learning.

 [**For additional resources you may wish to consult, click here.**](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ele/esl-toolkit/tools-resources/)

1. Hattie, J. (2015). [What Works Best in Education: The Politics of Collaborative Expertise](https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/corporate/global/pearson-dot-com/files/hattie/150526_ExpertiseWEB_V1.pdf), p.27. Pearson. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Warren Little, J. (1982). Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation: Workplace Conditions of School Success. *American Educational Research Journal*, 19 (3), p. 331–332. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Honigsfeld, A. & Dove, M. (2019). Collaborating for English learners: A foundational guide to integrated practices. Corwin Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Calderón, M., Dove, M., Staehr Fenner, S., Gottlieb, M., Honingsfeld, A., Singer, T., Sinclair-Slakk, S., Soto, I. & Zacarian, D. (2019). Breaking Down the Wall: Essential Shifts for English Learners’ Success. California: Corwin. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)